

FEATURE:

SUN Donor Network Resource Tracking

Background and Aim of the Resource Tracking Exercise

In 2013, a SUN Donor Network working group on resource tracking developed a common methodology for tracking financial investments in nutrition to increase accountability and improve tracking of external development assistance for nutrition. The exercise was rooted in a decision by the SUN Senior Officials Group (January 2012) to find an improved way to track nutrition resources, primarily those resources allocated through other sectors.

Presently, the OECD DAC sector code for nutrition (12240) falls under health and is primarily used for direct nutrition interventions, as there is no common, agreed-upon approach to track resources for “nutrition-sensitive” development assistance, which aims to leverage investments in other sectors to do “something different” for nutrition. Efforts to improve nutrition in other sectors such as food security, agriculture and social protection are often not counted as nutrition investments, even if nutrition actions are incorporated. This omission results in two problems: 1) an inaccurate estimate of investments allocated towards nutrition; and 2) no incentive to innovate or identify opportunities to incorporate nutrition into activities in other sectors.

Evidence on nutrition has moved forward significantly since the 2008 *Lancet* Series on maternal and child undernutrition, and there is now consensus about the key effective nutrition interventions. In June 2013, the *Lancet* released a new maternal and child undernutrition series, providing additional evidence that reinforces the importance of scaling up both direct nutrition interventions and nutrition-sensitive actions, in line with what countries in the SUN Movement have learned.

The SUN Donor Network resource tracking working group, chaired by Canada and the European Commission, developed a methodology over the course of 2013 that includes a decision to use the OECD DAC code for nutrition (12240) to reflect spending on direct nutrition, despite its limitations, and to focus on developing a manual approach to quantifying nutrition-sensitive spending. The methodology was approved by the SUN Senior Officials Group in December 2013.

The methodology for calculating nutrition-sensitive investments is complex. As there is no single sector code for nutrition-sensitive programmes, a list of codes that relate to nutrition was combined with keyword searches to identify programmes that warranted further investigation. Each programme that *might* be nutrition-sensitive was manually assessed by checking project documents. The donor methodology states that investments can only be classified as nutrition-sensitive if a project includes a nutrition objective or indicator, contributes to nutrition-sensitive outcomes and aims to improve nutrition for women, children or adolescent girls.

Findings

For 2014, SUN Donor Network members have reported on nutrition spending (USD) for calendar years 2010 and 2012 (commitments and disbursements)ⁱ. 2010 provides the baseline for when the SUN Movement began; and 2012 provides a comparative year. Nine bilateral donors (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States), the European Commission, two foundations (the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation) and the World Bank participated in this exercise, although the US has applied a different methodologyⁱⁱ.

Two categories of investments were reported on:

- Nutrition-specific (DAC code 12240); and
- Nutrition-sensitive (methodology applied).

Amounts in USD (\$1000s) - based on exchange rates used by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC)

DONOR	Category 1: Nutrition Specific				Category 2: Nutrition Sensitive			
	2010		2012		2010		2012	
	Commitments ²⁰	Disbursements	Commitments	Disbursements	Commitments	Disbursements	Commitments	Disbursements
AUSTRALIA								
TOTAL:	-	6,672	-	16,516	-	49,903	-	114,553
CANADA²¹								
TOTAL:	61,280	98,846	163,118	205,463	49,053	80,179	76,948	90,171
EUROPEAN UNION²²								
TOTAL:	67,060	50,889	24,075	8	425,917	392,563	543,883	309,209
<i>Development:</i>	67,060	50,889	24,075	8	95,536	62,182	240,066	81,346
<i>Humanitarian:</i>	-	-	-	-	330,381	330,381	303,817	227,863
FRANCE								
TOTAL:	3,585	2,895	4,737	3,852	23,340	23,003	27,141	27,141
GERMANY²³								
TOTAL:	4,550	2,987	1,687	2,719	19,104	18,856	37,951	29,139
IRELAND²⁴								
TOTAL:	7,691	7,691	7,565	7,565	34,806	34,806	45,412	45,412
NETHERLANDS								
TOTAL:	4,487	2,661	36,314	4,007	381	2,484	80,674	20,160
SWITZERLAND²⁵								
TOTAL:	-	-	-	-	23,976	21,099	43,733	28,800
UNITED KINGDOM								
TOTAL:	20,762	39,860	12,925	63,127	164,992	302,215	246,065	412,737
<i>Development:</i>					68,068	146,140	95,778	253,192
<i>Humanitarian:</i>					96,924	156,075	150,287	159,545
UNITED STATES²⁶								
TOTAL:	414,730	(8,820)	339,879	63,380	3,259,518	TBD	3,157,153	TBD
BILL AND MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION								
TOTAL:	19,540	50,060	49,960	80,610	23,330	12,320	18,560	34,860
CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND FOUNDATION²⁷								
TOTAL:	6,402	980	36,996	5,481	-	-	-	-
WORLD BANK								
TOTAL:	54,513	61,160	248,171	21,873	1,928,471	-	852,750	-

