

Perspectives on the SUN Movement:
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In this lecture, I describe the evolution of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and its elements. I set out my thinking on the melodies, rhythm and patterns within the Movement and offer a personal perspective on what more is needed as we move forward.

Evolution of the SUN Movement

In 2008 *The Lancet* published its first special series on Maternal and Child Nutrition which highlighted the costs of failure to address under-nutrition, pulled together evidence on the cost-effectiveness of interventions and chastised the international community for failed leadership.

This started to shift the narrative on nutrition from a charitable response to outrage about starving children to more of a rights-based and economic argument. But the primary actors were still divided.

More than 100 individuals came together to set out the new narrative and agreed on a Framework for Scaling Up Nutrition (the United Nations system was a part of, but by no means the leader of, this process) which was launched at the World Bank/International Monetary Fund Spring Meetings in April 2010.

The same group of stakeholders charted a Road Map to advance the Framework: this envisioned countries being in the lead, with donors, civil society, UN system and businesses supporting them. It represented a big shift in the way things are done.

The SUN Movement was launched in September 2010 in New York on the back of a meeting organized by the United States and Ireland to kick off the 1000 days' partnership (focusing attention on good nutrition between the start of pregnancy and a child's second birthday). The Movement grew rapidly. Three years after the birth of the SUN Movement in September 2013, a total of 42 countries have joined the Movement – home to 81 million stunted children equivalent to half of the world's total number stunted children.

Nutrition is on the Move

In the last five years Nutrition has moved from being an issue that is little noticed and rarely prioritized, to one that is seen to have a central role in human and economic development. Many governments, development agencies, foundations, civil society groups, businesses and the research community have moved nutrition firmly up their individual agendas. They understand how vital good nutrition is for good health, education, development, and the global economy and security. They see a real opportunity for change: to eliminate under-nutrition once and for all and to get control of over-weight and obesity which are starting to cause massive ill-health

everywhere. The SUN Movement provides a platform which enables them to work better together, despite their underlying disagreements. What has happened?

I identify four melodies that are now playing at all levels of the Movement: new narrative, transformed ways of working, a focus on outcomes and an eye, always, for the future. I am not sure that we would have predicted them when the journey started in 2009.

New Narrative

First, the narrative is changing: Many nutrition actors are burying their differences and aligning their thinking. They think in terms of a spectrum of malnutrition – unbalanced diets that lead to obesity, functional deficits due to a lack of specific micronutrients or under-nutrition (acute weight loss or slowed foetal or early childhood growth). They see malnutrition as a form of injustice because it brings disadvantages to individuals and societies, and are convinced that sustained improvements in people’s nutrition can be achieved through focused and well-coordinated action that empowers people to take control of their nourishment. They respond to immediate needs with specific remedies that have been tested and shown to work. At the same time, they respond to the underlying causes with empowering strategies that are sensitive to the determinants of malnutrition. They apply these through multiple sectors in ways that reflect people’s (and not professionals’) needs and interests.

Transformative Approach

Second, the approach is more transformative: Stakeholders are aligning their actions, with a view to providing responsive support to high quality national nutrition plans that engage multiple sectors and are adjusted and implemented at district and community levels, through multi-stakeholder platforms which are bounded by transparent principles and call for mutual accountability. They work together in pursuit of an agreed set of results, seek to implement in synergy, monitor progress carefully, take collective credit for achievements, emphasize mutual accountability and undertake robust outcome assessments.

To help the Movement advance, a governance structure is now in place with a 27 member Lead Group nominated by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General and chaired by the Executive Director of UNICEF. A small Secretariat of around 10 professionals supports the Lead Group from Geneva. Four global support networks are actively working to support SUN countries: Donor Network; Civil Society Network; UN Network and Business Network. Each Network is expanding and taking on critical tasks. Communications relating to the SUN Movement are improving. A website has been built which is being increasingly used by SUN countries to update others on progress and share experience.

