The Scaling Up Nutrition Movement is stronger and more determined than ever. Launched in 2010, SUN now unites 60 countries, three states in India and thousands of partners and donors from business, civil society, academia, United Nations agencies, parliaments and the media. Our common mission: to eliminate all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

The SUN Movement’s ability to focus country-level action on malnutrition and its devastating effects has helped drive a sharp reduction in stunting – or low height for age – among young children around the world. With this impressive result, we are poised to make a lasting impact on global nutrition under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Today, SUN is taking great strides in the race to leave no one behind. And many of the movement’s member countries are setting the pace.

Bangladesh, Côte d’Ivoire, El Salvador, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, and Peru have reported a decline in the number of girls and boys suffering from stunting in 2017–2018. These countries are all on track to meet the World Health Assembly target on stunting reduction. Even more SUN countries are reducing wasting – or low weight for height – while six countries are seeing great progress in the reduction of both stunting and wasting.

Meanwhile, more than one-third of SUN countries are slowing the ticking time bomb of overweight in children. And many member countries can boast exclusive breastfeeding rates above 60 per cent for babies in the first months of life – an important lesson for all countries, rich and poor alike.

In fact, one feature that makes SUN unique is its focus on lessons learned. SUN countries are open to learning what works, learning by doing and learning from one another. In 2017–2018, for example, 53 member countries participated in a joint assessment exercise to determine where they are faring well and where they need to scale up their efforts or change course.

Many of these countries have seen a notable increase in momentum for results. Forty-two SUN countries now have national nutrition plans, which are a key ingredient in driving progress on better nutrition for all.
However, we have a long way to go. The world is still miles away from ensuring food security and good nutrition for every household. In 2017, the number of undernourished people globally was an estimated 821 million, a figure that has been on the rise since 2014. Not enough countries – in the SUN Movement or beyond – are on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goals’ target on stunting reduction for children under the age of 5. Nor, given present trends, will we be able to halt the increase in the number of overweight children worldwide.

With these concerns in mind, it is time to take stock and ask ourselves some hard questions. Are SUN countries and networks learning enough from their collective experience, for instance, to accelerate results for people in every member country? How can we reach all children, no matter where they live – whether in Africa, where the number of stunted children is increasing, or in Asia, which is home to 17.5 million overweight girls and boys?

As we consider the answers to such complex questions, we must take action in four areas that will be critical to success.

First, we have to secure the highest possible level of national ownership in making better nutrition a priority. Governments must be fully committed to developing one vision, one plan and one budget to achieve their nutrition goals.

Second, we must accelerate our work on scaling up proven interventions to prevent all forms of malnutrition in the first 1,000 days of life.

Third, we must help countries develop a ‘systems approach’ to nutrition. This means transforming agriculture and food production into sustainable food systems – with education and social protection incorporated as key elements.

Finally, we must fight socio-economic and gender inequalities to improve nutrition across the life cycle. The nutrition of women, including young girls and adolescents, should be at the centre of all national strategies to break the inter-generational cycle of malnutrition.

As the SUN Movement’s members move ahead towards a world free of malnutrition, we know that we count on one another to help turn these challenges into opportunities. Let us work, learn and reach the finish line – together.

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