

## Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Government Focal Points' Meeting

Friday 28 September 2012 | 10:00-13:30

Labouisse Hall | UNICEF House

Three UN Plaza | New York

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### Report

#### Summary

*The second meeting of SUN Country Government Focal Points on the 28<sup>th</sup> September followed the SUN Lead Group and SUN High Level Meeting. The meeting brought together SUN Government Focal Points and facilitators from each of the SUN Movement Networks and Task Teams (Donors, Civil Society, Business, UN, SUN-ACT and Knowledge) to encourage focussed discussion on key issues raised in the Focal Points' first meeting and during their regular teleconferences.*

*The discussion concentrated on two issues that are relevant to advancing the SUN Movement. Firstly, the development of cross sectoral nutrition-sensitive strategies, and, secondly, how to ensure that the SUN Movement Networks are better able to respond to the needs of Country Government Focal Points.*

*A presentation by the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) on sector strategies that are nutrition-sensitive (explicitly designed to tackle determinants of under-nutrition among children and their families) highlighted the importance of ensuring that nutritional outcomes are properly located within all sector strategies. A single set of expected results (a common results framework) is established through cross sector dialogue in multistakeholder platforms. Progress is monitored against the results framework. Estimates of implementation costs are a critical element of all plans to help define programmatic options and mobilise resources from within and outside countries.*

*Participants took part in moderated discussions within breakout groups. They identified some of the critical elements needed to better align nutrition sensitive interventions across different sectors around a single set of results, and to scale up resources available both for specific nutrition interventions and for implementation of nutrition-sensitive strategies in multiple sectors. The elements include building political commitment, taking stock of the current situation, creating a shared space for discussion and action (which includes the voices of communities), the development of nutrition sensitive national development plans around common results frameworks, advocacy, and mobilisation and tracking of adequate domestic and external resources.*

*The second group working session examined the type of support needed from the SUN Networks to help Country Government Focal Points as they bring together different stakeholders, align programmes around common results, and mobilise external and domestic resources. The SUN Movement encourages political leaders, parliamentarians and others to ensure that nutrition is high on the national agenda and national champions help elevate nutrition to regional forums. Focal Points emphasised the importance of a) capturing, documenting and sharing learning and experience; b) facilitating cross-learning through ensuring linkages between countries and through the SUN website; c) donor conveners aligning programmes and funding, d) in country capacity building; e) all SUN Networks advocating for increased domestic and external resources for nutrition, including through innovative approaches and; f) utilising the expertise of the private sector.*

*The closing session of the meeting offered an opportunity for Network Facilitators to give their reactions to the day's work. The Civil Society Network recognised the significant role it can play at community level, in particular ensuring the voices of communities are heard, and its important role in advocacy, innovation and sharing lessons learned, and accountability. The Business Network noted that it has developed a tool kit to enable national businesses to engage with SUN in line with the SUN Strategy and Principles of Engagement. It will further explore how it can best contribute to supporting countries through further dialogue at national and international level in the coming months. The UN Network underlined its potential to support policy guidance, surveillance and monitoring, and support to in-country action through REACH. The Donor Network committed to putting in place functioning donor conveners in all SUN countries, aligning support around country plans, tracking donor support for nutrition and assist with estimations of costs for nutrition sensitive investments. Comments were also given by the SUN Country Network Facilitators, SUN Movement Secretariat and representatives of the SUN Lead Group.*

## **I Introduction**

1 This was the second Focal Points' meeting of the week and followed both the SUN Movement Lead Group Meeting and High Level Event on September 27<sup>th</sup>. The Lead Group unanimously agreed on the Strategy for the SUN Movement.

2 The earlier meeting of Focal Points – on September 26<sup>th</sup> - identified some key challenges with scaling up nutrition within countries. Concerted efforts are needed to ensure that plans and actions are both gender and nutrition sensitive, including across sectors such as agriculture, social protection, public health, and water and sanitation. Bringing such ideas into practice is not easy. Challenges include: identifying nutrition-sensitive strategies, estimating the cost of implementing them, tracking expenditure and identifying shortfalls, as well as monitoring both activities undertaken and nutritional outcomes.

