

*Accelerating progress towards
achieving SDG 2:
Lessons from national implementation*



MAIN TAKE AWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION

What we need to do to achieve progress towards SDG2:

- **Build political will and country ownership**
 - Use upcoming events and the framework of the Decade of Action to uphold existing nutrition commitments made individually and collectively and to make new financial and political pledges to ending malnutrition by 2030.
- **Improve the narrative around nutrition**, to make sure that it is well understood by political leaders (government, parliamentarians), but also by all sectors which contribute to nutrition.
- Ensure that “no one is left behind” and **address gender inequality, geographic inequality and absolute poverty**; universal targeting can be a good approach to inclusively address malnutrition and avoid social stigma in areas of absolute poverty.
- **Connect better undernutrition and over-nutrition** and build partnerships with countries that are making progress in these areas.
- Use all existing strengths and capacities, from different sectors, different stakeholders and key individuals at community level:
 - **Develop ownership of sectors** contributing to nutrition: It’s only when stakeholders from different sectors work hand in hand that political commitments and progress towards the reduction of undernutrition can be achieved. We know actions delivered through the “nutrition sector” alone can only achieve limited gains. We won’t reach the SDGs without good nutrition, and the eradication of malnutrition won’t happen without the mobilization of key sectors.
 - **Empower women and adolescent girls** to sustain the change, but also build on the roles of men within the community.
 - **Implement multi-stakeholder approaches** and ensure each stakeholder is playing its role, from the civil society (role in advocacy but also strong role to be developed in capacity building) to the business sector and donors.
- Take concrete actions:
 - **Work at sub-national level**: implement multisectoral and multistakeholder coordination at local level and ensure that nutrition is well included into local development plans.
 - **Increase nutrition funding and ensure they target the 1st 1000 days of life**
 - Go beyond actions that address only the immediate causes of malnutrition and **look at the drivers of undernutrition**, as well as at the food system as a whole.

SPEAKERS

- François Gave, Counsellor in Development and Sustainable Development, French UN mission
- Gerda Verburg. SUN Movement Coordinator
- Katherine Richards, Head of Hunger and Nutrition, Save the Children UK
- Christelle Hure, Nutrition Security Advocacy Advisor, Action Against Hunger
- Mwandwe Chileshe, Former CSOSUN country coordinator, Zambia

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BACKGROUND

Good nutrition is a matter of life or death. It is the difference between surviving and thriving. It helps to build human capital and improves productivity and economic growth. On the other hand, undernutrition has a profoundly negative human and economic impact, preventing countries and individuals from working and living at full capacity.

Nutrition is inherently multi-sectoral; it affects and is affected by many interventions, including agriculture, education, WASH, maternal health, food security, and social protection. **Thus progress on SDG2 is deeply intertwined with progress on other goals – particularly SDG1 (poverty), SDG3 (health), SDG5 (women) and SDG6 (water). And addressing malnutrition will be essential for driving progress across multiple SDG targets and central to achieving the SDG agenda as a whole.**

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

François Gave, Counsellor in Development and Sustainable Development for the French UN Mission, opened the discussion by highlighting how importance the issue of nutrition is and by presenting how France is fighting against malnutrition. With 1 in 3 children in the world being malnourished and 1 in 5 stunted, malnutrition is responsible for human suffering all over the world. It erodes the quality of life, harms productivity and erodes creativity. Poverty (SDG1) and undernutrition (SDG2) are closely connected, especially in Asia and Africa: being poor limits the ability of individuals to access adequate food in terms of both quality and quantity.

As nutrition is essential to human development and productivity and essential to realize the motto of the SDGs, “leave no one behind”, it is a moral imperative to combat malnutrition. Investing in better nutrition is a great investment: it is an investment in human capital, it empowers people and communities.

Responding to this imperative, the French government recently launched a Roadmap on Nutrition, which includes especially projects focusing on nutrition and agriculture (in Mali, Niger, Chad, CAR). France also mainstreams nutrition in a wide range of action and has joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement.

