COUNTRY INVESTMENTS AND ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Summary

The SUN Movement Strategy and Roadmap (2016-2020) outlines four strategic objectives to facilitate the building of an enabling social, economic and political environment, which is fit to ensure the collective efforts of all actors involved in the SUN Movement align behind their national nutrition priorities. The fourth strategic objective aims to effectively use and significantly increase financial resources for nutrition through a five-step ladder of change that will result in an improved financing landscape for nutrition.

During the first phase of the SUN Movement, an increasing number of SUN Countries have called upon donors and external investors to align their funds with national priorities and report on their spending for nutrition. Countries have emphasized their interest to have access to new international financing initiatives and learn about better use of financial resources. As a response to the wide recognition that current levels of financing for nutrition are inadequate, the SUN Movement Strategy and Roadmap (2016-2020) calls for improved access and use of financial resources for nutrition.

With this objective in mind, the 27th SUN Country Network Meeting discussed progress across SUN Countries in financing nutrition through improved country investments and additional resources. Overall, 45 SUN Countries came together in September 2017, to discuss the importance of aligning and coordinating external funding with national priorities in national nutrition plans, animating donor networks and mobilising additional funding from innovative mechanisms. SUN Countries emphasized that planning, costing, financing and implementing a common set of nutrition results is still work in progress, but also identified factors that facilitated the mobilisation of internal and external finances aligned with their Common Results Framework (CRF).

Key takeaways

✓ Have a plan with clear national nutrition targets and costed actions to promote coordination and alignment with different Government sectors and partners.
✓ Conduct a budget analysis and track spending to understand the financing landscape for nutrition, while having clarity on the finance gaps to efficiently mobilise additional resources through strategic partnerships.
✓ Mobilize innovative finance mechanisms and sustain the dialogue with donor partners

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I. Overview

The 27th SUN Country Network Meeting discussed the progress across SUN Countries in **financing nutrition through improved country investments and access to additional resources**. As the SUN Movement’s Theory of Change supports the creation of a transformational pathway along which resources are mobilised and coverage of locally relevant nutrition specific actions and nutrition sensitive contributions are scaled up; this Country Network Meeting aimed at learning about good experiences and challenges in:

i. Animating donor networks

ii. Aligning and coordinating external funding (from development partners and civil society organisations) with priorities in national nutrition plans, and

iii. Mobilising additional funding from innovative financing mechanisms (domestic and/or external)

The meeting was also used to get a deeper understanding of the finance landscape available at country and global level, in particular the earmarked funding of donors. Countries were invited to reflect on the following questions:

- How are development partners convened and organised to support the alignment of resources behind nutrition priorities/plans? What are the success and the challenges in doing so?
- Are there any tools that support the coordination process? E.g. Existence of tracking mechanisms, online portal etc.
- What are your experiences in mobilising additional funding including the innovative financing mechanisms? How to access the information?
- How civil society organisations can be mobilized for more efficient spending and delivery of priority actions?

II. Key Messages from the discussion

The added value of having clear national nutrition targets and ambitions embedded in national development plans is key in terms of political endorsement and resource mobilisation, which facilitates earmarking of government and donors’ funds. More specifically, having a robust Common Results Framework (CRF) facilitates the alignment of domestic and external funds behind national nutrition priorities. In total, 37 SUN Countries now report that they have a national CRF in place. Resources are easier to mobilise when the CRF is inclusive, and owned by everyone and the costs of implementing the framework have been estimated. Mobilising finances for a CRF requires conditions pertaining to its process by which it was developed and its format.

For example, Côte d’Ivoire has fully integrated its CRF in the development plan of the country so that the CRF can benefit from the tracking mechanisms set up as part of the development plan which are more sophisticated than regular programs. This has also enabled Côte d’Ivoire to integrate nutrition in its public investment program. Guatemala also presents an interesting case in which the funds of donors are aligned with the national budget. In The Gambia, the National Nutrition Policy, which consists of a strategy and costsed business plan, was presented to development partners including donors. Also, Sudan has developed a CRF with a detailed Investment Case for Nutrition and is using it for improving coordination and alignment. Burkina Faso and Benin reported to have their nutrition policies embedded in their development plans, which is useful for visibility and resource mobilisation. The Government of Cote d’Ivoire has funded 15% of their National Action Plan, and has worked with different partners and donors through a roundtable to secure the remaining funds. Interesting examples of alignment of the private sector were mentioned by El Salvador and Costa Rica.

Côte d’Ivoire has fully integrated its Common Results Framework in the National development plan to benefit from the tracking mechanisms part of the plan

Having a plan with costed actions and tracking finance for nutrition can support the identification of financial gaps, which in turn helps with the mobilisation of additional resources. Mauritania has used the results from financial tracking to estimate the contribution of the government and compare it to the cost of the plan, to develop a gap analysis. Cameroon mentioned that, while “costing” provides estimates of funding required for the planned actions, it is essential to have a dialogue with other sectors to ensure that funds are actually “allocated” for nutrition.

The exercise of budgeting vs. costing itself is useful to rationalise existing spending among sectors, as was in the case presented by Cameroon. Peru and El Salvador also mentioned the importance of having results-based budgeting to improve coordination and execution of programmes. An analysis of the nutrition-relevant budget allocations helped
reinforce the advocacy efforts in Mali and Chad with the government and other partners allowing efficient use of available resources through better coordination. Nepal and Tajikistan both demonstrate effective government coordination mechanisms with relevant ministries for nutrition sensitive budget allocations. Ethiopia conducted a finance tracking exercise against their newly endorsed National Nutrition Programme (2016-2020) to estimate the finance gap and coordinate with ministries and partners. Sri Lanka mentioned having a costed plan and budget line dedicated to nutrition. Lao PDR reported on their detailed stakeholder, action and resource mapping, which helped them to get a good picture on the gaps in terms of implementation and financing (including geographic coverage).