3 The second meeting brought together Government Focal Points from 26<sup>1</sup> of the 30 SUN countries together with facilitators from the SUN Movement Networks. It was designed to encourage focused discussion on key issues raised by the Country Focal Points in the first meeting and in their six weekly teleconferences over the last eight months.

4 Two issues have emerged that are relevant to advancing the SUN Movement Strategy. First – how to better develop and negotiate nutrition-sensitive strategies across a range of sectors. Second – how ensure that the SUN Movement Networks are better able to respond to the needs of the Country Focal Points.

## **II Nutrition Sensitive Strategies**

### *The issue*

5 Colleagues often ask how they can best explain Nutrition Sensitive Development to key people working within different sectors – be they from Government, research institutions, UN system, development bank or donor agency staff, people from civil society, business or the media. They also wonder how best to examine sector programmes to see whether or not they are nutrition-sensitive, and what kinds of results they are expected to achieve. To address these questions, Dr Francesco Branca, Acting Executive Secretary of the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition, made a presentation on nutrition sensitive interventions.

### *Presentation*

6 Dr Branca stressed that strategies need to be defined and described in straightforward language, and followed up with plans to translate them into action, with interactive platforms that allow genuine debate among the different stakeholders within and outside government. SUN Movement Focal Points and Networks need to ensure that nutritional outcomes are properly located within all sector strategies and that proposed actions in pursuit of these outcomes are based on evidence, relevant to the needs and interests of communities at risk of poor nutrition,

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda sent apologies.

and are developed through an inclusive consultative process. This will usually include a national multi-stakeholder platform that engages relevant and related sectors including agriculture and food systems, health, education, employment, gender, water and sanitation, social protection, trade as well as urban and rural planning.

7 Dr Branca acknowledged that issues of food quality also need to be considered, as well as systems for food distribution and the determinants of women's access to food (including purchasing power, physical access, seasonal factors, geographical location and autonomy). Trade policies – including those surrounding production and export of cash crops, are also relevant. A special focus on the interests of poor people, woman-headed households, smallholders, pregnant women and people with chronic illness and disabilities is essential to ensure that those most at risk of under-nutrition are factored into strategies and plans. Hence the emphasis on social protection that is predictable, timely, equitable, accessible to all and nutrition-sensitive. Diet diversification was highlighted as a priority area of focus, along with the minimisation of waste through the supply chain.

8 Dr Branca emphasised that estimates of implementation costs are a critical element of all plans to help define programmatic options and mobilise resources from within and outside countries. During planning, a first stage is to take stock of what is already being done (or is planned) and to consider how existing programmes can be adapted to better achieve the desired nutrition outcomes.

### *Discussion*

9 SUN Country Focal Points and Network facilitators worked in 8 groups to consider challenges to effective in-country implementation of nutrition-sensitive strategies at scale. They discussed what Government Focal Points could do (i) to align nutrition sensitive interventions across different sectors around a single set of results, and (ii) to scale up resources available both for specific nutrition interventions and for implementation of nutrition-sensitive strategies in multiple sectors.

10 The groups concluded as follows:

- a. ***Engage communities from the start:*** Engage with local communities to obtain their point of view on the most appropriate nutrition sensitive actions for inclusion in different sector strategies. It is at community level where the main action needs to take place.
- b. ***Lay the foundation for a multi-sectoral approach:*** Begin with an analysis of the situation, including the position of nutrition within the different sectors and the availability of people within these sectors with whom to engage on nutrition issues. Review current documentation (such as policies and plans should) to identify where nutrition currently positioned. A multi sectoral approach is vital but it should be grounded in people's realities. Identify nutrition-sensitive elements that could be enhanced within each strategy, estimate the cost of enhancement, map out current patterns of implementation and identify shortfalls.

