The SUN Movement Strategy and Roadmap (2016-2020) aims to build in-country capabilities so that actions to end malnutrition are fit for the challenge. Indeed, all SUN Countries are committed to ensuring key action across sectors can be coordinated using a Common Results Framework (CRF). This ambition is reflected in the third strategic objective of the SUN Movement. To this end, the 26th meeting of the SUN Country Network focused its thematic discussion on implementing nutrition actions aligned with common results and national goals by exploring challenges and bottlenecks encountered in the development of CRFs; how monitoring and alignment of actions in countries takes place in practice; and, how SUN Countries are learning from past experiences. 312 participants from 45 SUN Countries and 2 Indian States came together in March 2017, where participants stressed the value added of having a CRF in place to guide nutrition planning for improved coordination of multi-stakeholder efforts and resources for joint nutrition actions. Emphasis was also placed on the utility of CRFs as connectors for various sectors to translate global commitments and targets into national contexts – for results and lasting human impact.

BACKGROUND

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda are inter-linked and indivisible. By nature, they require multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboration. Over the next thirteen years, countries will mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, ensuring that no one is left behind. Nutrition is central to the Agenda, with 12 of 17 SDGs containing relevant indicators. Nutrition is crucial to the attainment of the SDGs. Since the establishment of the SUN Movement in 2010, there has been a resurgence of efforts to effectively allocate resources and align actions behind national nutrition priorities. A multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to tackling malnutrition is the new normal and results are best achieved when actors agree on and coalesce around a set of common results.

The various documents that can make up a country’s CRF is the point of reference for all sectors and stakeholders as they collaborate to deliver on a set of expected results. The process of developing a CRF involves bringing the plans of different sectors together and facilitating dialogue between a range of stakeholders. This is essential to inform the different phases of the policy and budget cycle for ending malnutrition, as outlined in figure 1. This process encourages all policy-makers and implementers to start with what exists and continuously improve for impact. Therefore, the way common results are developed and how they look in concrete terms is unique to each country. Regardless of where or how it manifests itself, each step and interaction in the process of negotiating a CRF adds value to the national policy and budget cycle. Regardless of its form, it is commonly understood that a CRF includes several key ingredients (as outlined in figure 2) and lessons learnt are emerging from many SUN Countries on what makes a robust CRF.

Figure 1
A well-developed CRF can be a powerful vehicle for national stakeholders to translate policy into action and results; to ensure accountability to each other and to those most affected by malnutrition; and to mobilise resources.

**CURRENT TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING A CRF**

As part of its knowledge management support to the SUN Movement, EHN produced a series of case studies about countries, which were at different stages of developing CRFs in 2015. These studies have been further elaborated and developed into audio podcasts and video interviews to highlight key learnings from three phases - development, implementation and evaluation and strengthening. The MQSUN Consortium have also produced a guidance note for developing a CRF based on their experience in working with SUN Countries.

Building on these elements, a Checklist on the criteria and characteristics of “good” national nutrition plans has been released for discussion with policy makers in national planning bodies, line ministries and with nutrition stakeholders involved in planning processes. The aim of this Checklist is to assist with the systematic review of existing planning documents as well as to provide guidance for the development of new ones.

**OVERVIEW OF THE TELECONFERENCE**

The 26th SUN Country Network Meeting discussed progress across SUN Countries in terms of planning and implementing their CRFs. Since countries are at different stages, and therefore face different challenges, discussions were tailored to address:

- **Challenges and bottlenecks encountered** when developing a CRF, and how actors in the SUN Movement (from SUN Networks, the SUN Secretariat and technical assistance providers) can support SUN Countries;

- For those countries that have a CRF, the discussion focused on how SUN Countries have **advanced** – from the agreed plan to the implementation phase; how the monitoring of aligned actions at both national and sub-national levels has progressed; and how the development of the CRF has helped to mobilise resources for nutrition;

- For those countries who have been implementing and monitoring their CRFs for some years, the discussion focused on how SUN Countries are learning from past experiences to ensure quality and to achieve impact, as well as how new challenges are being addressed.

