

Case study

Coordination at the heart of the SUN Movement in Mali:

The role of multi-stakeholder and multisectoral platforms

Country: Mali

Date: March 2023

Themes: Coordination of action through improved functional capacities

Sub-themes: Strengthening capacity to better coordinate with sectors or groups



Introduction



Nutrition work spans multiple sectors, including agriculture and health, and involves multiple roles within each. Nutrition also involves multiple types of stakeholders, including the Government, civil society, the United Nations agencies, academia and the private sector. All of these sectors and stakeholders are involved in different ways in influencing nutrition outcomes within a country. Recognizing this, the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) has embarked on a journey to document good practices on well-functioning multi-stakeholder and multisectoral platforms.

The case study documentation addresses five key questions:

→ What is the local definition of a multi-stakeholder/multisectoral platform?

- What are the governance arrangements for multi-stakeholder/multisectoral platforms across varied settings?
- How are the multi-stakeholder/multisectoral platforms structured at the country level?
- What are the key achievements and emerging challenges faced by multi-stakeholder/multisectoral platforms?
- How do we ensure that gains made by well-functioning multi-stakeholder/multisectoral platforms are sustained?

Five countries have been identified, spanning different geographic settings, including Anglophone Africa, Asia, Francophone Africa, Latin America and the thematic Convergence Hub. The approach to documenting the good practice is summarized in Annex 1.

This case study places a spotlight on the Multi-stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) in [Mali](#).



The case of Mali

While MSPs may mean different things in different contexts, well-functioning MSPs are judged by their tangible results in coordinating nutrition efforts from various sectors, actors and networks and in prioritizing, funding and implementing national nutrition plans. Despite their recognized critical role, MSPs in several countries are currently facing challenges due to a lack of effective coordination, leadership and funding, among other factors. The SUN Government Focal Points who are expected to lead the MSPs on behalf of the Government often lack

the capacity to engage the various stakeholders, and the SUN Networks' activities are sometimes limited by several factors. In some countries, however, the MSPs are functional and active, and their successes can be replicated in other countries. The *Comité Technique Intersectoriel pour la Nutrition* (CTIN) (Intersectoral Technical Committee for Nutrition) in Mali is an example of a well-functioning MSP among the Francophone African SUN Countries. This is commendable, given the country's security challenges and the recent political transition.



Objectives of the case study

This case study describes the characteristics of a well-functioning MSP in Mali.



Period covered

Mali joined the SUN Movement in 2011, and the MSP was established in 2015. The achievements described in this case study are those observed since the establishment of the MSP.



Interventions applied in Mali

Created in 2015, the CTIN is active at both the national and subnational levels. Several factors explain the CTIN's effectiveness in leading the MSP Mali, with support from its partners:

- a. **Strong coordination:** The CTIN is chaired by an active and committed SUN Government Focal Point sitting in the Ministry of Health as Coordinator of the Nutrition Coordination Cell. In addition to his status as a government representative, the personal commitment and motivation of the SUN Government Focal Point has been one of the main drivers of the MSP's continuous engagement as a coordination platform and of its numerous achievements.
- b. **Annual action plans:** The CTIN among the few MSPs to develop annual action plans. In addition, the MSPs at the subnational levels also develop their annual action plans. This is an important best practice, because annual action plans help stakeholders define clear objectives and the means to achieve these goals.



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- c. **Active SUN Networks:** The SUN Networks in Mali – namely, the Civil Society Alliance (CSA), the SUN Business Network (SBN), the SUN Academia Network, the SUN Donor Network, and UN Nutrition – are all active members of the MSP. They work closely with the SUN Government Focal Point and support him with various tasks in a complementary manner. For example, the CSA – which also gathers representatives from among youth