²⁰ All donors reporting to OECD DAC use the definitions for commitments and disbursements set out in paras 90-98 of the CRS reporting directives at [http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DCD-DAC\(2013\)15-FINAL-ENG.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DCD-DAC(2013)15-FINAL-ENG.pdf). Multi-year projects may be committed in one year but disbursed over several years. There is some variation in how disbursements against multiannual commitments are reported. For example, the EU 2012 disbursement figure represents all disbursements made against their 2012 commitments, regardless of the year in which they are disbursed. All other donors have reported the total of their disbursements in 2012, including disbursements against commitments made in previous years.

²¹ The commitment reflects the total amount reserved for this investment. In order to determine if the amount committed is fully disbursed, disbursements for each year of the investment would need to be reviewed.

As in Canada multiple codes are used to classify investments, a small proportion of the budget for nutrition sensitive investments may be captured in the nutrition specific total. As such, these investments would not have been considered for the nutrition sensitive figures.

²² The N4G baseline covers European Union (EU) commitments only. The EU commitments are firm agreements with a partner that entail a particular budget. The reported disbursements of years 2010 and 2012 correspond to the sum of the payments made on the commitments on years 2010 and 2012 only. For humanitarian assistance, commitments are disbursed within a period of maximum 24 months.

²³ The N4G-relevant baseline covers BMZ commitment only: nutrition-specific commitments (2010)—USD 1,766; and nutrition-sensitive commitments (2010)—USD 19,104. The totals for Germany do not include humanitarian assistance.

²⁴ Ireland operates a cash year, so commitments are equal to disbursements.

²⁵ These figures for Switzerland are provisory. They include a significant proportion of nutrition-sensitive investments accounted for under "humanitarian aid" in the DAC Creditor Reporting System, such as in-kind provision of Swiss dairy products.

²⁶ For the US Government, disbursement data as reported under DAC code 12240 represents only a portion of total disbursements for nutrition specific investments and does not include nutrition investments in HIV/AIDS or school feeding. Also for the USG, data in the new area of nutrition sensitive investments is not currently available; the USG is developing a method for tracking these investments.

²⁷ Both CIFF commitments and disbursements have been included in terms of contracted (or transferred) amounts for a single year; historically CIFF did not enter into multi-year contracts.

SUN Donor Network: Investments in Nutrition, 2010 and 2012 Reporting

The numbers indicate an increase in spending from 2010 to 2012 for both categories. Total nutrition-specific investments (disbursements) among reporting donors increased from USD 325 million (2010) to USD 411 million (2012), representing 27%. For nutrition-sensitive investments, there was an increase from USD 937 million (2010) to USD 1.1 billion (2012), representing 19%. This total excludes the US figures, which used a different methodologyⁱⁱⁱ.

Investments in nutrition seem to be on a positive upward trend. With analysis only available for two years, however, it is not possible, at this point, to reach any definitive conclusions.

Challenges

As expected, the SUN Donor Network faced several challenges^{iv} with the application of the methodology and recognises its limitations^v. For example:

- Stringent nutrition-sensitive criteria sometimes excluded projects that were clearly nutrition-sensitive due to their lack of focus on actions “aimed at individuals” (e.g. advocacy and research, nutrition tracking systems, nutrition products);
- An inefficient keyword search that failed to identify significant additional spending^{vi};
- Variability among donors in the size, number and type of components within projects and whether these projects should be classified as nutrition-specific only, sensitive or have relevant portions allocated to each category. Given the wide range of challenges and unique reporting approaches of individual donors, no standard approach was applied; however, donors agreed to ensure that such projects are not double-counted and to maintain consistency in the application of the methodology.

Although partially mitigated by a detailed methodology with stringent criteria for inclusion, the approach is subjective. Furthermore, participating donors are different in their objective, organisational structure and tracking and reporting mechanisms, and therefore it is inherently challenging to create a single reporting methodology that can be universally applied.