- c. ***Develop plans and a results framework for nutrition sensitivity:*** The objective is to get well defined, cross sectoral objectives relating to nutritional outcomes within national development strategies. A plan for pursuing this objective that reflects the input of all sectors, has a multisectoral structure and outlines the roles and expectations of different actors. It would include standardized and measurable indicators that can be applied across ministries. A single set of results – set out as a Common Results Framework - is essential. Once developed and agreed, all sectors can refer to it. The framework should be short and clear enough for all to understand and for Ministers and Senior Officials to refer to in cross-government or multi-stakeholder working.
- d. ***Create a mechanism to sustain high level engagement:*** All agree that high level in-country engagement is needed to secure nutrition sensitivity across the sectors. This means investment in creating momentum at the highest level, and encouraging enthusiasm among leaders. To do this, multisectoral coordination is best located in a high level part of government – the President or Prime Minister’s office, or within the Planning Commission – rather than in a line Ministry. A high level inter-Ministerial or Permanent Secretary steering committee can assist with this. Synergies at the provincial and district level should be factored into planning and all levels should be engaged in implementation. Nutrition Sensitivity is easier to achieve if nutrition expertise is located within all line ministries.
- e. ***Advocate for nutrition sensitivity – sharing experiences between countries:*** Developing a multi-sectoral nutrition plan requires focused advocacy so as to create the context in which it can happen. The techniques used by SUN countries that successfully develop multi-sectoral plans should be shared with others so that all countries can use them as applicable.
- f. ***Ensure accountability:*** Accountability at all levels is imperative. This includes leaders living up to their commitments and making funds available not only at national level, also at decentralised levels. It means having reliable systems for managing Information and reporting on progress so that all stakeholders have the same information about what is happening and which results are being realized. Mutual accountability can be reinforced through having cross-Government “contracts” between different sector and/or provincial leaders and the head of Government.
- g. ***Mobilize adequate resources:*** All involved in the SUN Movement want to be sure that sufficient funds and skilled people are available both for nutrition-sensitive actions and for specific nutrition interventions of good quality and coverage. An agreed Framework of Results is used in some SUN countries as a basis for the convergence of different programmes and their alignment in order to yield expected outcomes. The demonstration of outcomes being achieved through efficient use of investments encourages Finance Ministries and donors to liberate more resources. Indeed, demonstration of outcomes is the best argument for decision makers to agree on contributing more funding.

- h. **Engage key actors on financing – Finance Ministries and Civil Society:** Finance Ministries have a crucial role as they not only make funds available from national budgets but are also frequently involved in prioritizing external assistance (from development banks, foundations or donor agencies). Civil society (both national and international) has a key role to play in encouraging the mobilization of both in-country and external resources, and in checking that funds are used efficiently to benefit those who are most at risk. The involvement of national NGOs is critical to ensure in country ownership of the effort.

### III Ensuring that SUN Countries receive the best possible support

#### *The Issue*

11 Participants met in groups to consider how SUN Countries could receive better support from the SUN donor, business, civil society and UN Networks (a) when they work with stakeholders in different sectors to identify nutrition-sensitive interventions and (b) when they try to align the interventions with a single set of expected results. They also considered how best SUN Country Focal Points and Networks can work together to mobilize extra internal and external resources for scaling up nutrition.

#### *Discussion*

12 The groups concluded as follows:

- a. **Get the different stakeholders to focus on nutrition:** The groups were clear – they need help to ensure the consistent engagement in-country of the President and Prime Minister, Ministers, Parliamentarians, tribal and religious leaders, business leaders, media and legal experts so as to ensure that nutrition features in national plans for development, food security, resilience (such as the 3N initiative in Niger), maternal and child health, poverty reduction, education and women’s empowerment. They would like to be able to receive help from the Lead Group chair and members, from the SUN networks and from the Secretariat.
- b. **Emphasis on capacity building is vital:** Frequently the constraint to moving forward is the limited availability of in-country capacity: in some countries this is seen as a priority both for national development and for external support. In-country capacity can be supported through the sharing of expertise and tools.
- c. **Share experience and information among stakeholders:** A multi stakeholder forum is needed to exchange information. This could include creating learning platforms. Exchange visits should be arranged between SUN countries, and the SUN Movement Secretariat can assist with linkages between countries. Evidence-based practical experience should be shared. The website and newsletters could be used to share information and experience. Sometimes more can be learnt from what has not worked than from success stories.

