El Salvador Enhanced Learning Exercise Prevention and Managing Conflicts of Interest in Multi-sectoral and Multi-stakeholder Platforms

Preface

Over 60participants came together for the Enhanced Learning Exercise on the Prevention and Management of Conflicts of Interest in the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, hosted by El Salvador at the Royal Decameron Hotel in Salinitas, Sonsonate, on 17 to 18 July 2014. Multi-stakeholder representation included participation from sixteen government agencies, NGOs, UN agencies, academic, regional governments and, for the first time, the private sector. Additional multi-stakeholder representation came from Costa Rica and Guatemala. Our thanks to the outstanding leadership of the SUN Focal Point in El Salvador, Daysi de Marquez, supported by a dedicated and productive local planning committee.

Introduction

The Enhanced Learning Exercise in El Salvador was part of a project led by the Global Social Observatory to develop a framework for the prevention and management of conflict of interest within the context of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. In the first phase, three multi-stakeholder consultations were convened in 2013 to develop a Reference Note and Toolkit on conflict of interest. In the second phase, the GSO is partnering with the SUN Movement Secretariat to conduct a series of four Enhanced Learning Exercises. Two Enhanced Learning Exercises have already been held on 1-2 April 2014 in Accra, Ghana and on 29-30 May in Nairobi, Kenya. This event in El Salvador on 17 to 18 July 2014 was the third Enhanced Learning Exercise. A fourth will be held in Indonesia in October.

The objectives of the Enhanced Learning Exercises are first, to bring together SUN Focal Points and partners at the country level to discuss their experiences in relation to preventing and managing conflict of interest and second, to assess how the Reference Note and Toolkit produced in the first phase of the project can be applied and used to support work in this area at country level. A concluding report from the GSO will draw on the lessons learned from these exercises to make recommendations on strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration in support of the objectives of the SUN Movement. There will also be a compendium of experiences and lessons learned for sharing during a concluding conference for the project in Geneva, Switzerland early in 2015. The project is also facilitating the building of a community of practice for an ethical perspective on conflict of interest. This includes a global expertise based in an organization called Globethics.net, and the engagement of a local ethics expert for each of the four Enhanced Learning Exercises.

Summary of El Salvador ELE

The opening session was launched by Daysi de Marquez, the SUN Focal Point for El Salvador who welcomed the participants and explained the importance of the local context for addressing conflict of interest in order to work together more effectively to combat under-nutrition across all sectors and stakeholders. She was joined by Katherine Hagen who explained the role of the Global Social Observatory in conducting a consultation process for the prevention and management of conflict of interest in the SUN Movement; and by Pau Blanquer who explained the background of why the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) was supporting the process.

Dr. Hagen then introduced the objectives of the ELE and main subjects covered in the Reference Note and Toolkit that had been developed in the first phase of the consultation process. The local ethics expert for El Salvador, José Marinero Cortes gave a presentation on his interpretation of the ethical perspective on conflict of interest in the Reference Note and Toolkit. This was followed by a presentation by Nixon Rogelio Hernandez, the author of two local case studies that were intended to serve as the basis for applying the Reference Note and Toolkit to the specific circumstances of El Salvador.

In the afternoon of the first day, participants were invited to consider the first of the four elements of the framework for a conflict of interest policy, the element of "prevention". Following a presentation on this element by the GSO, there was a multi-stakeholder panel moderated by Ing. Néstor Deras to set the stage for the first round of learning circles. Participants were then organized around five tables, with each table addressing the same questions on linking the element of prevention as presented in the Reference Note and Toolkit to the two case studies. The afternoon concluded with reports from the five groups and further reflections from the El Salvador Focal Point and from the local ethics expert.

On the second day, the participants were invited to consider the remaining elements of the framework – on identification, management and monitoring – along with the issue of capacity-building. Following a presentation on these elements by Martin Gallagher from the SUN Secretariat, a second multi-stakeholder panel moderated by Ing. Nestor Deras from the CONASAN technical team set the stage for the second round of learning circles. This time three of the learning circles were invited to focus on the elements of identification and management, and two were invited to focus on monitoring and capacity building. Again, the responses were shared by the whole group. In the afternoon, a third panel moderated by Daysi de Márquez discussed conclusions, recommendations and next steps, and a concluding panel of the local ethics expert and case study author with the GSO facilitator shared their impressions of the meeting. Daysi de Marquez delivered the closing remarks.

