



En-net evaluation March 2012

Background

The ENN launched en-net (www.en-net.org.uk) in February 2009 as a resource primarily to enable field practitioners in remote locations to have access to prompt technical advice for operational challenges for which answers are not readily accessible in current guidelines. It also sought to provide space for informal discussions of approaches to challenging or atypical situations and innovative technical responses, linking people to key resources and linking field practitioners, researchers and technical experts to discuss current issues

En-net is open to people working in the nutrition and food security sectors worldwide. It was initially funded by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance ([USAID/OFDA](http://www.usaid.gov)), and later additionally through the support of the Irish People through [Irish Aid](http://www.irishaid.ie) and the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development ([DFATD](http://www.dfatd.gov.ie)) (formerly Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)). It was developed at the request of many agencies and individuals

The forum was launched with seven thematic areas, but has since expanded to ten in addition to areas for “Announcements and nutritionists needed”, “Upcoming trainings” and “Other thematic area” for issues that sit outside the ten existing areas. The ten areas are: prevention and treatment of severe acute malnutrition, prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition, livelihoods interventions, infant and young child feeding protection and support, humanitarian systems, assessment, general food distribution, micronutrients, coverage assessment and cross-cutting issues.

Users can become members of thematic groups, receiving email notifications of new postings, or simply visit the site sporadically to view and participate in discussions.

Evaluation Methodology

A Survey Monkey questionnaire was created to evaluate the use of en-net with the objectives of finding out who is or is not using it, what are its perceived strengths and weaknesses and what changes both users and non-users would like to see to make it more useful for emergency nutrition practitioners in the field as well as for the academic and research community. The survey went live early in 2011 and email alerts were posted out to all en-net users and Field Exchange subscribers¹. A link to the survey was also posted on the en-net homepage and it was further promoted through Field Exchange. It proved a slow

¹ Print publication produced by the ENN. fex.enonline.net A mailing database with email contacts for the majority is maintained by the ENN.

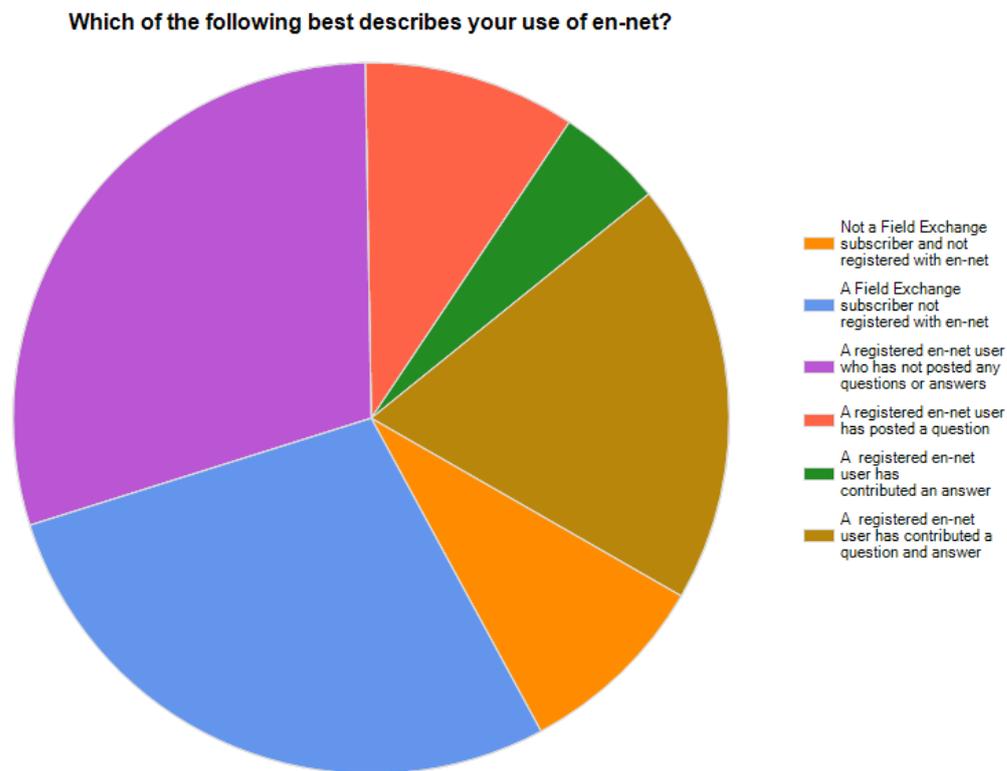
process to obtain a sufficient number of responses to enable a meaningful analysis of the results until a further reminder was sent out in late 2011, which included new Field Exchange subscribers. In March 2011 there were finally sufficient responses for the survey to be concluded. Technical Moderators were also surveyed with additional targeted questions regarding their particular role in en-net.

