

SISN Annual Report 2020

GOAL 1. Advance the theory, methods, conduct and capacity for implementation science (IS) in nutrition

Objective 1: Articulate and promote the distinctive theory & methods of IS for nutrition

Objective 2: Facilitate setting research agendas at global, regional and national levels

- SISN partnered with the **International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)** under a **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)** three-year grant to improve the implementation of Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation (IFAS) programs for women in Kenya and Uganda. The **Implementation Science Initiative (ISI)** seeks to apply an IS approach and create a galvanized coalition of policymakers, program actors, and researchers in each country in order to strengthen IFAS programs during implementation. The initiative provides the opportunity to learn how to build the capacity for and practice of IS through a facilitated process of learning-by-doing. The team is led by Dr David Pelletier with Dr Isabelle Michaud-Letourneau as Senior Technical Expert (providing ongoing technical assistance and knowledge brokering) and Marion Gayard as Research and Evaluation Specialist. The project is further supported by the ISI Working Group which in addition to the core team includes Dr Gretel Pelto (SISN), Dr Alison Tumilowicz (BMGF).

The goal is to strengthen program implementation by:

- Closing a knowledge utilization gap by integrating existing evidence into policy and programmatic decisions through technical assistance, mentoring and knowledge brokering
- When necessary, conducting practical implementation research (IR) in the form of rapid assessments, operations research, process evaluation or other exercises, as appropriate, to address the critical challenges facing implementers and policymakers
- 3ie and SISN have partnered with URC in Uganda and FHI360 in Kenya to provide the implementation arena for the initiative. In each country, a core team was created and includes at least a senior nutrition expert from an NGO, a senior Ministry of Health nutrition official, researcher(s) and a project manager/knowledge broker.

Milestones and Achievements

- **Webinar** on the focused ethnographic study (FES) approach (February 2020)
- Joint development of a manual to provide guidance on conducting a FES evaluating barriers to antenatal care (ANC) attendance and iron and folic acid supplementation (IFAS) adherence (June 2020)
- Completion of a process evaluation on the implementation of an intervention (enhanced support for quality improvement) in Uganda
- Intensification of the analysis of the documentation of the experiences to draw diverse types of learnings over the course of the whole initiative
- In **2019** an IR protocol was developed in ISI to carry out three studies in Kenya and Uganda. Preparatory work for the studies, using an effectiveness-implementation hybrid design in both countries, was undertaken and submission was made to the national ethics committee. Three open-access, free webinars, articulating different aspects of the process, were presented.
- In **2018** ISI National core teams were created and terms of reference developed. Bottleneck assessment workshops were carried out on IFAS programs in Kenya and Uganda. Guidance notes were developed on the different components of the initiative.

Objective 1: Articulate and promote the distinctive theory & methods of IS for nutrition

SISN partnered with **Nutrition International (NI)** on a joint initiative entitled '**Strengthening Global Nutrition Impact Through Collaboration**'. Under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) the collaboration will involve a number of activities aimed at supporting individuals and organizations to make greater use of IS to improve their own implementation and impact. The following specific activities were agreed:

- A **Webinar Series focusing** on topics relevant to NI programs and workforce development needs. The first of which (Dec 2020) focused on **scaling up pulses fortification**.
- **Implementation Research (IR) Methods:** This activity aims to identify, develop, curate, package, disseminate and/or build capacity for a variety of IR methods suitable for NI field programs
- An **Internship Program**.

Objective 2: Facilitate setting research agendas at global, regional and national levels

- SISN provided mentorship and support to the **Nutrition Society of Nigeria (NSN)**. The NSN had received funding from BMGF for Project ENAN, a 3-year project (2019-2021) with the objective to mobilize, engage and strengthen academia and develop their capacities towards the operationalization of their research and learning agenda in the context of the Nigeria Country Nutrition Plan. Following an exploratory meeting between the two organizations, NSN asked for SISN's help in reviewing concept notes they had received after inviting small grant proposals for implementation science.

The SISN Team developed a simplified rubric under which they reviewed the concept notes. Their comments were shared with the Nigeria Team who implemented the recommendations, including: revising the timelines for the small grant competition; increasing the size of individual project budgets by awarding fewer grants; and updating the existing proposal template with a greater focus on methods. This contribution from SISN was unfunded.