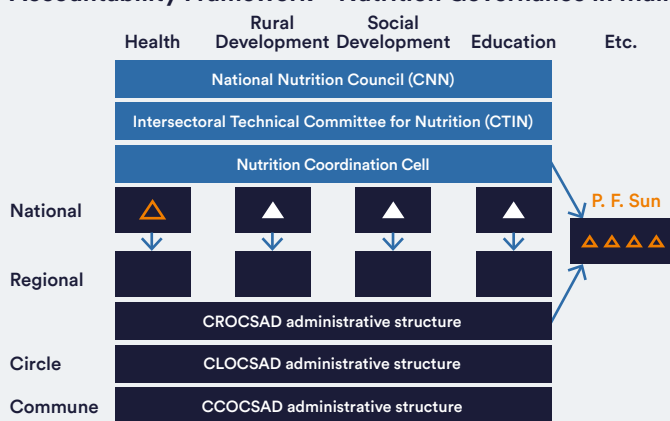


and the media and which was a recipient of SUN Pooled Fund grants in 2018 and in 2021 – works closely with the SUN Government Focal Point and has been an influential stakeholder in developing national nutrition plans and in resource mobilization efforts in favor of nutrition.

d. Strong accountability mechanism and transparency:

In Mali, a clear accountability mechanism has been established for all the policies and key nutrition commitments, notably from the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summits and ongoing work on the development of the food systems strengthening pathway. This inclusive mechanism includes both national and subnational levels. In addition, the CSA has developed its own accountability process for the use of communities or project beneficiaries.

Accountability Framework – Nutrition Governance in Mali



e. Level of anchoring of the MSP: In Mali, the steering bodies of the National Nutrition Policy are:

- National Council for Nutrition (CNN), which oversees the coordination of the National Nutrition Policy. It is chaired by the Ministry of Health and Social Development and meets annually to evaluate the progress of the nutrition agenda.
- The CTIN, which is in charge of steering and monitoring the National Nutrition Policy. In 2021, the CTIN was operational and met three times, including to validate its work plan.
- The Technical Secretariat, which is in charge of facilitating and preparing the CTIN meetings.
- The Coordination Cell for Nutrition (CCN), which was created in March 2015 through a decree from the Prime Minister with the aim of reinforcing the coordination process and monitoring the implementation of the National Nutrition Policy. The SUN Government Focal Point coordinates the CCN

within the Ministry of Health, although the CCN is overseen by the Prime Minister's Office. The CCN's mandate is to strengthen governance around nutrition and to oversee the performance of all SUN Networks at the central level. It submits quarterly reports to the Government. The CCN is composed of nutrition Focal Points in all relevant ministries (18–20 line ministries). Operating costs are mostly funded by the Government, although the CCN also has been supported by the World Food Programme (WFP) for four years.

- At the decentralized level, the CCN also has a mandate to facilitate the activity of three subnational coordination frameworks operating at the regional, department and commune levels. These are the Communal Committee for Orientation, Coordination and Monitoring of Development Actions (CCOCSAD); the Local Committee for Orientation, Coordination and Monitoring of Development Actions (CLOCSAD); and the Regional Committee for Orientation, Coordination and Monitoring of Development Actions (CROCSAD).

The MSP's activities in Mali have had tangible results in advancing the national nutrition agenda. High-level advocacy was conducted to have a national nutrition forum and draw attention from the President, Prime Minister, President of the Parliament and subsequent transition Government and Conseil National de Transition. Great coordination and advocacy efforts from the MSP led to Mali's commitments during the United Nations Food Systems and N4G summits. A multisectoral and inclusive approach was used in the development of the new Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (PAMN) 2021–2025 and in the efforts around nutrition budget tracking, the mobilization of domestic and innovative funding for nutrition, and enhancing mutual accountability.

The strong collaboration between the MSP and the SMS, through the SUN Movement Coordinator and the Country Action Team (formerly the Country Liaison Team), also has led to great achievements. For example, the budget analysis exercise that was conducted in 2021 and the related advocacy led by the CSA, with support from the rest of the MSP and from SUN Pooled Fund grants, resulted in the inclusion of a budget line of CFAF 600 million (approximately USD 1 million). This facilitated the purchase of ready-to-use therapeutic foods approved in the 2020 national budget, in addition to the regular budget dedicated to the CCN. Other successful interventions included resource mobilization at the national and subnational levels. Specifically:

- The mobilization of domestic resources at the district level to finance nutrition-related activities (screening, food demonstration, etc.) through lobbying and the establishment of the regional alliances and MSPs.