- d. ***Increase work at the regional level:*** The regional level has potential but this means developing linkages with and through regional organizations: this is potentially a good entry point for bringing nutrition into national development plans (and into strategies for food security).
- e. ***Align programmes and funding:*** Government should take the driving seat in relation to developing plans and aligning resources. It often helps if donors are part of the process as good donor representatives can facilitate flexibility and buy in. It is important that donors listen to what the countries are saying and act in response to what they hear.
- f. ***Adopt innovative approaches to mobilizing resources:*** Innovative approaches can be established if there is a strong national commitment and at least some budget allocation (e.g. nutrition objectives in the national development plan or a fixed percentage of government budget allotted to nutrition).
- g. ***Work with the SUN Movement Networks on financing:*** Donor convenors should help Country Focal points to link to the donor network and discuss their needs. The recently established SUN Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) could serve as a model for innovative funding. National and external resources for nutrition could be pooled in-country and used in a transparent way. The business sector has a big role to play both within countries and in supporting advocacy. All the SUN networks could help advocate for increased funding to countries that are prepared to Scale Up Nutrition.
- h. ***Document country experience:*** A system is needed to document country experience – partly for accountability and partly for advocacy. SUN networks need information about in-country progress to support their own advocacy. Documentation should focus on what needs to be done, how it can be implemented, and to whom accounts should be rendered. It forms a valuable base for high-level meetings which increase levels of advocacy within countries.
- i. ***Engage the Private Sector:*** There was a general consensus that each stakeholder has a role to play but that the private sector has a range of expertise into which all could tap to good advantage.
- j. ***Make the Movement Work as We all Want it To (WaWaWiTo):*** The SUN Focal Points, Networks, Lead Group and Secretariat can help ensure that different parts of government are able to work together, build on each other, strengthen their capacities, know what to do, amplify their efforts, go to scale, make a difference and let everyone know about it.

#### **IV Comments from SUN Movement Network Facilitators**

13 The *Network Facilitators* gave their reactions to the day’s work – especially the comments from the second round of group discussions. They were invited to say what they would expect to do differently as a result of what they had heard.

##### *Civil Society*

14 All three of the participants from the civil society network spoke: they were encouraged by the discussion, by the recognition that no one sector can tackle the issue of under-nutrition on its own. All have important roles, and this requires all to work together. Civil society is a major force in the SUN Movement: organizations in the network have “feet on the ground” and are very active at community level. The Movement can benefit from Civil Society organizations sharing realities from the communities that are most at risk of under-nutrition. Civil Society organizations can help ensure that those most at risk can access the interventions needed for better nutrition, and ensuring that this happens. It is important to go beyond aligning behind common plans and expected results: there must be spaces within which civil society (especially women’s groups) and all other actors can be part of the process, helping to develop concepts, prepare plans, implement and assess outcomes.

15 Civil society has an important role in articulating the voice of those affected by under-nutrition, at the country level and internationally. To help increase Civil Society participation at country level, 10 proposals for the development of SUN civil society alliances are being supported through the SUN Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The role of civil society in facilitating programme innovation and learning among practitioners – especially to crystallize out ‘what works’ and to share this throughout the SUN Movement. Civil society has two other vital roles: (i) support for capacity-building and (ii) assessing whether scaling up nutrition is on track or not (looking at metrics on results or levels of financial investment). The SUN Civil Society network is being re-configured with an inclusive stewardship structure and will solicit increased membership particularly from in-country civil society organizations.

