

Introduction

In the decade since the **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement** was established as a multistakeholder and multisectoral country-led movement to end malnutrition in all its forms, much has been accomplished to bring all members together towards this goal. This culminated in 2021, the Year of Action for Nutrition, with the successful United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) and Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit. These events reinforced commitments and strengthened actions designed to ensure all people, everywhere have access to good nutrition.

This past year also marked the significant strengthening of the SUN Movement with a revitalized SUN Strategy 3.0 and a renewed SUN Global Support System, ready to support countries to respond to current opportunities and challenges they are facing as they work to realize national, regional and global nutrition goals.



UNICEF/Krepkih

These developments are very timely. The world is facing unprecedented simultaneous crises impacting the ability of hundreds of millions of people to access healthy nutrition. The global COVID-19 pandemic hit economies hard and created challenges for accessing nutritious foods due to increased costs, reduced cross-border trade, and closures of schools where many children find their only daily source of nutrition.

Today, the world is grappling with another emergency crisis – the ongoing Russia-Ukraine

war – which is already causing increased food and fuel costs, reduced availability of fertilizers, and threatening to decrease production of and access to nutritious foods. In fact, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has reported that food prices are 34 per cent higher than this time last year and have never been this high since FAO started recording them.

At the same time, data from our partners the Global Nutrition Report indicate that worldwide, 149.2 million children under 5 years of age are stunted, 45.4 million are

wasted and 38.9 million are overweight. Over 40 per cent of all men and women (2.2 billion people) are now overweight or obese.

It is therefore critical that we invest in making our food systems resilient and that mechanisms such as the SUN Movement are in positions of strength to both safeguard nutrition progress made over the past decade and to respond to urgently ramped up needs in many countries.

So, as I sit down to write this progress letter to stakeholders, I find myself reflecting on the important year that 2021 was for the SUN Movement and the world, while also recognizing how strategic and nimble we must be in 2022 if nutrition goals are to be achieved – and most importantly if we are to ensure the wellbeing of people and our planet.

SUN Country Progress

In 2021, the SUN Movement's now **65 countries and 4 Indian states** – collectively known as the SUN Countries – made significant national nutrition strides, while also playing key roles in advancing progress of global nutrition goals during this “Year of Action for Nutrition”.



As part of the UNFSS, 53 SUN Countries hosted dialogues that served to build capacity and accelerate action designed into a food system national pathway. Even more, 60 SUN Countries, took part in the N4G Summit and submitted concrete, measurable commitments to the Nutrition Accountability Framework.

This strong SUN Country engagement was supported by a wide range of members and experts across the SUN Movement in its four networks – the SUN Civil Society Network, SUN

Business Network, UN Nutrition and SUN Donor Network – and its Secretariat.

More than 46 of the pathways identified in the UNFSS outcomes included “nutrition” – clear recognition of its importance to effective food systems. Also, eight SUN Government Focal Points were appointed as their national food systems convenor.

Currently, of the 194 countries assessed by the Global Nutrition Report, 105 are on track to meet the target for tackling childhood overweight and over a quarter are on track to meet stunting and wasting targets.

While much progress has been made, the Global Nutrition Report indicates that the world is not on track to meet five out of six global maternal, infant and young children nutrition targets, on stunting, wasting, low birth weight, anaemia and

childhood overweight – nor to meet all diet-related non-communicable disease targets, on salt intake, raised blood pressure, adult obesity and diabetes.

With SUN Countries having now just completed their SUN Joint Annual Assessments, we have a solid sense of what countries need and where other SUN members can support by leveraging the strength of the SUN Movement – including the now +4,000 civil society organizations, +1,400 businesses, 16 UN agencies, and a strong donor network.

We also had the pleasure to welcome three new SUN Countries in 2021: Djibouti, Ecuador, and Sao Tome and Principe.

SUN Movement Secretariat Operational Progress

The year 2021 can be summed up as one of marked “transition and progress” regarding SUN operations. The SUN Movement Strategy 3.0 (2021-2025) was launched, marking the start of the third phase of the initiative, with kick-off events held in many SUN Countries.

The SUN Secretariat was also restructured to meet the evolving and advancing needs of members, including the ongoing embedding in 2022 of staff in four regions around the globe, reflecting the re-emphasized “country-driven, country-owned” approach of the SUN Movement.



UNICEF/Pirozzi

Staff are now being deployed to regional hubs in Dakar, Nairobi, Bangkok and Panama to serve countries regionally, while countries not regionally served, and those with humanitarian needs, will be served in the specially dedicated Convergence Hub. Together they create the Secretariat’s Country Action Team.

The SUN Movement Secretariat is being strengthened by the arrival of its new Director, Marcy Vigoda; the launch of a Resource Mobilization Team to support the SUN Movement to act on increased requests by SUN Countries in

identifying innovative nutrition funding; a new Strategic Advisory Team to support the SUN Coordinator, SUN Global Support System collaboration and, most importantly, country priorities; as well as the launch of a SUN Movement finance capacity development platform, to build and support informed strategic decision-making.