Gerda Verburg, SUN Movement Coordinator, gave an overview of the global progress against SDG2, explaining that we’re improving but not fast enough. Several priority areas for progress were identified:

- **Improve the narrative around nutrition.** The narrative around nutrition is not well drafted, told or communicated. Most SUN countries have yet to understand that nutrition is crucial for their economic development, as well as for children’s physical and cognitive development. They must understand that it is essential for development to invest in the 1st 1000 days. This narrative has to be developed to attract politicians’ and MPs’ interest. We need the right narrative to make the connection with the SDGs. Nutrition is a catalyzer, an engine of the SDGs.
- **Connect better undernutrition and over-nutrition.** Although the world is slowly making progress when it comes to undernutrition, progress remains poor when it comes to over-nutrition and obesity. So far, the nutrition community hasn’t been able to connect the two topics. Undernutrition and over-nutrition should be connected and partnerships with countries that are making progress in these areas should be built.
- **Build country ownership:** ending malnutrition is a matter of political will. If governments don’t start investing in it, we will never succeed to eradicate malnutrition by 2030.
- **Implement multi-stakeholder approaches.** The civil society is really stepping up and taking action against malnutrition at national and global levels. But other stakeholders must be mobilized and new challenges lie ahead, regarding the role of the business sector: a critical dialogue with the business sector is needed to make progress. Donors have a role to play in ensuring a real multi-stakeholder’ approach, including civil society.
- **Develop capacity building.** Civil society must go further than advocating and sustain (and communicate more on) their efforts in capacity building and make smart contribution at grassroots level. Civil Society has a role to play to bring the voices of the community with its experience to the table.
- **Build on the roles of both women and men in the community.** Within the community, the roles of both women and men are key: women and girls must be front and centre – this is where it starts. However, the role of men in communities must not be overlooked, as they can be great champions, and will want to be champions once they understand the narrative.

After these introductory remarks, three case studies were presented, to demonstrate the benefits of a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder approach to implementation of SDG2 and share key lessons learned from practical experiences in programs and advocacy.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM COUNTRIES

Katherine Richards, Head of Hunger and Nutrition, Save the Children UK, gave an overview of the implementation of multi-sectoral interventions in Nigeria to tackle undernutrition.

Nigeria has the highest number of malnourished children in sub-Saharan Africa, with 37% of children under five years old chronically malnourished - stunted, and 18% acutely malnourished – wasted. Although there has been some progress, it has not been fast enough or inclusive enough. Our research shows that, if current trends continue, chronic malnutrition – stunting - will not be eliminated in Nigeria until well into the next century – not until 2109.

Gender inequality has a significant impact on undernutrition – particularly in Northern Nigeria. As the main care givers, women are expected to stay at home and look after the children; but women’s rights are undervalued and they are afforded low social status. Furthermore, women’s autonomy and movement is restricted (through ‘*kulle*’ – seclusion), resulting in extremely low levels of access to services and assets; 80% of child deaths happen in the home with no contact with the health service. Girls are also less likely to attend school; female literacy rates are between 10% and 50% of male literacy rates.

In Nigeria, Save the Children delivers a number of interventions to prevent and treat malnutrition, including: community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM); vitamin A supplementation and deworming; promotion of improved infant and young child feeding practices and child-sensitive social protection. Save the Children is also committed to health system strengthening, and delivers capacity building for health workers on the basics of nutrition and essentials of nutrition programming. Advocacy and institutional capacity building are embedded in STC programming, with activities focused on resourcing, coordination and policy implementation, for both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive approaches. STC is also a member of Civil Society Alliance for Scaling up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN), which coordinates civil society and ensures effective collaboration with other stakeholders such as the government, UN agencies, donors and the private sector. Through CS-SUNN, civil society advocates with one voice to inform national nutrition planning, drawing on programme evidence as well as the experiences of those affected by malnutrition.