What follows is a more detailed summation of each session, including the highlights. These have subsequently been combined into a list of the key messages from the Enhanced Learning Exercise in El Salvador. Of particular note is the consensus among participants to encourage the government of El Salvador to conduct a pilot for verifying the applicability and usefulness of the Reference Note and Toolkit in a specific local context.

Full Report of El Salvador Meeting

I.   Opening Session

Daysi de Márquez inspired the participants with her opening remarks, noting that sectors and stakeholders were working together to create a new generation of Salvadorians that have the opportunity to develop their full physical and mental potential. She noted that the causes of under-nutrition are multi-sectoral and responses must be both multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder. She welcomed the initiative of the SMS, with GSO, to provide guidance to countries as developing the capacities needed to address conflicts of interest is integral to delivering on El Salvador's goals.

Katherine Hagen described the role of the Global Social Observatory (GSO) to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue in a neutral forum. The GSO was invited by the SUN Movement Secretariat to develop the Reference Note and Toolkit on conflict of interest through a consultation process with the multiple stakeholders of the SUN Movement. The GSO is pleased to be working with the SUN Movement and its partners in order to help think through this important issue.   The Enhanced Learning Exercise is intended to be an interactive dialogue and learning experience for everyone.

Pau Blanquer explained that **t**he SUN Countries own and lead the SUN Movement by bringing together all stakeholders around nutrition. This is a voluntary commitment by all stakeholders that share the objective of delivering better nutrition for women and children. Conflicts of interest can occur in multi-stakeholder platforms when a personal or organisational interest is put before the collective interest.

Addressing conflicts of interest can be a challenge and many countries have asked for support. The GSO work, on behalf of the Movement, has been oriented to helping the countries, through the development of the Reference Note and Toolkit. These documents are not mandatory; but they serve as a guide and orientation to allow the Focal Points and stakeholders to develop their own approaches based on the local context. Each country will determine its own framework.

II.   Introducing the Background Materials and Perspectives

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II. Some Key Points from the Introductory Session

- Government in the lead is essential.
- A common understanding of the objectives of the joint endeavour is important.
- Creating a space for dialogue is important in order to build trust and resolve issues.

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a. The Reference Note and Toolkit

Following these introductory remarks**, Katherine Hagen** presented the objectives of the ELE and outlined the contents of the Reference Note and Toolkit with a PowerPoint presentation that is included as an attachment to this report.   The key message in the Reference Note is that while there are conflicts between institutions and between individuals, they are not conflicts of interest. There is an important distinction between having conflicts over policy or procedure and dealing with conflicts of interest that undermine the common objective.   In the SUN Movement, governments have the leadership role in establishing a national multi-stakeholder initiative and therefore in the prevention and management of conflict of interest.   Existing national legal and

policy frameworks should be the starting point for developing national conflict of interest policies. In addition, the programme for the ELE specifically includes a local ethics expert to facilitate the understanding of the interplay between ethics and conflict of interest.

Martin Gallagher noted that all stakeholders have the potential for conflict of interest and should examine their own behaviour. Addressing conflict of interest is an important prerequisite for building trust and promoting accountability. It should be viewed as an integral part of developing multi-sectoral ways of working together. The SMS, with GSO and others, is examining how it can support countries around these issues.

b. Introducing the Ethical Perspective

José Marinero Cortés (Ethics Expert) – Conflict of Interest cannot be discussed without considering ethics.

In multi-stakeholder collaboration, each group brings different values. Ethics tries to provide a framework, a guideline for decision-making. Using an ethics based approach can help groups working together to agree common standards or values to guide their work. The Reference Note and Toolkit are an exercise in applied ethics. The Principles of Engagement represent the values that those within the Movement feel are important and that can help deliver on the Movement's goals. They go beyond the agreed goals of the Movement to the agreed means to achieve those goals. This is a central point of how different groups work together. The ethical goal should be achieved in a way that is ethical in itself. In the end, the ethical framework based in values has a common objective regarding governance. For SUN, it is to promote better nutrition.

c. Introducing the Case Studies

Nixon Rogelio Hernández (Case Studies) – The case studies were developed with multi-stakeholder engagement and consultation with civil society groups. The aim was to ensure a common understanding of the issues that were being studied.