Enhanced implementation coordination across the SUN Movement’s Networks and Secretariat has been strengthened through increased engagement as one SUN

Global Support System. This has included the development of the SUN Global Support System Logframe 2021-2025, as well as aligned SUN Global Support System communications and advocacy strategies and work planning designed to harness the full capacity of the SUN Movement in support of SUN Countries' nutrition communication and advocacy needs.

Our governance bodies have also seen transitions. In late 2021, we bid farewell to our SUN Movement Lead Group Chair, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore, when she retired from her UNICEF role. A dedicated proponent of nutrition and the SUN Movement, she will be long recognized for the very effective leadership she brought to the Lead Group. Newly appointed UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell is now slated to take on this important role, with her confirmation due in the coming weeks. The SUN Movement looks forward to benefiting from the broad and rich experience she brings at this critical moment in time for nutrition globally, and I personally look forward to working with her to maximize the potential of the new SUN 3.0 Strategy.

The SUN Secretariat had a very active year responding to the expanding needs of SUN Countries. I would like to share links with you to our [in-depth report](#) of activity-level SUN Movement progress, which shows the full breadth of impacts achieved through the recently completed SUN Movement 2.0, including in 2021.



While COVID-19 restrictions hampered all our travel in 2021, I was still privileged to participate in my role as SUN Coordinator in many key national, regional and global events in support of SUN Countries and stakeholders – both live and virtually.

At the national level I was very pleased to have travelled to Malawi to take part in the launch of the national SUN 3.0 Strategy by President Chakwera, and to have participated virtually in regional launches across Asia, as well other launches by SUN Countries in Africa and Latin

America. In 2022, as travel restrictions lift, we are planning several missions to SUN Countries as they usually create huge momentum around nutrition and related issues thanks to the involvement of so many country and global SUN members.

At the global level, I represented the SUN Movement at the UNFSS and its pre-summit, N4G Summit and side events, World Health Assembly, Global Climate Conference (COP26) and side events, Committee on World Food Security high-level dialogues, G20 roundtable on nutrition, UN High Level Political Forum panels, national SUN 3.0 launches and related SUN events, World Food Day events held at

the Dubai World Expo, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa Summit, among others.

This included serving in various roles, including on the UNFSS Advisory Committee, N4G Advisory Group, Global Nutrition Report Steering Group, World Economic Forum Stewardship Board on Food Systems, Private Sector Guiding Group for UNFSS led by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and as Food and Land Use Coalition Ambassador, among others. In each role, it was my privilege to bring the voices of our SUN Countries to these global processes and to ensure their perspectives and needs were shared with partners and decision makers.

SUN Movement Network progress

I am also pleased to share with you these progress updates from the four SUN Movement Networks, which also demonstrate the important and unique value and role that each SUN Network and its members bring to the SUN Movement:

UN Nutrition

UN Nutrition was operationalized in 2021 following the merger of the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition and the UN Network for SUN. As the United Nation's coordination mechanism for nutrition, it also serves as the UN network in the context of the SUN Movement.



In 2021, UN Nutrition worked alongside countries and with other stakeholders to fuel the Year of Action on Nutrition, supporting the engagement of UN Resident Coordinators in related roundtables and side events (Indonesia, Rwanda and Nigeria), advocacy campaigns, country investment cases, UNFSS country dialogues (Cambodia, Madagascar) as well as the development of food systems national pathways, and ultimately, the formulation of 2021 N4G and UNFSS commitments.

UNICEF/Nazer

UN Nutrition will soon unveil the strategy that will guide the collective's work through 2030 and help countries pivot from commitment to action. In response to country demand, it continues to deploy its multisectoral mapping tool to help governments identify coverage gaps and improve coordination and accountability across stakeholders. This complements its ongoing work to promote policy coherence and joint programming to better link food, health, social protection, education, WASH and urban systems and to position nutrition at the center of the food transformation, climate change and universal health coverage agendas.

SUN Business Network

The SUN Business Network continued to grow in 2021, expanding its presence to 44 SUN Countries with over 1,400 business members. This growth was made possible by leveraging existing and new partnerships with governments, global members, donors, and the broader SUN Movement to support key initiatives and scale up private sector investment in nutrition. In this important year for nutrition, the SUN Business Network participated in UNFSS dialogues and the N4G Summit, during which it made an ambitious commitment to recruit 3,000 small and medium enterprises by 2024, working with partners to increase the capacity of these to provide nutritious foods for all.

As we move in to 2022 and mark the SUN Business Network's 10-year anniversary, its 3.0 Strategy sets out an ambitious vision for a better aligned effort to: 1) accelerate private sector investment, 2) strengthen business accountability and 3) improve the enabling environment around nutrition. The SUN Business Network is committed to supporting national networks to engage business in support of country nutrition priorities, ramping up strategic partnerships, exploring long-term sustainability models, and increasing its focus on women and youth entrepreneurs.