Objective 3: Participate in, organize and/or shape conferences

- At the American Society for Nutrition's **NUTRITION 2020 LIVE ONLINE**, June 3, SISN co-hosted an Interactive Virtual Workshop on Implementation Science and Covid-19. SISN Board Members Dr Edward Frongillo, Dr Kenda Cunningham and Dr Andrea Warren fielded questions to the expert speakers from a very engaged audience and highlighted emerging themes to explore in the coming months and years.
- A manuscript based on the insights gained from two workshops convened by SISN in June 2019 was drafted and published in *Advances in Nutrition* in June 2020. This open access article "**Building Implementation Science in Nutrition**" authored by SISN Board Members, Dr Andrea Warren and Dr Edward Frongillo, together with Dr Rahul Rawat from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, presents important insights into the challenges facing advancement of implementation science in nutrition. The article has been viewed or downloaded 1,970 times since its publication
- On November 16, SISN hosted a live virtual Learning Centre as part of Micronutrient Forum (MNF) Connected. The event entitled "**Challenges and Lessons Learned in Delivering Nutrition Programs at Scale: Examples of Balancing Implementation and Science in India and Kenya**" featured guest speakers Jacqueline Kung'u (Nutrition International) and Shruthi Cyriac (Emory University/GAIN) plus with SISN Board Members, Dr Mduduzi Mbuya and Dr Chowdhury Jalal, as discussants. Thirty-two people attended and positive feedback was received from the audience.

GOAL 3. Create and maintain an innovative and effective IS knowledge management system

Objectives:

1. Maintain an up-to-date, accessible, relevant website

4. Deploy digital dissemination strategies and platforms

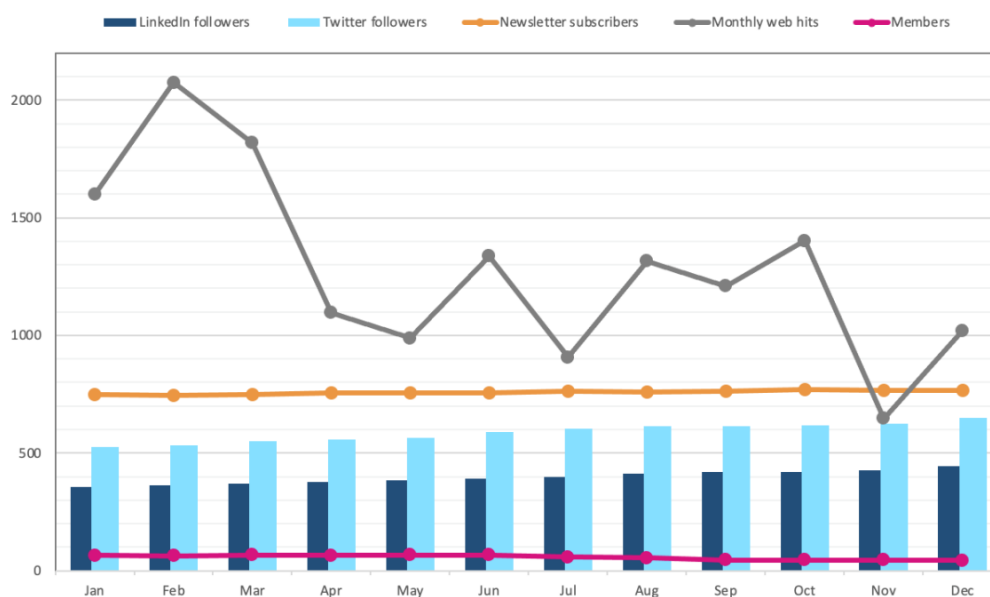
5. Disseminate knowledge products (briefs, FAQs, etc.), developed by SISN, members or other organizations