The first case study focussed on the first 1000 days between pregnancy and a child's second birthday and on the implementation of the laws and frameworks in place to ensure optimal infant feeding practices were promoted and protected during this period. The case study outlined the situation in El Salvador in advance of a national law based on adopting the International Code on the Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes and then presented the challenges now faced in ensuring full implementation of the law.

The second case study examined the importance of achieving a common vision among officials of cooperating aid agencies and government officials to work together on delivering nutrition to women and children. The case study examined a number of situations where, due to differing approaches, possible conflicts of interest or a lack of dialogue and mutual understanding, the best outcomes for women and children were not achieved. The case study asked readers to consider the underlying causes of these outcomes and how more positive outcomes could have been achieved.

d. Questions and Answers

The morning's presenters was asked whether unethical behaviour could lead to ethical outcomes. The ethics expert said that a compromised process would lead to a compromised outcome, as the collective good was not prioritised. An NGO representative asked how a framework can be put in place when there is a situation where the government approach and the markets' interest are

against each other, particularly in relation to food sovereignty. It was noted that within the SUN Movement countries are in the lead. All other stakeholders that commit to supporting the government must do so by aligning their activities around nationally agreed goals based on Government-led policy. CSOs, business and others can contribute to achieving national goals, but their engagement must be compatible with government objectives. This may mean changing their behaviour to align behind government-led policies.

Another participant suggested that it was difficult to build trust where one side believes in an absolute to the exclusion of the other stakeholders. Rather than excluding one side, it may be better to work together.

e. Summing up the morning's discussions

Daysi de Márquez summarized the morning's discussions by observing that ethics is a key to understanding and resolving conflicts of interest. Conflicts will exist among multiple stakeholders. The key is the capacity and ability to create space for dialogue, communicate and listen, and then to build trust for resolving conflicts of interest. This means that all stakeholders need to be at the table from the start and have a process in place to build trust and resolve issues through commonly agreed procedures. El Salvador has started this process with the aim of achieving common goals through alignment behind these goals.

III. Afternoon Session on Prevention

III. Some Key Points from the Session on Prevention

- A policy needs to be in place to help prevent and manage conflict of interest.
- The state should have a leadership role and others should align but in an inclusive, participatory format. All stakeholders should be included in all stages (development, implementation and evaluation of policies and plans).
- Continuity in programs is important, and changes should also be structured around inclusive dialogue platforms.
- Disclosure of interests is important for all stakeholders. There is a need to build functional capacities on multi-stakeholder ways of working.
- Dialogue and common understandings can help prevent conflicts of interest.

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a. Setting the stage for a discussion on the first element on prevention in the framework for a conflict of interest policy

Ms. Hagen outlined the **lessons learned from the previous enhanced learning exercises** in Accra and Nairobi with a PowerPoint presentation (attached) that summarized these lessons under four categories – buy-in, context, platform development and communication. In particular, the lessons learned reinforced the importance of the SUN Principles of Engagement, of government leadership, of local and community ownership, and the need to develop local capacity on conflict of interest

She then presented some of the key points for implementing the first element on prevention in the framework for a conflict of interest policy. The first priority in any policy should be to find ways to prevent conflicts of interest before they can have any negative impact. This means (a) having a policy in place that clearly alerts all stakeholders to their obligations and (b) providing

the avenues for disclosure of interests that may become conflicts of interest by each and every stakeholder.

b. Questions and Answers

Discussion with the participants reinforced the message that the SUN Movement is based on government leadership and engaging all stakeholders to ensure that their efforts are aligned and combined. This includes promotion of a multi-sectoral approach that may require different compromises in different settings.   In Accra the focus was on how civil society needs to come together, in Nairobi the focus was on the role of the private sector and the impact of decentralisation. One must work with what is available in the local context to build up a legal framework. Where government is weak, the focus of the SUN Movement is to help the other groups support the strengthening of the government's role.

c. Panel Discussion on Prevention[1]

Moderator: Ing. Néstor Deras

Panelists:

Lic. Daysi Cheyne – Director of the Institute for Research, Training and Development of Women (IMU) - Representative of the civil society

Lic. Elia Martínez –Nutrition Specialist at World Food Programme (WFP), Representative of aid agencies

Lic. Erick Ulate Quesada – President of Costa Rica Consumers (Civil society representative)

Lic. Sergio Hugo González – Coordinator Information System Food and Nutrition Security, (SESAN), Representative from Guatemala