Evaluation respondents

A total of 168 respondents started the survey and 135 completed it (80%); 84% (n=141) of them were aware of en-net.

There are different types of participation in en-net. An individual may register as a user (anonymous or named) and contribute questions and/or answers to postings. An individual can also view discussions without registering. As a registered user, you can opt to receive email alerts to questions/questions and answers postings on any of the thematic areas.

The graph below illustrates who the respondents were in terms of their use of en-net. The majority of respondents were registered en-net users who have posted no questions or answers (30%; n=37) and Field Exchange subscribers not registered with en-net (28%; n=35); 19% were en-net users who have contributed both a question and an answer (24 people).

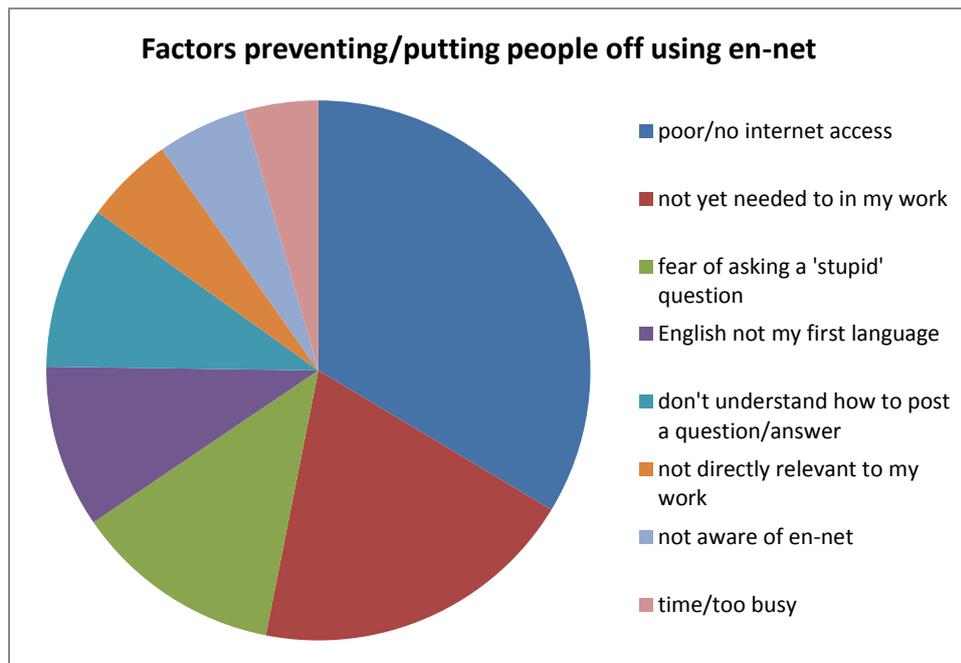


Findings

1. Practicalities in use of en-net

Overall, 72% of respondents (53 people) said they regularly view or follow discussions; however a follow up question on frequency revealed that only 19% (9) view en-net often, while 40% (19) look at it occasionally, 21% (10) have looked at it once and 21% (10) have never viewed it.

The biggest factor preventing/putting people off is poor or no internet access, accounting for 38% (31/82) of those who said something prevented/put them off using it². Fourteen percent of those who were put off said the deterrent was fear of asking a “stupid” question (11 people).



Ninety-six percent (106 respondents) found en-net to be user-friendly.

“It is ...very well-designed web page for forum discussion”

2. Use of information provided on en-net

The main purpose for joining en-net was to obtain useful advice for programming (34%; n=25) and to keep up with the latest debates in nutrition in emergencies (30%; n=22), however 15% (11) said their main purpose was to share their knowledge and experience with others.

“I have been implementing a malnutrition project and some of en-net discussions were very helpful when some doubts arose”.

Ninety-seven percent agreed that en-net provides a useful space to share ideas and field dilemmas with others working in similar situations.

² N.B. an omission here is that we didn’t have a “no” answer to the question “does anything put you off using en-net”.

"I have seen so many difficult issues about surveys it may not be clear before and after discussion it is clear for me".

Overall, 89% of respondents (92) thought that there is sufficient expert input on the forum. However, a minority of comments requested greater input from ENN and the en-net moderator to ensure an adequate response was provided to each question.

"The admission criteria for the OTP and the SFP or referral of the child cured from OTP to SFP has been articulated. I would suggest if the moderator would prompt for information acquired in current or recently held workshops relating to field practice. Thanks"

"There are some issues no one comments on. In such instances, the ENN staff should comment."

Several comments reveal that users are happy with the response from peers and the diversity of experience shared.