The transformation is pursued through four processes within SUN countries: One: Creating political and operational platforms, with strong in-country leadership and shared multi-stakeholder spaces where people come together to align their activities and take joint responsibility for scaling up nutrition. Two: Incorporating best practices into national policies for scaling up proven interventions; including the adoption of effective laws and policies. Three: Align actions across sectors around high quality and well-costed country plans, with an agreed

results framework and mutual accountability. Four: Increasing resources for coherent, aligned, effective action and maximum impact, and monitoring implementation. Progress with these processes, and the resulting transformations, is tracked jointly by the SUN countries and the Secretariat.

Focus on Impact

Third, the focus is on impact achieved more than actions done: Practitioners in different sectors see themselves as getting their act together, putting aside their differences and focusing on a common outcome. They are less concerned with their individual visibility and more intent on collective impact: they seek to work together, establishing alliances, empowering each other and making a difference together. Presidents and Prime Ministers, District Commissioners and Mayors, civil society groups and women's leaders are becoming champions for this new way of working because they believe it and see the difference it makes. They are building on the pioneering work of scientists, UN leaders and advocates who previously chastised them for their failure to lead. Now they impatiently demand new scientific analyses and evaluations: they seek to invest more and call for greater international commitment. And so the issue is seen to be relevant – even fashionable.

Results, results, results! All stakeholders in the SUN Movement are keen to demonstrate results in terms of improved rates of under-nutrition in countries. Whilst of course the overall goal of everyone is to see lower levels of malnutrition among all population groups, it is not possible to attribute any changes in trends to the SUN Movement and it will take some years before any changes are likely to become apparent.

There are some good signs. In 16 out of 42 SUN countries, the average annual rate of reduction in stunting among under-five children is decreasing by more than 2% per year. A substantially greater rate of reduction in stunting will be needed, however, if SUN countries are to achieve the global target of 40% reduction by 2025 agreed at the World Health Assembly in 2012.

In addition to the progress in SUN countries, a number of mechanisms have been put in place globally to support progress reporting. A Monitoring & Evaluation Framework has been established for the SUN Movement that will measure effectiveness over the next three years. A baseline for 2013 has been undertaken against which progress on impact, outcome and output will be captured.

One particular area of debate within the SUN Movement concerns the role and influence of specific interests in scaling up nutrition. Some are worried that businesses will be encouraged to direct nutrition policies in a manner which is damaging to nutrition. Conflict of Interest doesn't just apply to business but to all groups who, while sharing the common goal of the SUN Movement, also have specific mandates and agendas, and may demonstrate divergent interests. The governments of SUN countries are already building alliances with business in their countries in many spheres – to support food fortification, to enhance communication of nutrition messages, to develop local production of products to treat severe acute malnutrition. These governments are working out their own arrangements with business to ensure that efforts remain focused on scaling up nutrition.

At a global level, conflict of Interest is the subject of a consultation process which is taking place between April 2013 and February 2014 that seeks to:

- Create a neutral space for all members of the SUN Movement;
- Build a mutual understanding of each stakeholder's objectives;
- Prepare guidance on the practical meaning of engagement in the SUN Movement;
- Explore ways to manage conflicts of interest that may arise.

A long term project

Fourth, in the Lead Group and throughout the Movement, attention is on the future, not just the present: Transforming people's prospects through empowering them for good nutrition is a 10 year plus project. Stakeholders will achieve impact because they are implementing strategies that work together: separate but in concert together, independent but mutually accountable; divergent mandates but coherent interests. The support networks play an important role. Sustaining the Movement requires consistent nurturing; transparency among all; avoidance of harmful conflicts; synergized networks of support; predictable financial and technical backing; and genuine unqualified trust.

Different patterns and rhythms: common features

We can also feel some differences in the patterns and rhythm of the Movement within each country, network and task team. The melodies are played by a different mix of instruments and have their own rhythms in different settings but as the Movement evolves and countries come together to share progress,, six areas, which require focused attention and support from across the Movement, are becoming evident:

1. Nutrition sensitive multi-sectoral approaches: Enhancing people's nutritional status through developing nutrition-sensitive strategies and actions within different sectors. The focus is on negotiating and agreeing Common Results Frameworks at national and sub-national levels, as well as the engagement of multiple sectors and actors.