Of most interest is the CDGP (**Child Development Grant Programme**), a six -year pilot programme aimed at tackling poverty and hunger and reducing malnutrition in children, which Save the Children delivers in Jigawa and Zamfara states in Northern Nigeria. The programme is open to all pregnant women, irrespective of their wealth status to prevent any social stigma. It enrolls pregnant women who will receive **monthly cash transfers** until their child reaches the age of two. It also delivers **sensitisation and education sessions** in the local communities to create awareness on the aims and benefits of the programme. It also works with state governments to **build commitment and capacity in social protection to tackle poverty and undernutrition**. The CDGP is starting to show positive results, particularly in relation to exclusive breastfeeding and women’s empowerment, as well as in relation to better quality and more diverse food being eaten by beneficiary households. Emerging results also show that the programme leads to improvements in the stunting rates of children born during the implementation of the programme.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM NIGERIA

- Universal targeting can be a good approach to inclusively address malnutrition in areas of absolute poverty, particularly as it avoids social stigma.
- An integrated approach to tackling malnutrition is key, including funding and support for nutrition sensitive interventions and engagement with multiple stakeholders
- Addressing gender inequality, geographic inequality and absolute poverty is vital to leave no one behind in the fight against malnutrition in Nigeria.

Christelle Huré, Nutrition Security Advocacy Adviser, Action Against Hunger France, went on to present the impact of civil society work on the integration of nutrition and agriculture.

In West Africa Malnutrition remains dramatically prevalent. Among children under five, 31.4% suffer from stunting, and 8,5% from acute malnutrition. However, the policy front presents a reassuring picture of increased national level commitment towards the current nutrition situation. Although political commitments have been made and policies developed, much more remains to be done in translating these commitments and policies into concrete actions that can help reduce the number of children affected by undernutrition and accelerate progress towards SDG2. If the need to better integrate nutrition in other sectors is widely acknowledge, the “how” part remains often obscure. **The mobilization of the civil society in West Africa to improve the linkages between agriculture and nutrition gives a good example of what integration and success look like in practice. In this case, success is the integration of nutrition in key policy documents.**

A wide range of evidence demonstrates that, through income generation, employment, food production, transformation & consumption, agriculture has a crucial role to play in eradicating undernutrition. Influenced by the growing recognition in West Africa of the importance of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, ECOWAS new “Regional Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition Investment Plan” adopted in December 2016 proposes a comprehensive vision of how agriculture positively and negatively impacts nutrition, adopts a nutrition objective and includes specific nutrition indicators. In line with this policy, all ECOWAS countries have to revise their National Agriculture Investment Plans (NAIP). Farmers and producers can have a strong influence on the development of those plans.. Although aware of the nutritional role of agriculture, most farmer and producer organizations don’t know the different pathways between agricultural interventions and nutrition impacts. This is why AAH, with the SUN Civil Society Alliance, has decided to work in synergies with them, through the implementation of the following activities in Sierra Leone and Senegal (past), as well as in Burkina Faso (future): **capacity building workshops**, for CSOs working in agriculture and the main national farmer organizations and networks, with the development of key messages and concrete recommendations on the content of the NAIP; presentation of the messages and expertise to the government. In Sierra Leone, the government welcomed the support and expertise of the civil society and integrated its recommendations the provisional version of the country’s NAIP. After capacity building and advocacy at national level, **Action Against Hunger will work at the sub-national level**, to ensure that the NAIPS are really implemented and that agriculture sensitive interventions are included into local development plans.