The first panel discussion invited panellists to share their views on the ways that different stakeholders can prevent conflicts of interest from arising. All stakeholders, they agreed, must acknowledge their interests. Once identified, they can be the basis for discussion and finding a way forward. While the state is a facilitator, it also has its own interests. Donors, too, can have conflicts of interest. Development partners and other stakeholders should work together with the government to define targets jointly and to apply risk analyses to prevent situations that can undermine implementation of targets. Some situations might not be a conflict of interest but rather a lack of communication and dialogue.   Public policy development should be participatory and transparent, and open to all stakeholders. It can be relatively easy for all members in a multi-stakeholder platform to agree on common goals and objectives, but there is also a need to agree on the procedures and interventions to achieve these goals.

d. Learning Circles and Discussion

There was a general consensus on the need to move forward to develop a policy to help prevent and manage conflict of interest and to bring all partners together. There needs to be rules to ensure transparency and minimise possible conflicts of interest. The disclosure of interests is important.

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[1] Panel discussions focussed on individual parts of the Reference Note and Toolkit and looked to the Case Studies for examples of issues in these areas.

Participants agreed that the state needs to have the leadership role, with the participation of the others. But it is also important to have the support of other stakeholders, like civil society. Extensive discussions were held in several learning circles on what one needs to start a consensus. It was general agreed that policy should be put in place to prevent conflict of interest – with all stakeholders participating. Citizen participation means inclusion of people who might not agree with the majority of participants, and it is important to distinguish conflict from conflict of interest. Disclosure, follow-up and continuous analysis of policies are also important. Trust and responsibility and ethics may take more time, but they could produce more proactive and productive dialogue spaces. Alternative policies can be based on different visions for the different sectors – and this means that the people building the agreements should be well informed and flexible.

Respondents also discussed the idea that government policies should ensure that processes can survive political turnover. Change of government may generate new country plans but they should be structured around inclusive dialogue platforms. When modifying programs, one should apply ethical principles – with a focus on assessing differences in process or procedure.

Another concern raised in the learning circles was that it is important to build on existing capacities and ongoing processes at the local level – supported by consistent policies. Existing programmes should be evaluated and there should also be a review of existing stakeholders. Better training is needed to deal with some of the issues covered in the case studies. The need to build the technical and functional capacities of stakeholders to manage conflicts of interest as part of a broader multi-stakeholder collaboration is a major factor that needs to be taken into account. It is also important to ensure mentoring and follow-up.

Questions were raised about the issue of being profitable. There were strong discussions about how the promotion of ethical policies makes it a confusing term. A company should be profitable, but profit should not be the primary motive when dealing with policies and programs.

e.   Summary of Day One
Participants benefited from an interim summary by the **El Salvador Focal Point, Daysi de Marquez**:

- It is Important to recognise that conflicts of interest will happen in multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement. Different stakeholders have different interests and perspectives. Nonetheless, the common goal should prevail, based on established values. .
- Common objectives should be established in advance and be complemented by a framework of values that should be widely disseminated and understood.
- Common values should be established in a participatory way taking into account an ethical perspective. The principle of inclusion is important and should be taken into account from the beginning of the process.
- To avoid conflicts of interest everyone should base their actions on principles. The SUN Principles are a valuable guideline. Important principles include building trust, being transparent, being consistent; and being willing to be flexible.

f.   Reflections by the Ethics Expert
Looking forward to the second day, Mr. Marinero encouraged participants to reflect further on developing a consensus on distinguishing between a conflict and a conflict of interest. He raised a

series of questions about the role of voluntary versus regulatory frameworks and how norms should be enforced. Understanding the rules is important and may require training. Another key issue is the principle of inclusion, including how one decides who to include and what degree of participation is appropriate. Overall, he concluded that there appeared to be unanimous agreement that there will always be an ethical dimension

Day II

IV.   Identification and Managing; Monitoring and Capacity-building.

IV. Some Key Points on the Session on Identification and Managing and on Monitoring and Capacity Building

- Inclusion of all parties is important and communication across parties should be facilitated.
- Civil society may be well suited to identify and monitor conflicts of interest – not only for other groups but also for civil society itself.
- The consistent application of laws by government is important. The government position should not be driven by personal ideologies.
- Individuals need technical or functional capacities to manage interactions and conflicts of interest where they arise.
- The importance of all stakeholders understanding the rules of the game was underlined.
- Existing national stakeholders mechanisms and legal frameworks should be mapped and applied.