"I was asking a question to provide me examples of MAM guideline from other countries and I got the information from the members"

"...good to gain other peoples insight and experiences"

Seventy percent (66) of respondents said that en-net discussions had been useful in their work or study. A total of 51 examples were provided which included use of information from en-net discussions in programming (15), personal learning (11), conducting surveys (7), training (5), study (5), policy and guideline development (3) and career development (1).

"I have been writing a briefing paper on nutrition products for my organisation (NGO) and found many useful up-to-date debates"

"It has helped us decide how to carry out certain aspects of our programmes. We have learned of best practices this way. Sometimes new ways of looking at indicators come up, like a recent average length of stay discussion"

"it helps to answer some of the questions which I encounter in my trainings with health workers"

3. Satisfaction with the system

Every question that is posted to en-net is first reviewed by the en-net Moderator. Once cleared, it is posted online. All responses are posted directly to en-net without Moderator clearance. Technical Moderators (experts in the given field) are assigned to each thematic area. The en-net Moderator may 'escalate' a question or discussion to a Technical Moderator, particularly in cases where a question does not receive peer responses or where an expert view is required when contradictory responses are provided or there is lack of clarity or agreement in the response. A Technical Moderator is also free to contribute of his/her own accord to any discussion.

For those who had posted a question, 92% (23) said their question was posted to the forum in good time, with 88% (22) satisfied with the response time. Ninety-two percent (22) claimed

to have received a useful and adequate response and 83% (20) said the response directly influenced their work or study.

A total of 31 questions were answered offline by en-net forum moderators in 2011 and not posted as they were duplicates of previously-asked questions and the reader was referred to previous discussions, or at times the answers were readily available in the existing literature)³.

Of the 108 responses, 20 had posted a job advert: 2 of whom had received applicants through en-net; 10 had not and 8 didn't know.

Of the 58 respondents who replied to the question "Is there anything you'd like to change about en-net?", 33 simply replied "no". Of the other responses there were no consistent themes: two people requested information in French and one person asked for simple English, 3 people made requests for more trainings and courses and/or information about them and opportunities for funding/scholarships to attend, and 2 requests were for an area drawing attention to new research within the humanitarian nutrition sphere. Five people requested increased email notifications, suggesting that the system of registering and signing up to forum areas is perhaps not clear to all.

The final question concerning suggestions for improvement garnered 53 responses, 22 of which were "no/none" and 6 simply "keep it up". Of the remaining 25 responses, an increase in technical expertise and voices on the forum and extending its reach so that more people – both experts and field practitioners – are aware of it, were the most prominent suggestions, raised by 5 people.

"I think we need more technical people to provide further in depth support. Of course, individual [Technical Moderators] are doing incredibly good things. Thanks for organizing and creating such fantastic forum which is helping a lot.

"Some areas of the forum I find are too dominated by one voice and one agenda/opinion is driven.....having a more varied opinion and range of choices".

"En-net Moderators and technical experts to make a summary of conclusions especially on topics that generate a heated debate with different views so as not to leave audience, especially those new in the field, confused".

The Technical Moderator survey was completed by 5 people of whom 60% believe they are adequately called on to respond to questions, while 40% said it was too little. They all felt confident that they could respond to questions in their technical areas, though 80% welcomed additional support from another Technical Moderator. Two of the respondents follow all the discussions in their area of expertise, while another two follow most of them. They had no suggestions for changes to the Technical Moderator role. For the forum overall, there were 2 suggestions: to improve the log-in page so that the default is log-in, not search (this has already been rectified); and to explore the possibility of increasing the number of Technical Moderators or encouraging more voices on the forum through wider membership.

³ Info not from the survey.

4. Additional quotes from the survey respondents on their use of en-net

It has helped me in designing CMAM programme factoring challenges people have encountered and also sharing the responses during training sessions that i have conducted hence increased broader understanding.

Procedures and field tested experiences in sample size determination, calculation, consideration and other practical insights.

There are well read people out there. When we have some difficulties we will go and check previous Q and A and get a lot of information.

I've used EN-Net to help me draft a policy paper on nutrition supplements for the NGO I work for. The forum gave me lots of tips on controversial issues and resource pages.

all the field experience regarding treatment of SAM has been very useful. Also the discussions regarding breastfeeding.

Yes both for work and for my master's degree... as literature on nutrition is often difficult to locate or not available, having a "blog" style discussion to refer to has been useful.

Further action by the ENN

As suggested, the ENN will seek to expand the number of Technical Moderators who contribute expertise to en-net. We have noted there is a high proportion of registered users who are anonymous. We plan to survey this group to determine the reasons behind opting for anonymous status.

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