- **Pooled and joint funds of donors and partners are helpful for external resource alignment.** In Zambia, the focus is on financing the ‘most critical 1,000 days’ programme, with the aim of scaling up proven nutrition interventions to reduce childhood stunting. In this case, donors are aligning with the government’s priority through the ‘SUN Pooled Fund’ to promote harmonisation and alignment among key cooperating partners and stakeholders. This helps to avoid duplication of efforts as well as reducing transaction costs for all partners including the Government of Zambia and has led the way to the second SUN Pooled Fund for the next phase of the programme.

In addition, **advocacy initiatives such as sensitising parliamentarians on nutrition and working with civil society organisations, can help mobilise additional funding and facilitates implementation at decentralised and community levels.** It is vital to bring on board Members of Parliament to get their attention and for better disbursement of funds based on needs. In Cameroon and Chad, parliamentarians were mobilised to finance nutrition to compensate the weak nutrition financing from the government. Chad also mobilised the civil society, the REACH partnership and the champion network to jointly advocate with parliamentarians and the Ministry of Finance for improved allocation of resources. Senegal has published a guide for members of Parliament to integrate nutrition in the budget.

### III. Challenges and bottlenecks to overcome

SUN Countries also reported various challenges and bottlenecks that need to be overcome, in order to move forward with the strategic objective of mobilising and translating financial resources for nutrition.

- **Efforts to achieve comprehensive financial tracking systems for nutrition across sectors and actors need to be strengthened.** Zambia raised the challenge of not knowing how much the overall investment on nutrition in the country was, which led them to contemplate the need of a comprehensive approach for budget and expenditure tracking. Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, there is still a need for establishing a budget tracking mechanism. Furthermore, tracking from allocations to disbursements across sectors and actors can also be challenging, as reported by Burkina Faso.

- **Work is required to build on existing systems for information sharing and coordination with sectors at the sub-national level.** It is important to establish information sharing mechanisms that enable the access to up-to-date information with local authorities, as they allow better nutrition budget tracking. The Government of Niger plans to work at the local level so that nutrition components will get integrated in their own local development plans, while Cote d’Ivoire has already started the process. Niger also emphasised the importance of prioritising activities within the Action Plan to ensure adequate funding of priorities. Nepal and Bangladesh also mentioned the importance of combining implementation and resource tracking at sub-national level. El Salvador presented a clear coordination case of budget allocations and disbursements regarding the implementation of their national policy on nutrition. However, challenges remain in monitoring the impact and ensuring that a reliable and inclusive data system is in place.

- **Sustaining the dialogue between government and donor partners, can also be a challenge, especially if the ultimate objective is to scale up and increase the allocation of funds.** Besides, harmonising tracking systems of different stakeholders including bilateral aid agencies and civil society organisations for nutrition expenditure can be difficult. SUN Countries increasingly face challenges in having a fully functional and dynamic network of donors who regularly convene and pro-actively engage. Countries like Cameroon and Mali have reported the need to organise donor roundtables to facilitate the mobilisation of partners’ funds. Sudan also mentioned that
organising regular “breakfasts” with all development partners have proven useful. Only 36 countries mentioned having a donor convener.

- In the context of fragile countries, like in Mali, Niger, Chad and Burundi, challenges remain in mobilising resources for nutrition action plans as most of the funding is directed towards emergency response. In Niger, humanitarian financing represents nearly 90% of the total funds and are by nature only available on a short-term basis.

IV. Conclusions

- Having a robust CRF facilitates the alignment of national nutrition targets and domestic/external funds. In addition, a strong multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) that effectively convenes and leads the nutrition agenda gives credibility and trust to external partners, especially when donors are well represented in them. Such is the case of Burkina Faso, Benin, Gabon and Senegal, where their autonomous and independent MSP report that having budgets of their own is useful to carry out this coordination role, which provides autonomy and independence in terms of budget allocation.

- Conducting a budget analysis and tracking spending is essential to understand the financing landscape for nutrition. At the same time, it is necessary to apprehend the finance gaps to efficiently mobilise additional resources through strategic partnerships. Countries that have prioritized and costed high-impact nutrition-specific interventions in their national plans can go one step further. They can measure alignment by analyzing the sub-set of interventions from their budget analysis against those identified in the costing exercise.

- Countries with limited external funding are increasing public funds and seeking alternative private funding opportunities. For example, Mauritania has developed an advocacy case where they show how the government will increase their funding for nutrition over several years. Costa Rica mentioned the importance of establishing strategic alliances and coordinating with other actors to advance in the development of nutrition related programs.

Innovative finance mechanisms remain marginal although they are increasing. Cameroon for example, shared some very interesting examples where they mobilised additional funds through innovative mechanisms. In partnership with UNICEF, the Government of Cameroon has created an alliance with airlines, and has imposed a tax on mining activities to contribute to sanitation and nutrition. Some SUN Countries reported developing partnerships with new sectors or combined proposals to attract new types of funding. For example, Guinea developed an integrated approach involving agriculture and education for its school feeding programme and Madagascar is deepening its linkages with WASH sectors. In terms of engagement with the private sector, Burkina Faso and Gabon have successfully demonstrated public-private partnerships. Cameroon organized a business forum in 2015 and managed to dedicate 0.1% of the mine extractions to nutrition. Congo Brazzaville has worked with the private sector on changing behaviours for healthy diet on a dedicated campaign.