- SISN's communications activity is managed by Dr Naomi Cahill, under the guidance of a **Communications Working Group** (ToR [here](#)) led by Dr Mduduzi Mbuya. 2020 deliverables included:
 - 12 blogs and news items published and 3 webinars hosted
 - More than 100 resources added to our searchable online **IS Knowledge Hub**
 - A 25% increase in website traffic and **Twitter** and **LinkedIn** followers
 - More than 750 people reached with each issue of SISN's **newsletter**.
- We updated and expanded our website with many additional pages and resources (www.implementnutrition.org) to connect members with the key information to learn more about IS in nutrition and we achieved 15K hits in 2020. Notably, a **Frequently Asked Questions webpage** was added highlighting 15 common questions about IS and SISN.
- Launched in 2019, the **SISN Knowledge Hub**, is an online search facility designed to help audiences find key resources on implementation science (IS) in nutrition. The Hub now hosts over **387 resources** including a wide range of materials from journal articles, papers, case studies, reports and presentations.
- **Blogs** were posted covering a variety of topics from in-depth explorations of key IS topics, experts answering questions on IR and real-life case studies. Efforts were made to improve the quality and diversity of blogs and to stimulate greater engagement with the membership by inviting case studies submissions and input from guest writers. A specific focus was to widen our audience to implementers by simplifying terminology (i.e. using less

academic jargon) and sharing content on the ‘how to’ aspects of implementation. The three most popular posts can be viewed [here](#).

- SISN’s **newsletter** reaches over 750 nutrition stakeholders each issue. In 2020 it was reformatted to provide information in a more streamlined way and distributed quarterly. The newsletter is our main vehicle to keep our audiences up-to-date with news and events for the Society and key resources in global nutrition and IS and relevant opportunities, events and training. Past copies are archived on the website [here](#).
- Our open-access free webinar program delivered three live **webinars** with participant Q&A opportunities:
 - 26 Feb: **A focused ethnographic study: investigating the barriers to antenatal care attendance to improve iron and folic acid supplementation in Kenya**
 - 29 Oct: **A virtual training for trainers: Adaptations from COVID-19**
 - 15 Dec: **From innovation to scale up: Potential of pulses fortification to improve micronutrient malnutrition in Nutrition International’s program and beyond**
 - Recordings of all our past webinars can be accessed [here](#).
- Our audiences on **LinkedIn** and **Twitter** grew consistently month-by-month as we increased our posting frequency to expand our visibility and to promote engagement with our followers and members.
- We launched an automated e-mail series in June to support new members in finding their way around the resources available on our website. The series consists of four e-mails in a member’s first month with orientation on the Society’s background, our key online resources and how to get more involved with SISN and its mission.

SISN Key Engagement Channels 2020



GOAL 4. SISN’s members are inclusive of all stakeholder categories required for its mission

Objective 1: Deploy continuous recruitment, outreach and retention strategies

- Led by Dr Kenda Cunningham, the **Membership Working Group** includes three volunteer members, Dr Eva Monterrosa, Dr Laura Hackl, and Dr Andrea Warren. The Group’s mandate is to attract, retain and foster engagement with members. The ToR can be found [here](#).

2020 Milestones and Achievements:

- UNICEF became an Affiliate SISN Member with courtesy membership offered to UNICEF staff
- The membership criteria and application process were reviewed and streamlined.

GOAL 5. Ensure that SISN is well-governed, well-managed, appropriately resourced, accountable and sustainable

Secretariat:

- The Secretariat is led by Caroline Skirrow, Chief of Operations (COO) supported by Operations Assistant, Ariane Escritt.

Operations:

- The **SISN Bylaws** were reviewed and updated. Amendments were made to clauses related to Board Terms and the election process
- A new **Safeguarding Policy** was instituted and signed by all Board Members, consultants and volunteers.

SISN Board:

- After serving on the Board for five years, Dr Gilles Bergeron, Continuous Education and Capacity Building Councilor retired from the Board. Dr Kenda Cunningham, Recruitment, Engagement and Outreach Councilor also ended her first term at the end of 2020. We thank them for their invaluable service. Dr Chowdhury Jalal moved from his Development role to fill the vacancy of Continuous Education and Capacity Building Councilor .
- The creation of a new student (non-voting) position left three vacant Board positions starting 2021. Elections were conducting internally in accordance with the bylaws and Dr Purnima Menon (Recruitment, Engagement and Outreach Councilor), Dr Rebecca Heidkamp (Development Councilor) and Shannon King (Student Representative) were duly elected. All Board biographies can be viewed [here](#).
- The annual in-person Board Meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Committee:

- The Executive Committee (EC) consists of President, Dr Peggy Bentley; Vice-President, Dr Gretel Peltó; Past President, Dr David Pelletier; Treasurer, Dr Megan Bourassa; COO, Caroline Skirrow (*ex officio*). The EC meets at least monthly and is responsible for oversight of the Secretariat; Society's finances; policy; ensuring that the Board and Working Groups are delivering on their goals as set out in the Strategic Plan and biennial Work Plan.