- The participation of mining companies in the financing of nutrition activities at the subnational level, thanks to the Unitlife initiative. Efforts are ongoing to reactivate Unitlife in Mali.

In addition to the joint achievements, some SUN Networks had distinctive successes:

- 1. Civil Society Network (CSN):** The CSN in Mali is one of the most active SUN Networks in the SUN Movement Francophone Africa hub. The CSN works closely with all the other Networks and plays host to youth and the media. For example, the network has raised financing from the SUN Pooled Fund, the WFP, the United States Agency for International Development and *Action Contre la Faim*, among others. One of the CSN's achievements has been to set up a Network of Nutrition Champions, such as local leaders, religious leaders (particularly Imams) and others. The relationships among the CSN, the SUN Government Focal Point and the Government are strong, mutually beneficial and based on the implementation of common activities. Official meetings are held on a monthly or quarterly basis. In addition, there are a number of consultation frameworks in which the CSN actively participates on an ongoing basis. This reinforces the frequency of interactions between the two parties. The Government is also involved in all the Network's activities (joint definition of programmes and targets etc.) at national and regional levels.
- 2. Academia Network (RaRSUN):** Mali is one of the few countries that has a relatively active RaRSUN. The RaRSUN collaborates with the CSN, especially in delivering capacity-building trainings. The RaRSUN also collaborates with the Government, particularly in the review of nutrition plans.
- 3. Business Network (SBN):** Although the Business Network is still establishing itself, clear lines of communication with the SUN Government Focal Point have been established. For example, SBN members have started exploring ways to substitute imported food products with locally produced, highly nutritious foods.



What the country would have done differently

While the bodies of all the sectoral departments participate, through their representatives, in the coordination of nutrition, the institutional anchoring of the multisectoral coordination mechanism for nutrition still faces major difficulties:

- One of the difficulties is that the CCN has an atypical structure because it is convened by the Prime Minister's Office but delegated to the level of the Ministry of Health, which renders its convening power weaker than if it had been placed within the Prime Minister's Office. As a result, the Coordinator of the CCN is more technical than political. To balance this difficulty, it is recommended to either raise the institutional positioning of the SUN Government Focal Point and/or to identify a SUN Government Focal Point representing the Prime Minister. Both strategies would certainly help raise even further the mobilization around nutrition in Mali.
- There were discussions in early 2022 around the establishment of a National Council on Food Security, Nutrition and Social Protection under the Prime Minister, which is a good sign that the institutional anchoring of nutrition is moving in the right direction. However, a discussion needs to take place on its operationalization and ensuring food security does not take precedence over the other areas. Coordination at the subnational level is one of the most important challenges the CCN is facing. Although the coordination bodies exist and are clearly defined in the National Nutrition Policy, their operational capacity at decentralized, and local levels remains low. National-level and regional-level meetings are organized regularly, but coordination meetings are not held at the operational (commune) level.
- There has been duplication of the SUN Networks' work by other frameworks that exist outside the Government's networks, notably the cluster networks set up by United Nations agencies on nutrition, food security, health and emergency response. Although these additional coordination frameworks are set up to focus on specific themes, the duplication weakens the work of the SUN Networks and presents a great challenge for alignment.
- Political instability and insecurity remain major obstacles to prioritizing and implementing nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities.
- It is important to strengthen the collaboration between the Food Safety Commission and the Ministry of Health, as the Commission is coordinating the implementation



of the multisectoral National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PoSAN), adopted in 2019, with six different ministries responsible for various aspects of the PoSAN.

- To support the SUN Focal Point even further in his MSP coordination role, UN Nutrition could help organize meetings twice a year focusing on nutrition

and bringing together all nutrition stakeholders, so that the focus is not only on food security but also on nutrition security. UN Nutrition is also encouraged to convene a meeting with all SUN Networks and the SUN Focal Point at least once a year to reflect on how the Government is progressing and on the level of collaboration among stakeholders.