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a. Introducing the Reference Note and Toolkit on the Remaining Elements for a Conflict of Interest Policy Framework

Martin Gallagher presented the remaining main elements of the Reference Note and Toolkit on Identifying, Managing, Monitoring and Capacity Building. See the PowerPoint presentation for more details. The Reference Note describes a risk-based approach to assess the degree of significance of conflicts of interest, supplemented by a "reasonable person" test. Managing actual conflicts of interest include both having a procedural framework in place for acting on such conflicts of interest and criteria for applying varying degrees of remedial actions. Monitoring the implementation of a conflict of interest policy includes assessments of policy effectiveness but also ensuring that monitoring mechanisms are in place and being used in the right way. There is an important role for civil society to play to ensure appropriate monitoring, especially where governments are weak.

The importance of capacity building to manage multi-stakeholder interactions, including to adopt and implement a conflict of interest policy was noted. Governments should ensure that skills are built both horizontally, across stakeholders and sectors, as well as vertically from national to the regional and community level. But both the GSO and SUN Secretariat understand the need for encouraging more local expertise in building the capacity to develop and implement conflict of interest policies.

b.   Panel Discussion moderated by Lic. Ana de García

Moderator: Lic. Ana de García
Panelists:

Lic. Josefa Blanco – Director, Centre for Breastfeeding Support (CALM) Representative of civil society

Lic. Brenda Gallegos – Member of the Committee on Food and Nutrition Security at the University of El Salvador (Representative of academia)

Lic. Mario Montero – Executive Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce of the Food Industry in Costa Rica (Representative of the private sector)

Panellists noted that the meeting presented a good opportunity to discuss and reach an agreement on how different stakeholders can go about reaching agreements. While stakeholders may not always agree, that does not mean they cannot always work together. There needs to be a consensus on methodologies integrating the institutional, cultural and legal frameworks, including on the specific issues of breast feeding and food security. All stakeholders should display a willingness to listen and respect interests of each party – and to avoid harm. Every stakeholder needs the ability to understand the specific interests at play.

One important message highlighted by the panellists was that citizen participation should be a key part of identification and management of the conflict of interest approach. The leading role is with the Ministry of Health but others have been added for a multi-stakeholder approach, and all stakeholders must respect each other. It is a key role of civil society to identify conflicts of interest and to hold people to account. One should not, however, exclude particular parties since it is through the coordination among interested parties that common goals can be achieved. In particular, for breastfeeding, the private sector should not be excluded. How laws are being implemented and the roles of all stakeholders should be clear and transparent.

Communication is another important part of the process to ensure that civil society can play this role. Women need to have access to the information to allow them to make informed decisions on the most appropriate infant and young child feeding practices for them. Information should be visible on who is doing what. Stakeholders need to build cooperation and make information accessible to everyone –based on a solid work team. It is important to work within a framework of respect with adequate communication between different parties.

Panelists also observed that more clarity is needed in the Reference Note and Toolkit on what types of corrective measures for remedial action could work in various circumstances. It is important that there is consistency in the application of laws across institutions. However, some panellists suggested that one should not remain focussed on compliance with the Code or other aspects of the legal framework but rather on how one can promote breastfeeding. One should address the social and cultural factors influencing this choice in addition to any focus on the availability of the breast milk substitute.

Finally, panellists discussed the role of monitoring and follow-up. This should not just identify problems but should also identify best practices and report on them. And a mentoring process is important to generate change.

Panelists also discussed a proposal to the SUN Movement to have this Reference Note and Toolkit validated in El Salvador, but it was not clear to the panellists by whom they could actually be validated. This was open for discussion in the learning circles. The panel also heard a proposal for a forum in Costa Rica for the ministry to meet on a regular basis with the companies involved in producing breast milk substitutes to monitor their behaviour.

c.   Learning Circles (2) on Identification and Managing and (3) on Monitoring and Capacity Building (with feedback combined)

i.   General Recommendations from the Learning Circles:

The Reference Note and Toolkit provide a useful route as a model. Several groups expressed support to validate the tools in the Reference Note and Toolkit by applying them to current processes underway in El Salvador. Reference was made to doing a pilot within the food sovereignty law. The multi-stakeholder platform is new and other stakeholders are coming in. So this is a good time to validate. However, there needs to be political will for a validation process. Political will is needed to promote citizenry participation and to set up a committee to handle conflict of interest.   There needs to be clear and continuous information to all stakeholders. Political advocacy is also needed for a monitoring policy, augmented by technical advice for a plan of action. Internal and external audits may need to be done. Sharing of good practice can be very useful.