Many other examples of how nutrition civil society (and especially SUN CSAs) connects with civil society from other sectors in West Africa could be mentioned and especially: partnership with Sanitation and Water for All civil society platforms on the need for increased synergies across the nutrition and WASH sectors; partnerships with Every Women Every Child and other health platforms on health system strengthening, health budget or Universal health Coverage.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM WEST AFRICA

- We won’t reach the SDGs without good nutrition, and the eradication of malnutrition won’t happen without the mobilization of key sectors. Beyond multisectoral nutrition plans, each sector needs to understand the impact it has on nutrition and act accordingly by integrating nutrition in its policies and plans, both at national and sub-national levels.
- It is essential to stop putting all our efforts in supporting the national level and to start focusing on the sub-national as well. Progress towards SDG2 won’t be achieved without multisectoral and multistakeholder coordination at local level and if nutrition is not included into local development plans.
- Considering the complexity of the issue of undernutrition and its underlying causes, it is essential to spend time building a common understanding on the interlinkages between nutrition and other contributing sectors for the effective implementation of the SDGs.
- The role of local civil Society is essential, to represent the community, influence public authorities and create synergies between sectors, to be reproduced at government level.

Mwandwe Chileshe, former CSOSUN country coordinator in Zambia, presented the experience of Zambia in implementing a multi-sectorial approach to tackle malnutrition and in integrating nutrition in its national development plan.

Zambia has one of the highest levels of malnutrition in Africa, with 40% stunting, as well as high rates of over-nutrition. It was one of the 1st countries to join the SUN Movement. In 2013, during the Nutrition for Growth Conference, the vice president made the commitments to increase the national budget allocated to nutrition. But it hasn't happened yet, as shown by the civil society budget analysis. The SUN multi-stakeholder platform (chaired by the Ministry of Health) brings together all sectors and enables accountability for nutrition progress, reporting in to government and parliamentary structures. There are some efforts to integrate nutrition with other sectors, especially with social protection, with the existence of a nutrition sensitive protection technical working group.

As regards the policy framework, Zambia has developed its national nutrition action plan (2017-2021) and recently launched its national development plan, with great efforts to align with SDG and the African Union Agenda 2063. 12 indicators are especially dedicated to nutrition.

The Civil Society Alliance, CSOSUN, exists since 2013. It brings together actors who were previously fragmented, including other sectors such as social protection, allowing building consensus. It is an essential vehicle to secure political will and to influence policies (ex: agriculture, social protection policies). Main activities involve: campaigning around nutrition during presidential campaigns (radio adverts to push politicians to make nutrition commitments and to raise awareness of the general public on nutrition); support to the setup of a parliamentary caucus in 2014.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM ZAMBIA

- Country ownership is essential: each country must have its own vision and pursue it.
- We need to commit and to build political will
- We need to take action: we need to increase funding but also to build the narrative and make sure that it is well understood, so that the funding is going to the right place and used for nutrition interventions during the 1st 1000 days of a child.
- We need to sustain the change, especially through the involvement and empowerment of women and adolescent girls.
- We must scale up the SUN Movement, within the country, by engaging at subnational level and involving other sectors, for them to take ownership of the nutrition issue.

CLOSING REMARKS

What we need is political will, with concrete actions and increased funding for undernutrition. The World Bank investment framework identifies a funding shortfall of \$70bn for nutrition-specific interventions, just to hit the WHA nutrition targets. To hit SDG2, additional investment will be required across sectors, incorporating nutrition-sensitive and specific interventions.

Upcoming opportunities (World Bank Human Capital Summit, high level nutrition event in Milan, etc.) should be used by the nutrition community to push States to uphold existing nutrition commitments made individually and collectively and to make new financial and political pledges to ending malnutrition by 2030.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- The Global Agriculture and Food Security program (GAFSP, World Bank), can help support the work of the civil society, especially to engage at the district level. Although the civil society participates actively in the GAFSP, there is room for improvement.
- Capacity building is needed at all levels, and especially at government level. Implementation must be built on trust.
- The food system is broken and current progress is not enough. We live in a decade of action on nutrition and we should use this opportunity: the decade of action brings nutrition to the highest level, at the UN General Assembly, where countries can hold each other accountable. We need to go beyond action to address the immediate causes of malnutrition and look deeper at the drivers of undernutrition as well as at the food system as a whole. The Decade of Action is the framework that can allow us to do so. Within the Decade of Action, countries need to make specific and SMART commitments
 - The next Committee for World Food Security in October is a good opportunity to bring at the global level lessons from countries and design policy guidance.