

Action brief

Creating a private sector network in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Country: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Topics: Coordination

Sub-topics: Strengthening cross-sectoral coordination

Date: 2023



Overview



The establishment of a Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement private sector network is helping place a focus on nutrition and creating an environment conducive to achieving national nutrition objectives. The SUN Business Network (SBN) aims to coordinate the private sector and create multisectoral synergies by improving the mechanisms that connect and support people in the private sector. The SBN also is a key contact for governments and members of civil society wishing to discuss nutrition issues with the private sector.



Objectives of the action brief

This action brief aims to present the establishment of a national SBN in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



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Period covered

The Democratic Republic of the Congo created its Private Sector Operators Network (ROSP) in November 2019 after the National Nutrition Programme encouraged involving the private sector in the fight against malnutrition.

A World Food Programme (WFP) workshop brought together members of the *Fédération des Entreprises du Congo*, member organizations of the *Confédération des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises du Congo*, people working in food and nutrition and representatives of

international organizations to identify the entry points, initiatives, challenges and opportunities for the network.

The network's mission is to promote the contribution and involvement of the private sector in the national effort to improve nutrition – including, among other things, by raising awareness among private stakeholders on food fortification standards.

However, the launch of the network was slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic.



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What action was taken?

The first task was to define the network's terms of reference and draw up a related annual action plan. To do so, the Democratic Republic of the Congo drew on the experience of similar networks in other countries, notably the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, while adapting these models to local realities. The country also

took part in peer-to-peer exchanges with the Congo to facilitate the establishment of an SBN there.

Next, in July 2020, by-laws were drafted and completed to give the network a legal existence and form the basis for its activities. Membership includes full members, who



have certified involvement in food and nutritional safety, and honorary members, who have expertise that makes a significant contribution to the mission. Members pay annual dues and participate in activities. To date, the network has ten members.

The network's General Meeting, which brings together all members at least once a year, is convened by the National Committee. It elects the members of the National Committee, the Special Commission and the Auditing Commission and sets the annual membership fees. The National Committee attends the quarterly coordination meetings of the National Multisectoral Platform for Nutrition (CNPMN) and the consultations organized by the National Nutrition Programme and receives regular support from the WFP when necessary. A monitoring committee, also elected by the General Meeting, monitors and evaluates the network's activities. However, the ROSP and CNPMN plans are not aligned due to a lack of resources.

Funding comes from government and international subsidies, activity income, donations and membership fees.

The network has developed a plan for nutrition enrichment that allows companies to voluntarily enhance their products and thus stand out from the competition through social marketing.

For the past two years, the ROSP has been working on setting up small "Lia Malamu" grocery shops in schools, supplied with Congolese products of a certain nutritional quality and combined with nutritional education sessions for children. The aim is to limit malnutrition while giving

Congolese companies access to a new market. This public-private partnership offers a sustainable alternative to the food programmes offered previously while contributing to the country's economic development.

Alongside this project, the ROSP continues to take part in ministerial meetings relating to nutrition.

Learning, teaching:

- Ensure the lead's dynamism and knowledge of the sector to facilitate the implementation of ROSP and its recognition by the authorities.
- Focus on a single project based on a needs analysis and with potential knock-on effects, in order to maximize spin-offs and limit duplication.
- Create a project, even a small one, to help convince new members to join the network. Potential members must be able to grasp the benefits of joining the network (social marketing, visibility, etc.).
- Gradually incorporate private-sector members into the network, and therefore into projects. New members can be mobilized by sector, depending on the needs of the project.
- Don't underestimate the time it will take to get the network up and running (legal declaration, authorizations for activities, etc.). Allow one year for an SBN to become operational.
- Think carefully about your mobilization strategy.



What would the country do differently?

What could have been done differently:

- Obtain a defined budget line in advance, adapted to the size of the country and the scale of the problems to be solved, in order to rationally plan activities and provide appropriate solutions. This includes the creation of a schedule of activities.
- Establish a plan that involves small producers, as their contributions to nutrition remain important.
- Define a head office for a more tangible existence and for improved network organization.



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Adaptation and applicability

Advice

- Obtain government approval and recognition, including through authorizing speaking time at meetings, to maximize network impact.
- Adapt the experiences of other countries to local conditions. Network creation varies from country to country, particularly in terms of communication and membership.
- Establish a “support” project (communication campaign, small actions) to help decision makers and new members understand the effectiveness and relevance of the network.
- Create benefits for network members (marketing tools, capacity-building in nutrition for private-sector players) to encourage new members.



Challenges

- Difficulties in mobilizing large-scale private sector players, as they see few advantages in joining the network.
- Organizing the network to take account of the diversity of stakeholders in the private sector.



Next steps

- Find funding and a school at which to set up the first “Lia Malamu” shop.
- Establish a food fortification plan in collaboration with the WFP.

For further information, please contact the SBN focal point in the DRC, Mr Rick Puati Ndungi, by e-mail at rickpuatindungi@gmail.com.



ENGAGE • INSPIRE • INVEST

Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
 c/o SUN Movement Secretariat
 Villa Le Bocage, Palais des Nations
 CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland
 +41 (0) 22 917 7283
info@scalingupnutrition.org
www.scalingupnutrition.org