ii.   Specific Recommendations

On the element involving Identification of Conflicts of Interest, there was feedback from the learning circles that the risk based approach is useful and can be applied to look at specific manageable risks, for example, in the law implementing the promotion of breastfeeding. For a risk based approach, however, there needs to be clarity regarding all the stakeholders that are involved and their interests. Having a tool to apply a risk-based approach would help avoid many of the conflicts of interest that emerge.

Participants further reported that there should be both a legal and an ethical exploration to identify the causes of conflict of interest, the criteria for identifying them, for finding solutions and for taking corrective measures. There needs to be a framework of reference for this. This should involve mapping stakeholders, processes and problems that need to be addressed and to identify the risks among those who are involved and affected the most. There are several legal tools already in place and the process should involve taking stock of these, adapting them to this specific environment and ensuring that everyone knows how to use them.

Another key point from the learning circles was confirmation that the government agency that is responsible for achieving results should be leading the process, but that there needs to be involvement of providers (both private sector and NGOs), direct beneficiaries, academia, cooperatives and society at large. Government taking on board a broad range of opinions does not undermine government's leadership role. All stakeholders need to know the rules of the game. This can help avoid conflicts of interest (and conflicts). A lack of consultation can actually undermine implementation.

Participants agreed that applying due diligence is a good approach to managing/resolving conflicts of interest. Due diligence, however, needs to be undertaken in a situation where everyone is at the same level. The level of influence of different stakeholders needs to be taken into account, and this requires a programme for capacity building. One of the most important issues throughout negotiation processes is a clear understanding of the variables that are the source of conflicts. All people involved in all processes should be clear on their range of flexibility. Some cases are non-negotiable and this will depend on what is being discussed, who's at the table, etc.

Participants also agreed that there is a need for monitoring processes – a new model to identify early the potential of COI. This includes understanding why things are not implemented as planned. The mechanism for monitoring might need to be external – to have sufficient credibility. The challenges are to improve education and advocacy, engage the executive level, engage in monitoring conflict of interest of all stakeholders involved in policy implementation, and ensure an effective implementation.   Some participants in the learning circles suggested that it would be even better to have some kind of independent person to identify who is a stakeholder and identify positive results. The University, it was suggested, should lead in the certification process – to certify people in country by SUN.

V.   Conclusions and Recommendations

V. Some Key Points from the Session on Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Reference Note and Toolkit are useful tools but should be validated through a pilot that could be conducted in El Salvador, with technical support from GSO and SUN.
- There is a need to review translations to ensure translation of tools are meaningful in other languages.
- It is not only important to ensure participation of stakeholders in platforms but to ensure that this participation is of quality – all stakeholders can contribute actively to decision-making and consensus-building and should participate in MSPs under equality of conditions.

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a. Panel Discussion on conclusions and recommendations

Moderator: Daysi de Marquez

Panellists:

Lic. Rosemarie Rivas, Nutrition Specialist with FAO, Representative of coordinating agencies

Ing. Douglas Romero – Project Manager Food Assistance Division (DAA) of the Ministry of Social Inclusion - Government representative.

Lic. Claudia Donis – Program Coordinator Rural Development, Environment and Population in Guatemala - FLACSO - Representative of academia

The panelists agreed that the proposal of piloting is a good idea, and can draw on some of the existing spaces where multiple stakeholders are coming together. Many speakers have underlined the importance of having spaces for dialogue and that of involving all stakeholders. There should be awareness raising within government but also within the broader society. It is important to sensitise the private sector and include other important groups, including academia.

The panel discussed the importance of starting from the recognition that we all have diverse interests – and sometimes they are not compatible. This does not necessarily mean than one or other party has a conflict of interest. Different stakeholders operate at different levels and have different access to the tools. It is important to find common points of both capacity and

understanding. Tools are useful but to apply the tools they need to be a part of everyone's daily work. Dialogue is important and a culture of dialogue needs to be built. Developing legal frameworks can take time; however, the ideas within the Reference Note and Toolkit can be made part of one's everyday work now.