Funding:

- SISN received further installments (US\$ 184,110) of the three-year grant from **3ie** (US\$ 499,924). The funding supports technical assistance and travel for SISN's Implementation Science Initiative in Uganda and Kenya (see details in Goal 1 above)
- SISN entered into a contract with Nutrition International to collaborate on a series of Webinars (US\$ 36,000) to be completed in 2020 and 2021. Further NI funded projects are scheduled for 2021
- SISN entered into an affiliate membership arrangement with UNICEF for 220 of their in-country staff
- SISN funds a portion of the Secretariat costs from individual membership dues.

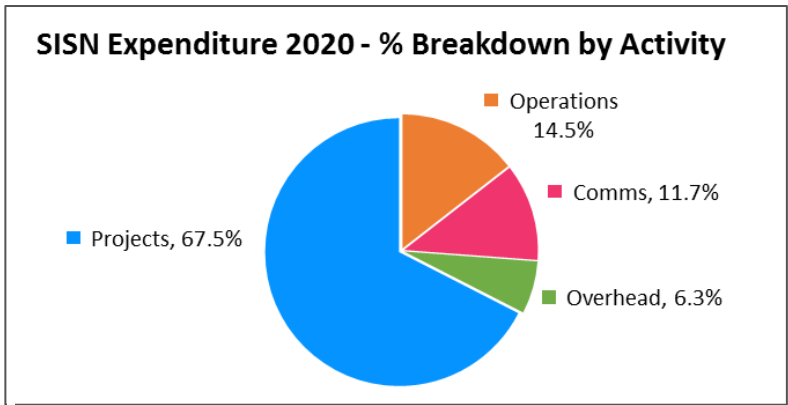


Financial Management:

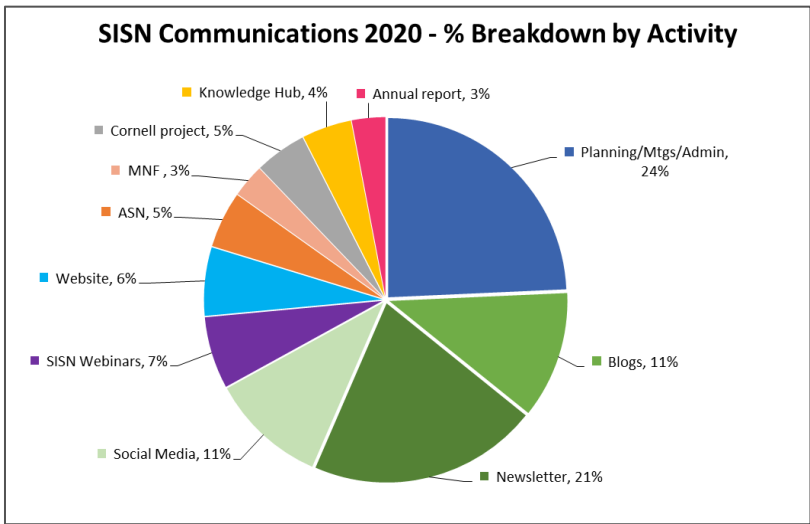
- Day to day financial management is conducted by the COO with the support of an outsourced accounting team (Altruic Advisors (CPA), MA, USA), both under guidance from SISN's Treasurer, Dr Megan Bourassa. The **Finance Team (COO, Treasurer and CPA)** hold regular meetings to discuss the Society's financial matters and report to the EC and the Board
- The necessary **2020 Tax Filing** was signed off by the Treasurer and submitted to the IRS in April 2021. SISN is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) corporation.

Expenditure reporting:

- Over two-thirds of SISN expenditure is directly supporting projects:



- 11.7% is spent on communication and dissemination of educational materials on implementation science. Time spent on specific activities is broken down as follows:



- Around 20% of expenditure supports SISN’s operations, including supporting the function of the Board and all of its Working Groups and their related activities.