Outcomes and Implications for the SUN Movement

This methodology represents an approach for donors to track external nutrition development assistance in a transparent, consistent/comparable manner. Improved tracking of donor spending on nutrition is important not only for accountability purposes but also to measure progress in mobilising resources and to improve the quality of nutrition aid by highlighting gaps and inspiring changes to investments in other sectors in a way that will impact nutrition outcomes. Despite methodology limitations, the Donor Network feels this is a significant step forward on tracking resources and developing a common approach.

Moving forward

The SUN Donor Network has already discussed possible revisions to the methodology: for example, potentially developing descriptions to clarify what classifies as a nutrition objective or indicator and a standardised list of types of objectives, outcomes, indicators and activities that are nutrition-sensitive to avoid inconsistent classification.

Due to the resource-heavy and time-consuming nature of the exercise, donors have also begun to discuss the sustainability of the endeavour and ways to make the process more manageable, including potentially altering the frequency of reporting from every year to alternate years.

Donors have also discussed how they can use the data to discuss the specifics of how to work together to make investments in other sectors more sensitive to nutrition.

The SUN Donor Network plans to present some of the data by country in the first Global Nutrition Report to be launched in November 2014. The Independent Expert Group working on the Global Nutrition Report will review the data before publication and may make suggestions for how to improve the methodology.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Please see SUN DONOR NETWORK Methodology and Guidance Note to Track Global Investments in Nutrition.

ⁱⁱ The US Government was not able to follow this methodology due to the disproportionately large burden of personnel time that would be required to complete this exercise. Instead, the development of the USG nutrition-specific and -sensitive budgets was a collaborative effort and included participation by the US Agency for International Development, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Departments of State, Treasury and Agriculture. Based on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive definitions consistent with the 2008 Lancet series, departments and agencies analysed programmes to identify resources attributable to nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive interventions. For nutrition-specific programming, the following funding streams were considered: USAID Development Assistance; USAID Economic Support Fund; USAID Global Health Programs; USAID Community Development Funding; USAID Food for Peace Title II/Community Development Resilience Fund; USAID Food for Peace Title II/Emergency; USAID International Disaster Assistance; Millennium Challenge Corporation; State: Global Health Programs (PEPFAR); Treasury: Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP).

Departments and agencies also provided descriptions of activities being identified as either nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive to accompany resource tables. Programmes were then further reviewed by technical experts and policymakers to ensure that resources were fully consistent with the definitions.

The definitions, consistent with the Lancet 2013 Maternal and Child nutrition series, are:

Nutrition specific:

- Interventions or programs that address the immediate determinants of fetal and child nutrition and development—adequate food and nutrient intake, feeding, caregiving and parenting practices, and low burden of infectious diseases
- Examples: adolescent, preconception, and maternal health and nutrition; maternal dietary or micronutrient supplementation; promotion of optimum breastfeeding; complementary feeding and responsive feeding practices and stimulation; dietary supplementation; diversification and micronutrient supplementation or fortification for children; treatment of severe acute malnutrition; prevention and management; nutrition in emergencies

Nutrition sensitive:

- Interventions or programs that address the underlying determinants of fetal and child nutrition and development—food security; adequate caregiving resources at the maternal, household and community levels; and access to health services and a safe and hygienic environment—and incorporate specific nutrition goals and actions
- Nutrition-sensitive programs can serve as delivery platforms for nutrition-specific interventions, potentially increasing their scale, coverage, and effectiveness
- Examples: agriculture and food security; social safety nets; early child development; maternal mental health; women’s empowerment; child protection; schooling; water, sanitation, and hygiene; health and family planning services

ⁱⁱⁱ Please see endnote ii above.

^{iv} Additional to the challenges listed, the following were also encountered:

- It was of interest that many programmes had nutrition analysis in the context or in the language of the project description, but it did not follow through to programme design and monitoring, suggesting that a key word search alone would be less accurate.
- It should also be noted that many programmes had one objective covering nutrition-specific work but nutrition did not always cut across other objectives; thus, the sensitive category is a combination of broader programmes with direct nutrition components as well as truly nutrition-sensitive investments that aim to do something differently.
- There are also problems with classifying all funding coded to Basic Nutrition as nutrition specific, as the definitions of the sector code and accepted interventions do not match.

^v In addition to the limitations raised, the following needs to be noted.

- This reporting does not capture core funding for UN agencies and IFIs, which support many nutrition programmes. Further, with non-governmental organizations and SUN countries also committed to reporting on their investments in nutrition, the resource tracking work presented here is just one piece of a broader picture. In addition, this was a retrospective exercise and does not include any projections or planning figures for countries, donors or others.

^{vi} Suggestions have been made to exclude this step and expand the CRS code.