##### *Private Sector*

16 The private sector has a lot to share about how actions can be implemented efficiently and effectively in multiple locations with full attention to people’s interests and wishes. To this end, the Private Sector network has developed a set of tools which will help local business groups support the implementation of national strategies and programmes within the context of the SUN Movement Strategy and the “Principles of Engagement” for groups within the Movement. Discussions on the potential contribution of business to national SUN efforts will shortly be initiated by the network in around 10 SUN countries. The private sector will hold high level discussions on its potential contribution to the SUN Movement – and, specifically, in support of national nutrition strategies, targets and programmes. There is scope for businesses operating in multiple locations to stimulate the sharing of experience between SUN countries and to reinforce SUN as a Movement.

### *United Nations Network*

17 There was widespread appreciation for the contribution of the REACH partnership to the building of multi-stakeholder nutrition platforms in-country, stocktaking of on-going actions, facilitating the development of multi-sectoral policies and nutrition-sensitive sector strategies, assisting the development of national plans and supporting implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The contributions of the individual UN agencies were also appreciated – specifically those of UNICEF, WHO, FAO and WFP. The SCN Acting Executive Secretary, Francesco Branca, described the capacity of the different agencies to assist, described the potential of the SCN to offer coherent policy guidance, and mentioned the additional capacities now available to support surveillance and monitoring from within WHO. Nancy Walters of REACH also spoke: others (Florence Egal, Facilitator at Large, Mohammed from FAO, Werner Schultink, UNICEF HQ, as well as Felicity and Noel, UNICEF regional adviser, would also like to have spoken but time was very tight).

### *Donor Network*

18 Anna Taylor, Erin McLean and Hanns-Christoph Eiden all explained the commitment of the donor network to have functional country conveners, to align support around country plans, to improve tracking of donor support, to assist with capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and to seek to expand the donor base. They appreciated the efforts being put into advancing the stages of country preparedness and the news that several countries have been able to increase their national spend on support for nutrition outcomes. They offered to help with estimations of costs for nutrition-sensitive investments.

### *SUN Movement Secretariat*

19 Comments were made by Christine McDonald (Consultant on Costing, formerly with the World Bank); as well as Emorn Wasantwisut, Bibi Gyose and N.K. Sethi (who have facilitated the Country Focal Point network since it was created in 2011). Each offered to help the Focal Points advance their work and to stimulate learning between countries. Christine will provide material which will support on defining interventions, costing them and assessing the shortfall.

### *SUN Movement Lead Group*

20 Opening and closing comments were kindly provided by Lead Group members Nina Sardjunani and Tom Arnold.

## **Conclusion**

The meeting of SUN Country Government Focal Points was an opportunity for analysing constraints to scaling up nutrition, sharing approaches for overcoming them and identifying ways in which the SUN Lead Group, Networks and Secretariat can help. The outcomes of the discussion groups emphasised the importance that SUN Focal Points attach to the four processes identified in the SUN Strategy.

First: functioning, multi-stakeholder platforms that focus on people's interests and needs, Second: agreed strategies and legislative frameworks, Third: a single set of expected results around which different groups align, and Fourth: mobilising additional resources (and capacity) in support of effective actions to realise the results.

SUN Country Focal Points are leading the way in catalysing these processes at country level. However, they are looking to the SUN Lead Group, Networks and Secretariat for support in mobilising and sustaining high level political commitment; capturing and sharing learning; aligning external support; resource mobilisation and national and global advocacy.

The SUN Network Facilitators recognise the needs of SUN countries and will increase their support activities. The SUN Movement Strategy charts the way forward for the Movement, and the Lead group has requested a detailed accountability framework for the Networks which outline how they will support the SUN countries, a Resource Mobilisation Strategy and an Operating -plan

Within the SUN Movement, countries are at the centre, moving ahead with energy and commitment. The meetings helped all concerned appreciate how Focal Points can be supported as they enable different parts of government to work together, complement each other, strengthen their capacities, know what to do, amplify their efforts, go to scale, make a difference and let everyone know about it. They inspired us all.

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