

SUN Country Network Meeting

Report of the 20th Meeting 27-31st July 2015

The 20th meeting of the SUN Country Network took place from the 27th to the 31st July 2015. The meeting involved 11 two-hour sessions by tele and videoconference: seven in English, three in French and one in Spanish.

In all, there were 194 participants in the meeting from 41 countries [Bangladesh; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Chad; Congo Brazzaville; Democratic Republic of Congo; El Salvador; Ethiopia; Ghana; Guatemala; Guinea-Bissau; Guinea-Conakry; Haiti; Indonesia; Kenya; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mozambique; Myanmar; Namibia; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Sri Lanka; Swaziland; Tajikistan; The Gambia; Vietnam; Yemen; Zambia; and Zimbabwe]. Participants from 13 countries (Cambodia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire; Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and the Indian State of Maharashtra) were not able to join. 2 of them (Peru and the Indian State of Maharashtra) sent their written contribution to the Country Network discussion.

51% of the participants were employed by their national governments, 29% came from United Nations entities, 11% from civil society, 5% from donors, 3% from academia and 1% from business.

The Meeting agenda was as follows: 1) Thematic Discussion: "Development of the updated SUN Movement Strategy 2016-2020". 2) Information about current priorities of the SUN Movement.

Thematic discussion: "Development of the updated SUN Movement Strategy 2016-2020"

Participants in the meeting were invited to reflect on two or three questions from the following:

1. What will accountability for SUN countries mean in practical terms (i.e., accountability lines, mechanisms, leverage) given the context of the voluntary nature of the Movement?
2. How can the SUN Movement better support national common results framework enabling alignment of domestic and external investments and actions?
3. How can the SUN movement assist countries to maximize the impact of current investments while scaling up domestic and external resources for nutrition? What is the role of the SUN Movement to make domestic and external financial tracking in SUN countries more effective and sustainable?
4. The SUN Movement encourages learning and sharing among SUN countries. How can you (SUN countries) take advantage of this common learning space to gain from the knowledge of others and at the same time contribute your experiences? How can the SUN Movement improve in facilitating this cross-learning?

I. Country perspectives

- 1. What will accountability for SUN countries mean in practical terms (i.e., accountability lines, mechanisms, leverage) given the context of the voluntary nature of the Movement?**

In-country accountability

- Countries (20) referred to the importance of **Multi-Stakeholder Platforms** to improve in-country accountability;
- 10 Countries highlighted the need to **set up in-country networks** and to coordinate with existing structures in order to convene multiple sectors & stakeholders and foster accountability (10).
- Countries (19) emphasized the need to **report** on how SUN principles are integrated and operationalised in-country, and on how the lessons acquired or triggered from participation in SUN activities are reflected at the national and sub-national level. Countries also highlighted the importance to report on implementation of the nutrition plans at decentralized level (9).

In-country Transparency of information

- Most of the countries (28 out of 41 who participated in the calls) referred to the importance of enhancing **information systems at country-level** to foster accountability.
- Improving in-country **monitoring and evaluation systems and frameworks of the Common Result Frameworks** are interesting ways to hold stakeholders of the Movement accountable (20).

High political level advocacy

- **Countries mentioned increased high level political engagement** as a way to enforce accountability mechanisms (9). It was also suggested that an **advocacy at the global level** of the Movement could influence national efforts to scale up nutrition in innovative ways (7).
- It was also proposed to renew the commitments of the members to the SUN Movement on a regular basis (2).
- Similarly, Countries (8) mentioned that **tracking budget allocations** could help measure commitment.

Self-assessment (SA) and commitments

- **Countries felt that the SUN Movement self-assessment** was considered as a useful way to keep the MSP accountable, and to reflect on the country's performance to improve nutrition (11). However, countries mentioned that it needed to be strengthened (and adapted) in a way that reflects the maturity of the Movement in some countries (7). I.e.: Countries suggested the SA could also **reflect commitments** specific to national priorities and results obtained on the grounds (6).

2. How can the SUN Movement better support national common results framework enabling alignment of domestic and external investments and actions?

Knowledge and guidance support

- Most of the countries (30) considered that **guidance** on key elements of a comprehensive Common Result Frameworks was needed.
- Countries mentioned that there is a need to have **evidence-based information available** to provide appropriate guidelines on how to establish a CRF and how to implement it (14) and asked to better **share existing CRFs** (8).
- **Countries suggested training to develop a quality CRF** was necessary (6) and highlighted the need for sustained technical support to ensure concrete outcomes. (2).

- Countries expressed the need for **support on definition of indicators and Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks of the CRF (12)**, including (7) countries with a specific view to monitor implementation and inform the policy cycle.

Sectoral and stakeholder alignment

- **Countries identified in-country alignment with existing CRF** as a requirement for further external and domestic alignment (6).
- Countries mentioned the alignment of the national Networks with the National CRF could be facilitated by SMS (5).

3. How can the SUN movement assist countries to maximize the impact of current investments while scaling up domestic and external resources for nutrition? What is the role of the SUN Movement to make domestic and external financial tracking in SUN countries more effective and sustainable?