SUN Civil Society Network

In 2021, the SUN Civil Society Network launched its new strategy after a consultation process with hundreds of inputs from civil society alliances. Under this strategy, every effort is being made to enhance the sustainability and independence of network members, supporting them to seize advocacy, capacity-building and funding opportunities, so that civil society organizations can thrive.

Last year, the network supported representatives from grassroots organizations, youth leaders and international non-governmental organizations in global events, including the UNFSS and N4G Summit, to make bold commitments to tackle malnutrition and amplify civil society representation.

In 2022 the SUN Civil Society Network is focusing on holding pledge-makers to account on commitments made in 2021. The network will continue advocating for food systems that benefit people and planet, and to ensure private sector actors comply with internationally recognized standards of ethics. It will continue supporting alliances to deliver sustainable programming and strong policy changes that benefit the most vulnerable, especially those affected by poverty, conflict and climate change.

SUN Donor Network

The "Year of Action for Nutrition" was at the core of the SUN Donor Network's activities in 2021 with a focus on advocacy for nutrition and preparations for the N4G

Summit and UNFSS. Many network members seconded tremendous resources to the summit organizers.



UNICEF/Willocq

Most network members committed to maintain their support to the SUN Civil Society Network, SUN Business Network and SUN Movement Secretariat, and also provided a front-loading for the Secretariat. The SUN Donor Network also continued to emphasize the need to track nutrition finances and many network members implemented the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development nutrition policy marker and/or engaged in the constitution of the SUN Movement's Finance Task Team.

Participation and inputs to the SUN Operations Group, an SUN Donor Network retreat, and a

Senior Officials meeting were other important achievements of the network in a difficult 2021.

Illustrated by many standalone actions – including finalization of the TASC report and preparations for the Sixth African Union – European Union Summit, and more – there is an inspiring spirit for re-fostered engagement within SUN, resulting in updated work plans and strategic planning in line with SUN 3.0.

Looking forward – from commitments to impact and scaling

Today, as I look forward to what 2022 holds in store, I am filled with optimism, despite the challenges of our times. We are now seeing many countries make the critical shift from commitment making to implementation, creating nutrition impact and scaling up towards solutions that can be owned and driven further by people themselves.

In February, the African Union announced 2022 as “Year of Nutrition”, scaling up the ambition for nutrition action and finance across the continent. Already, the African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency, African Leaders for Nutrition, African Development Bank, SUN Countries in Africa, and the SUN Movement itself, have stepped up to engage in this important year.

The 60 SUN Countries that have submitted commitments to the Nutrition Accountability Framework are now putting their action plans in place for implementation with the support of our SUN Global Support System.

This support includes that of the four new regionally based SUN Movement Representatives and the Convergence Hub, which will not only deliver scaled up on-the-ground support to countries, but which will also create stronger regional

relationships among SUN Countries – enabling valuable knowledge sharing, cross-inspiration and collaboration.



At the global level, action is already underway in preparation for the next N4G Summit to be hosted by the Government of France aligned with the 2024 Olympics. Two months ago, I met with government officials in Paris to support France’s planning, while last month I had the pleasure to meet with the Director General of Global Affairs with the Government of Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Takeshi Akahori to thank Japan for their Nutrition leadership and very successful delivery of the 2021 N4G Summit. We will jointly visit and share N4G lessons learned with the French Government.

This year’s Global Climate Conference (COP27) in Egypt will be an important opportunity to raise the profile of nutrition within the context of climate change, and the environment more broadly. Climate change is already having a significant impact on agriculture, food systems and nutrition across the African continent. Food and nutrition are impacted by climate change, while they need to become part of an integrated climate solution for both people and our planet. This will need to be a key theme at COP27.

This year we will also see nutrition featuring in national COVID-19 recovery plans, and the integration of gender equity in national nutrition plans. The SUN Movement, through its unique multistakeholder and multisectoral approach is actively supporting SUN Countries to advance these. It is critically important to do so, as we know that nutrition is the catalyst to achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals, and so we must work shoulder to shoulder as members and partners on gender, environment, education, water and sanitation, nutrition inclusive universal health coverage, and more. And of course, we want to see everywhere the inclusion of young people.

It is this unique country-driven approach of the SUN Movement that will build global resilience against the threat of increased malnutrition rates caused by current global crises. Should ground be lost, the domino effect could be catastrophic. Malnourished populations create heavy burdens on health systems, workforce productivity, child development, education levels, and economies – stalling development. We must safeguard our food systems.

In short, while the world is indeed facing many challenges, we are also demonstrating our strong resilience and our ability to come together in innovative

ways to harness our shared SUN Movement capacities and principles to tackle some of the most pressing issues of our times.

For this reason, while I announced last month that after serving three terms as SUN Coordinator, I have made the personal decision not to seek a fourth term, I very much look forward to working with each of you, and all of us together, towards the best possible achievements in 2022, until my successor is firmly in place. Using the SUN Movement power of “WE” can create great strides to bring nutrition to everyone, everywhere, for the benefit of both people and our planet.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerda Verburg', written over a white background.

Gerda Verburg

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and
Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
3 June 2022