2. Costing of national nutrition plans and the identification of funding shortfalls: Reinforcing the quality of plans for enhancing nutrition within different sectors through developing, costing and budgeting these plans. Indicating how different stakeholders are responsible for their implementation, using the plans as a basis for mobilizing both domestic and external investment, and (if requested by countries) validating the assumptions and projections in the plans.

3. Scaling up and rolling out implementation of plans with a focus on district and community levels: Moving forward with implementation of prioritized interventions for improving nutrition, as set out in the Common Results Frameworks and national plans, to ensure that results are achieved at community, local and national levels.

4. Tracking of domestic and external funding: Keeping track of, and recording, the mobilization and use of domestic and external investments, checking against prior commitments,

ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively, and linking investments made to results achieved at various levels.

5. Demonstration of results through inter-sectoral monitoring and evaluation: Strengthening systems for monitoring implementation at local and national-levels, using the Common Results Framework as a template, so contributing to global nutrition information systems with data that are credible and recognized as valid by international authorities.

6. Advocacy and communication to sustain high-level engagement: Galvanizing leaders, including national parliamentarians and local councilors, to act for nutrition; encouraging synergy among programme personnel across multiple organizations and sectors, and mobilizing resources around the Common Results Frameworks – through effective advocacy and targeted communication.

I sense that these six areas will underpin the evolution of melodies, mix and rhythm in the rest of 2013 and 2014: they are of interest to SUN countries and Networks. They will be played out in the big theatre of the SUN Global gathering in New York 23 – 24 September where participants will make music together – sharing and learning from one another, and partners will listen and join in, appreciating achievements, challenges and requests for support.

Back to the Future

Where will this effort go?

Countries in the SUN Movement are working hard on the kinds of transformations that many have sought for decades – transformations that will result in massive reductions in people's risks of being malnourished. Nothing new But they are serious and want to move ahead, and they demand the science that helps them choose what works and makes it happen.

The donors are more active following the Nutrition for Growth meeting in London June 8th 2013 and are seeking a mechanism to follow up on commitments, an annual state of nutrition report, more research and analysis to find effective ways to advance the agenda, including better understandings of the links between agriculture or food security and nutrition, a careful analysis of public private partnerships, examination of different systems for implementation, a global and networked nutrition information system to track progress, an examination of ways in which women's power improves and climate change undermines nutrition – and a detailed examination of ways in which civil society can increase the political attention given to nutrition.

There will be continuing challenges with matching the countries' wish to move forward and the donors' needs for concrete accountability. But the exciting issues will all emerge at the country level given that for so many governments nutrition is a big and difficult issue, and they seem determined to move ahead with it despite the difficulties. These are not theoretical "what if" exercises in a postgraduate teaching programme. They are being dealt with in real time. It will be important for all the SUN Movement support networks to align behind the countries as they seek to resolve these issues.

What more is needed?

Analysis and judgment are priorities in order to build the evidence-base for which interventions work and to reflect the real-life practice of SUN countries. By observing and analyzing practice in the different contexts of SUN countries, it is possible to identify and articulate key elements of success. When I speak to SUN country teams, this is what they most want – to learn from the real-life experience of others which they can adapt and adopt in their own contexts.

Shared confidence and collective action are needed to strengthen the progress that has been made and to inspire others to act. It is important that those who have so much to offer can trust national governments, feel inspired to join the Movement, put aside their skepticism and are reassured by the arrangements in place to protect good nutritional practices.

Widening and deepening of the Movement will continue. Tajikistan joined the SUN Movement in the last few weeks, several more countries are poised to join. Stakeholders in the Movement are working in an increasingly sophisticated manner to deepen the impact of scaling up.

Sustaining Momentum

National governments want to take advantage now of the new political space that exists. How can the momentum be sustained? Will it have the desired impact on levels of malnutrition? That is up to all of us, but the will of many to work together for the fair and just nutrition of both women and children is enormous, and there is no holding back the political will that is building for concerted action and for results. It is, quite simply, a privilege to be sharing this transformation with thousands of others and to be feeling and seeing it take place.