Experience sharing

- Countries can benefit from sharing with one another the steps undertaken in-country to increase investment for nutrition. Countries (8) mentioned that **learning from the experiences of other SUN countries which had success stories in terms of impact** should be continued. .

Building in-country capacity

- Countries (3) proposed that the SUN Movement could contribute the **capacity building of national stakeholders to ensure adequate planning and budgeting** with considerations for the national nutrition priorities; and local actors to **analyze the impact of investments, resource mobilization, data analysis, and for achieving the established results**. This can be facilitated either by direct technical support or facilitating exchange of experiences among SUN Countries.

Funding Mechanisms

- Countries (3) reported that funding mechanisms should be linked to national priorities and expressed the interest to learn more about the new international financing initiatives (Catalytic Fund, Global Financing Facility, Power of Nutrition, UNITLIFE, etc.).

Support Advocacy for Resource Mobilization

- Countries (13) reported that the role of the SUN Movement is to **mobilize high-level advocacy both nationally and in the international fora to maximize the impact of current investments for nutrition**.
- It has been reported that **resource mobilization for nutrition-specific interventions have proven to be easier than for nutrition-sensitive interventions**. The Movement can make **advocacy tools available to facilitate interaction with other sectors** (Education, Social Affairs, and Food Security, etc.) to include nutrition in their budget planning phase, and during monitoring and evaluation.

Track allocations and expenditures

- Countries reported that in order to support maximizing investments, **tracking allocations for nutrition needed to come first** (6), by supporting the costing of national plans, (1); by mapping and monitoring of investments and implementation of all the development partners in-country (2); and by developing an off-budget tracking exercise (1).
- The need to provide an exhaustive review of tracking expenditure progress (1) was also reported by the countries.
- Countries (2) stated that linking impacts to financial tracking tools was useful to identify innovative ways of Scaling up nutrition.

4. The SUN Movement encourages learning and sharing among SUN countries. How can you (SUN countries) take advantage of this common learning space to gain from the knowledge of others and at the same time contribute your experiences? How can the SUN Movement improve in facilitating this cross-learning?

SUN Movement Tools and Activities for learning

- Countries (12) reported that **several of the tools and learning activities initiated by the SUN Movement Secretariat have proven to be useful to share experiences**: the SUN Movement website, In Practice Briefs, the SUN Movement Newsletter, social media pages and Learning Routes.
- Countries mentioned the SUN website could be improved by integrating **Knowledge Management tools** and making it a resource centre for SUN countries (11).
- Regional workshops **bring together SUN Countries in similar situations** were welcomed (4). Regularized **Regional meetings** could be an opportunity for SUN countries to interact and learn from one another.
- The **SUN Country Network Meetings** were reported to be a good entry point for valuable exchange with SUN Countries (2). However, alternative methods could be considered to carry the discussions forward in an effective manner.
- **Global Gatherings could be organized in SUN Countries** (and not necessarily in Italy) to gain traction around nutrition and garner Government support to mobilize in-country resources (1).
- Countries (11) requested the need to better **synthesize the experiences from SUN Countries and simplify the key messages**. Lessons learnt from participation in SUN activities need to be simplified and advocated in the right manner to the different audiences (e.g. how investment in nutrition can promote intersectorality and will lead to increase in the Gross Domestic Product).

Foster Cross-fertilization and Learning

- Countries (37) confirmed that role of the SUN Movement is to foster learning among SUN Countries by bringing them into the common space. Countries reported that **face-to-face learning visits including regional workshops were the most preferred exercise** among countries as it provides an opportunity to appreciate the reality of the context. (20).
- Countries expressed interest to learn from the **successes of the countries who have progressed well** in addressing the malnutrition effectively (11) and from their **neighbours with similar problems and solutions** (5)

Other ideas coming from different countries are listed there:

- Case studies can be conducted among different SUN Countries who share a similar background and nutritional situation to draw the lessons learnt (1).
- It was also reported (1) that the SUN Movement could also encourage the creation of **peer-to-peer partnerships** for least developed countries to benefit from opportunities and economic support.
- A **Regional facilitator** can be appointed for the SUN Network to facilitate effective communication among SUN Countries in the region (1).
- Global Networks need to be actively involved in the lessons learned by sharing their activities in SUN Countries (1).

Improving the Common Learning Space

- **Regular webinars** on different issues could be an interactive solution to effectively engage SUN Countries (2).
- Relevant information on existing trainings can be systematically shared within the members of the Movement, and more **trainings can be organized for the different stakeholders** to facilitate their actions (7).
- **Online courses can be created for policy makers, planners, and managers** (1), and a **common learning e-platform** can be developed to enhance the capacity of all program planners to initiate discussions and have quick solutions (1).

Other ideas coming from different countries are listed there:

- A **database mapping SUN Countries' needs and matching it with the SUN Countries' strengths** can be established and made available for countries to access (1).
- As **language remains a barrier for non-anglophone, -francophone and -hispanophone countries** in the Movement – more information should be made available in the national language (when possible) (1).
- The SUN Movement was encouraged to promote the international recognition of SUN countries with outstanding performance with SUN processes (1), and awards could be granted for SUN countries with best experiences (1).