

Action brief

# Creating an enabling policy and governance environment for nutrition amid humanitarian crisis

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**Country:** Somalia  
**Topics:** Coordination of action through improved functional capacities  
**Sub-topics:** Strengthening capacities to better coordinate with sectors or groups

**Date:** 2024



## Overview



This brief focuses on the importance of creating a favourable policy framework and strengthening nutrition governance and coordination mechanisms to address the underlying causes of malnutrition and achieve sustainable nutrition goals.

Somalia has been working to reduce humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities while simultaneously addressing the reasons behind malnutrition. One of the key outcomes of these efforts has been the creation of the Food Systems, Nutrition and Climate Change Inter-Ministerial Council in the Office of the Prime Minister.



## SDGs





## Objectives of the action brief

South-South and Triangular Cooperation can play a critical role in helping countries achieve development goals. From Ethiopia, Somalia has learned how to create a favourable policy framework for nutrition. This has supported the creation of a food systems and nutrition council at the Office of the Prime Minister. Zambia and the Philippines, meanwhile, have taught Somalia to establish nutrition coordination structures. This brief highlights the importance of government policies and structures for sustainable nutrition gains in countries highly dependent on international humanitarian assistance.



## Period covered

The brief covers work undertaken from July to December 2023.



## What action was taken?

The Government of Somalia recognizes that after decades of conflict and recurring drought and famine spells, the country needs to move beyond a seemingly endless cycle of emergency humanitarian interventions. The Government has therefore worked to ensure the country does not focus only on emergency nutrition efforts during humanitarian crises but also on medium- to long-term solutions.

A major reason multisectoral nutrition effort has failed to gain momentum in Somalia has been a lack of coordination and collaboration across sectors. To overcome this, the SUN Movement in the country, with close support from the SMS Convergence Hub, has been working closely with

relevant ministries and international development partners to establish a multisectoral nutrition platform anchored in the food systems approach and backed by legislation. The idea is that a favourable policy framework can facilitate longer-term interventions, obviating frequent and short-lived crisis responses.

This commitment to boosting multisectoral coordination is evident in the Ninth Somalia National Development Plan, in which the Federal Government of Somalia prioritized the establishment of its new Food Systems and Nutrition Inter-Ministerial Council.





Somalia also used the attention paid by donors and governments to the 2022 famine review to set up nutrition governance structures that can help the country boost nutrition in the years ahead rather than focusing on emergency interventions.

In March 2023, with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other development partners, the SUN Movement Secretariat in Somalia drafted the Food Systems and Nutrition Act (FSNA) – flagship legislation to provide legal, policy and institutional frameworks for the country’s first national food systems and nutrition council.

Formally launched in October 2023, the Food Systems, Nutrition and Climate Change Inter-Ministerial Council represents a significant step towards promoting an integrated and holistic response to food insecurity and nutrition and climate challenges in Somalia.

Food security and nutrition are critical issues that require

effective coordination and collaboration among government sectors and with donors and partners. The new Somalia Food Systems, Nutrition and Climate Change Inter-Ministerial Council serves as the governing body responsible for coordinating and overseeing national food security and nutrition initiatives. Chaired by the Prime Minister – a clear sign of its high-level political commitment – the council has the following objectives:

- Enhance coordination and collaboration among relevant government ministries and departments to address food security and nutrition challenges.
- Strengthen the governance and oversight of food systems and nutrition initiatives.
- Promote the integration of food security and nutrition considerations into national policies and programmes.
- Facilitate engagement and coordination with donors and partners at the ambassadorial level.



## What would the country do differently?

Various challenges were encountered during this work, including getting buy-in within the government for investments in human capital development. For most governments that spend heavily on defence budgets, investment in nutrition may not be a top priority. Convincing the government to focus on nutrition requires extensive advocacy backed by evidence that builds the case for investments in nutrition. What will be done differently in the future is investing in advocacy early on and in parallel with the technical preparations.

The technical expertise required to set up these medium- to longer-term government structures may not necessarily be available within the country. The SUN Somalia team was able to overcome this via peer-to-peer learning from other countries, supported by the SUN Convergence Hub. Moving ahead, soliciting support – including technical expertise for these structures – will be a priority early on. Given the limited capacity at the country level, soliciting support for the operationalization of these structures is as important as setting them up.

Limited resource availability is a key challenge, especially for activities that involve policy work and the setting up of government structures. Donor funding in contexts like Somalia is meant for humanitarian interventions, making it difficult to invest in longer-term interventions.





## Adaptation and applicability

→ Eleven SUN Countries are considered “extremely fragile,” according to criteria from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Following the example set by Somalia, which was able to capitalize on the increased government and international partner attention to food security and nutrition brought on by the 2022 famine, these countries can use the spotlight on humanitarian crises to gain traction on work to develop human capital.

→ The Somalia case also highlights the importance of setting up national systems to address food and nutrition issues. Many countries rely solely on international assistance delivered through parallel aid structures. This leads to limited development of government capacities and lack of national ownership.



## What was the role of the SUN Movement in this good practice?

The country’s efforts have been bolstered by what it has learned from other SUN Countries. The policy and implementation frameworks draw heavily on the work behind the Seqota Declaration (Ethiopia), with Somalia gaining valuable insight during a 2022 exchange mission with Ethiopia facilitated by the SUN Movement Secretariat. Meanwhile, the establishment of the Food

Systems, Nutrition and Climate Change Inter-Ministerial Council was inspired by the National Nutrition Council in the Philippines and the National Food and Nutrition Commission in Zambia. These exchanges, facilitated by the SUN Movement, are an example of how countries can capitalize on the wealth of knowledge and experience that exists among the 66 SUN Countries and four Indian States.



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## Next steps

The council, formally launched by the Prime Minister in the first week of October 2023, represents a significant step towards promoting an integrated and holistic response to food insecurity and nutrition and climate challenges in the country. Efforts are under way to boost the team’s capacity to run the council and establish it at the subnational/state level.

Scaling Up  
NUTRITION

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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