Adapting and applying the interventions in other settings

The successes of the MSP in Mali can be applicable to other countries, especially if some factors are considered:

- Advocacy to draw attention of the national leaders on nutrition. In Mali, the attention of the President and the Prime Minister has helped establish the various coordination platforms and enabled the positive response to the advocacy efforts in favor of nutrition.
- Developing action plans and establishing monitoring mechanisms through regular meetings.

- Making efforts to broaden the MSP membership. In Mali, the MSP includes active networks comprising youth, media, persons with disabilities and others.
- Designation of a well-positioned and motivated SUN Government Focal Point.
- Consider the nomination of a SUN Government Focal Point, strategically positioned above the sectoral ministry level, for example at the level of the Prime Minister's Office or President's Office.



The role of the SUN Movement in supporting this good practice

The support of the SUN Movement has played a significant role in strengthening the MSP in Mali. For example, the SUN Pooled Fund grants enabled the following achievements:

- The CSA was heavily involved in organizing the 2019 National Nutrition Forum, during which the Prime Minister officially committed to doubling the funds allocated to nutrition and financed the purchase of nutritional inputs up to CFAF 600 million (approximately USD 1 million) in 2020 and the commitment of CFAF 1.2 million (more than USD 2 million) in 2021.
- The CSN was also able to successfully lobby the Government to increase the nutrition budget using the budget analysis exercise that was conducted in 2021, with technical support from the SUN Movement.
- Additionally, 17 committed parliamentarians identified as Nutrition Champions were sensitized and trained on malnutrition, with three of them being women.

- The MSP influenced the design, review and proofreading of various key national development documents. This was made possible through direct high-level lobbying from the CSN with support from donor agencies, ongoing participation in technical and political work sessions on the development of these legal documents, and taking the lead in organizing national-level events on nutrition. Further, the creation of four subnational CSN platforms with their own budgeted strategic plans and mobilization strategies was achieved.

In addition to SUN Pooled Fund grants, the MSP and SUN Government Focal Point have been receiving continuous technical support for the SMS Country Liaison Team (now the Country Action Team), which has enabled access to various capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities. Some technical assistance also was funded through SMS in support of the MSP's action plan, notably on digitization efforts at the subnational level.



Conclusion and next steps



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To address the challenge of the institutional anchoring of the multisectoral coordination mechanisms, the SUN Government Focal Point is organizing a peer-to-peer study trip to Niger to learn from that country's experience in the governance of nutrition. This activity is planned for 2023. The MSP activities in Niger are coordinated by a Focal Point who reports to the President's Office. The SMS Dakar hub is supporting the mission by connecting the teams from both countries, supporting the technical aspects of the mission, and joining the mission.



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Annex 1: Good practice documentation questionnaire

A number of key informant interviews were conducted alongside a review of various national documents. The SMS good practice action brief template was used to document the study. Tailored questions on the functionality of the MSP included:

- Area 1: Local definition of MSP: What does MSP mean in your context? What do you see as the key components of a well-functioning MSP? What do you hope to gain as a member of the MSP?
- Area 2: Governance of MSP: Who is the current coordinator/convenor of your MSP? Is there an action plan available for the MSP? Is there an operating framework/guidance guiding the work of the MSP? What are the reporting lines of the MSP? In which ministry is the SUN Government Focal Point located? Where is the MSP anchored and at what level? What is the engagement of the subnational level in the MSP/how does the MSP function at the subnational level? How is the MSP funded? What accountability mechanisms exist within the MSP? What communication channels are available in the MSP?
- Area 3: Structure of MSP: Who are the members of the MSP? What sectors do they represent? What is the level of frequency for the MSP meetings? How many representatives are there from each stakeholder group? What is the process for including additional members? How often are new members invited?
- Area 4: Achievements/challenges: Have there been any notable achievements as a result of good MSP collaboration? What are some of the challenges that you have faced as an MSP, and what steps did you take to overcome them?
- Area 5: Looking ahead/MSP sustainability: What is needed to further improve the functioning of the MSP? What is needed to sustain the gains made by the MSP?

Scaling Up
NUTRITION

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