It was suggested once again that government has to lead on COI to develop public policies that are clear. This includes the point that government must actively engage with stakeholders, not just have consultations. Real participation goes beyond consultations. Government should review existing institutions and decision-makers. Discussion on issues related to food and nutrition security and food sovereignty from different sectors are sometimes sources of conflict. The Reference Note and Toolkit and the support from GSO and SUN can serve as the basis to work on resolution of COI in El Salvador and the other countries in the region.

Daysi de Márquez as moderator concluded that the GSO/SUN tools are useful and practical, and it is important to institutionalize them. Conflicts arise when there is a lack of transparency and understanding. Practical implementation should start with prevention and resolution of conflicts. All are agreed on the proposal of El Salvador being a pilot in the implementation of the Reference Note and Toolkit.

b. Closing Discussion on Main Outcomes and Lessons Learned.

Katherine Hagen was invited to share her impressions of the El Salvador Enhanced Learning Exercise. She was joined by **Jose Marinero (Ethics Expert)** and **Nixon Hernandez (Case Study Author)** who were invited to sum up their impressions of the two-day meeting. Mr. Marinero identified three challenges – using dialogue to resolve cultural tensions among diverse stakeholders, translating the theory in the Sun/GSO conflict of interest framework into practice through a possible pilot project, and identifying the rules of the game for moving from where we are to where would like to be. Mr. Hernandez noted that systematizing information within the platform and adapting to cultural considerations while ensuring continuity over time were lessons gleaned from the case studies. In addition, while the government must lead, the methodology for dealing with conflict of interest benefits from the involvement of all stakeholders.

In her conclusions on behalf of the GSO**, Katherine Hagen** expressed appreciation to the reception by participants of the Reference Note and Toolkit as useful in their work. Having a neutral forum to facilitate dialogue and action is important. She also welcomed the important catalytic role of Messrs Marinero and Hernández in stimulating and setting the stage for the dialogues. The GSO once again recognized the importance of working within the local context and of applying the Reference Note and Toolkit as the basis for local frameworks. The SUN Principles of Engagement have come across as particularly important within the discussion. All of the Principles are important, including transparency and inclusiveness, but she especially noted the extensive discussions about the principles of flexibility and mutual trust.

In terms of going forward, the GSO team looks forward to supporting further activities with participants here, as well as in the other SUN Movement countries, in coordination with the SUN Movement Secretariat. A pilot project to validate the Reference Note and Toolkit in El Salvador is an appealing proposal, along with the proposed steps on mapping the legal frameworks and

stakeholders. The GSO hopes there will be particular attention given to the differences between conflicts over policy and conflicts of interest in a multi-stakeholder framework.

VI.   Closing of the Meeting and Next Steps

Daysi de Márquez delivered her closing remarks by noting that the two-day meeting had presented a unique opportunity to share views and experiences and to build stronger relationships across the range of stakeholders with whom the government was working. She thanked SUN and GSO for their support.

We were asked by GSO/SUN whether we are interested in applying these tools and of course, we are. We now have this knowledge and need to start applying these tools. This will require technical and financial support. We have to start from a situation that we are all people with emotions and perspectives. We need to acknowledge our specific interests, and it is important to define common objectives.

The main next steps could include:

- Convening of ad hoc interdepartmental working group (WG) to take this forward
- Sensitising high-level leaders to the issues (government and other stakeholder groups)
- Mapping of current laws, policies, etc. on ethics, conflicts of interest, corruption as well as current frameworks for multi-stakeholder cooperation
- Mapping of stakeholders (Already done by CONASAN)
- Taking into consideration the SUN-GSO Framework (Prevent, Identify, Manage and Monitor), Toolkit and local needs, identification of areas where gaps exist
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Seek (financial/technical) support to support the development of a draft framework for conflict of interest – from traditional donors, particularly UN System
- Drafting of framework for prevention and management of conflicts of interest (the framework may include capacity building components)
- Further consultation with stakeholders
- Agreement of policy framework.

Additional factors to take into account include:

- The approach should be looked at within the context of developing broader functional and technical capacities
- Accreditation for mediators in different phases of conflict resolution.
- Communication, respect and everything based on rights, with a crosscutting role for ethics
- GSO and the SUN Movement Secretariat to act as a resource.

Daysi Marquez stressed that the analysis and discussion of the law of food sovereignty and nutrition security is currently being debated in the Assembly, which is the space for the implementation for the tools for the prevention and management of conflict of interest.