![Diversity of participants*](image)

* Percentages are indicative only and aim to demonstrate diversity of participation. Stakeholder figures represent all participants and sectoral figures represent participants from sectors.
The discussion also looked at crosscutting considerations, such as how parliamentarians have been engaged in efforts and the value they have brought to the process; the role of nutrition champions and implementers across different sectors in accelerating the development and implementation of plans; feedback on the Checklist, as mentioned above, and how it can support national planning efforts.

**KEY POINTS FROM THE DISCUSSIONS**

A number of SUN Countries reported to have their CRF in the form of an enabling multi-sectoral strategic document for nutrition, that maps out activities and contributions of the different actors from the government in addition to external partners. Depending on the country context, the CRF is called a Pact (in Mauritania), a Reference Framework (in Burkina Faso), a Roadmap (in Gabon), a Strategy (in Pakistan, Viet Nam, and Zambia), a Policy (in Papua New Guinea and Zimbabwe), an Action Plan (in Yemen, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Malawi and Nepal), or a Programme (in Indonesia, Mozambique, and in Kyrgyzstan). It was reported that the value added of having a CRF in place to guide nutrition planning in the country is a better coordination of efforts and resources for joint nutrition actions.

The CRF was also perceived as a connector of different plans of various sectors which translates global commitments and targets to national contexts – to ensure results. Senegal’s CRF, the Multi-sector Strategic Plan for Nutrition 2016-2021 enables the mainstreaming of nutrition into various Governmental sectors. In Sierra Leone, the Food and Nutrition Security plan covering a 5-year-period outlines annual realistic targets to be achieved, and is aligned with the National Prosperity Programme 2013-2015. Kenya’s National Nutrition Action Plan 2012-2017 identifies coordination among sectors as one of the specific objectives of the Plan. Some countries, including Bangladesh, mentioned that developing a CRF ensures a programme’s monitoring across sectors.

**CHALLENGES AND BOTTLENECKS TO OVERCOME**

Although an established CRF has its benefits when in place, SUN Countries reported various bottlenecks that need to be overcome to agree on joint outcomes for improved nutrition. Despite the fact that nutrition is a multi-sectoral endeavour, the persisting lack of ownership for this agenda continues to be a challenge. This often arises from a lack of capacity and technical expertise on nutrition in the non-traditional sectors, with very few well-informed nutrition-focused personnel at the departmental level to drive multi-sectoral cooperation for nutrition.

With reduced commitment from sectors, adequate resources do not get allocated for the implementation of prioritised activities. Indonesia overcame this challenge by ensuring that line ministries and institutions allocate approximately 10 per cent of their budget for health and nutrition programmes, at both national and sub-national levels. Mauritania ensured that the CRF was costed to determine the ‘price tag’ of scaling up nutrition interventions for adequate coverage for all women, men and their families. Ivory Coast recently held a roundtable event with donor agencies and institutions to ensure external partners align their resources behind the national priorities and support the financing of their CRF.

Sustaining the government and people’s commitment to the CRF is essential for continued results. The high staff turn-over and leadership in line ministries and institutions can lead to changes in the implementation and priority placed on a nutrition policy and programme. Some SUN Countries (including Ivory Coast, Somalia, Mali, Togo, and Guinea Conakry) stressed that the integration of the CRF into the National Development Plan is essential to ensure the sustained implementation of actions. To protect the CRF as a nonpartisan agenda, Mali, Congo, and Senegal, reported to involve members of Parliament in the development process of the strategy and accompanying action plan.

In the context of SUN Countries facing emergencies, fragility or recurring crises, the challenge of addressing the dwindling resources is a constant battle. The Government is unable to allocate funds to scale up activities that mitigate nutrition impact as identified in the face of a deteriorating economic situation. To address this, South Sudan suggested that the CRF must identify the emergency responses to be framed in a broader development agenda and not be executed as a siloed intervention. This allows the Government to anticipate crises and enables them to be prepared for a post-disaster context.

**THE CRF AS AN ACCOUNTABILITY TOOL**

Bangladesh intends to use the CRF as an accountability tool, which will also monitor the nutrition-relevant programme implementation across various sectors.

For the CRF to serve as an effective and efficient accountability mechanism, Mozambique suggests that, in addition to identifying the roles of line ministries, it is vital to define the right indicators which will enable sectors to contribute towards the reduction of malnutrition.

Indonesia’s accountability mechanism is in place through a Presidential Decree (No. 7 of 1999) and the evaluation mechanism is regulated by the Minister of
Home Affairs (Decree No. 34 of 2011), which includes evaluation of plan of actions, measurement, reporting, and the achievement of targets, and performance of institutions.

Ethiopia has a strategy that presents a multi-sectoral nutrition scorecard. This scorecard is available at the district, regional, and national levels, and enables the comparison of performance inter-regionally, and across districts.

Zambia’s recently developed multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder monitoring and evaluation framework of the CRF will be implemented in selected districts. To facilitate the reporting of monitoring indicators within the different sectors, capacity-building of key players at the community level has been a priority.

CONCLUSIONS AND TAKEAWAY MESSAGES

According the differing level of SUN Countries in the development or implementation of their CRFs, the discussions highlight different types of challenges and helpful elements for countries.

Based on results from the teleconference, countries can be classified into three broad groups:

- **21 out of the 50 countries who participated in the teleconference are in the process of developing their CRFs or are exploring developing a CRF.** As preliminary steps, they are highlighting the importance to have a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder platform for nutrition in place, to be able to mobilise different kind of actors (such as NGOs, academics, development partners or parliamentarians) or some Ministries (such as ministries of the Interior or finance) and define their respective roles. They also mention the necessity to access financial resources for preliminary studies and to integrate the CRF into National Development Plans so as to ensure that governmental commitment is maintained. They also highlight the importance of looking at global initiatives and targets. Having an identified project lead is also crucial. Some recommendations for countries that are at this stage includes looking at the Checklist on the criteria and characteristics of good national nutrition plans, focusing especially on areas 1, 2 and 3 of this checklist relating to: (1) **Situation analysis and policy and programming review.** Clarity and relevance of priorities, goals, objectives, interventions and programming strategies selected, based on a sound situation analysis; (2) **Stakeholders’ engagement and high-level political commitment processes.** Soundness and inclusiveness of the development and endorsement processes for the national nutrition plan; (3) **Cost and budgetary framework.** Soundness and feasibility of the financial framework for the national nutrition plan.

- **13 countries out of 50 are implementing their CRFs.** These countries stress the importance of having operational plans that improve the collaborative way of working together and that include communication strategies. The core challenges faced across the board can be seen as the mobilisation of domestic and external funding to implement the plan and the identification and availability of functional and technical capacities. Some recommendations for SUN Countries that are at this stage include using the Checklist on the criteria and characteristics of good national nutrition plans, focusing on areas 1, 2 and 3 of this checklist, in addition to area 4 on (4) **Implementation and management arrangements.** Soundness of arrangements and systems for implementing and managing actions contained in the national nutrition plan.

- **Finally, 18 countries are evaluating or strengthening their CRFs.** Challenges in prioritising indicators and those that will contribute towards strong results in the fight malnutrition were stressed. Setting up monitoring or accountability mechanisms was also mentioned as one of the main challenges. One recommendation for SUN Countries that are at this stage is to look at the Checklist on the criteria and characteristics of good national nutrition plans, focusing on area 5, which looks at (5) **Monitoring, evaluation, operational research and review.** Soundness of review, accountability, learning and evaluation mechanisms and how results are used.