

The 16th meeting of the SUN Movement Network of Country Focal Points took place between November 3rd and 6th 2014. The meeting involved 9 two-hour sessions by teleconference: five in English, three in French and one in Spanish.

In all there were 234 participants in the meeting from 47 countries [Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cameroon; Chad; Comoros; Congo-Brazzaville; Cote d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of the Congo; El Salvador; Ethiopia; The Gambia; Ghana; Guatemala; Guinea Bissau; Guinea Conakry; Haiti; Indonesia; Kenya; Kyrgyz Republic; Lao PDR; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mozambique; Namibia; Nepal; Niger; Pakistan; Peru; Philippines; Rwanda; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Sri Lanka; Swaziland; Tajikistan; Tanzania; Togo; Vietnam; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe and the Indian state of Maharashtra]. Participants from Bangladesh; Cambodia; Costa Rica; Liberia; Myanmar; Nigeria; South Sudan and Uganda were not able to join. Forty one per cent of the participants were employed by their national governments, 32% came from United Nations entities, 17% from civil society organizations and academia and 6% were from bilateral donor agencies.

The meeting agenda was as follows: 1) Theme: "Contribution of nutrition specialists, science and academia to support scaling up nutrition"; 2) Progress with Scaling Up Nutrition within countries and major initiatives anticipated in the next months; 3) Information about major priorities for the SUN Movement in 2014: Feedback from the Lead Group meeting held on 22 September 2014 in New-York; Presentation of the programme of the 2014 SUN Movement Global Gathering; Update on the Independent and Comprehensive Evaluation of the SUN Movement; Update on the preparation of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

1) Thematic discussion: Contribution of nutrition specialists, science and academia to support scaling up nutrition

- This thematic discussion was organized to hear from country participants on how nutrition scientists, academics and professional associations currently support scaling up nutrition, and on gaps identified and needs. At least 27 SUN countries have academic institutions involved in the national multi-stakeholder platform but the exact contribution of academic institutions to the platforms needs to be better understood. In addition, academic institutions, nutrition professionals and scientists are increasingly involved in the four emerging Communities of Practice that are strengthening the capacity of SUN countries to deliver improved nutrition.
- The thematic discussion enabled participants to share experience and challenges, and to identify the approach that is needed to develop mechanisms for supporting and facilitating access to scientific evidence, nutrition academic and professional support by governments of countries and others in the SUN Movement.
- **Participants were asked to consider the following questions when preparing for the meeting:**

1. *How are nutrition scientists, academics and professionals integrated into the activities of country multi-stakeholder platforms for nutrition or the networks from which the platform is composed? (provide examples and good practices)*
2. *What are the challenges of working with nutrition scientists, academics and professionals and how can they be addressed?*
3. *Is there a need in your country to develop specific mechanisms to leverage scientific evidence and capacity to scale up nutrition interventions?*
4. *What are the top three actions that are needed to create an enabling environment to strengthen nutrition science, academic and professional support for scaling up nutrition? And what is needed to ensure that these actions are implemented?*

Overview of feedback from countries during the meeting of the network of SUN Country Focal points:

1. ***How are nutrition scientists, academics and professionals integrated into the activities of country multi-stakeholder platforms for nutrition or the networks from which the platform is composed? (Question 1)***
 - Scientists and academics are part of the multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) in most countries. In at least 4 countries (Ghana, El Salvador, Niger and Yemen) an academic platform for scaling up nutrition has been established while at least 14 countries are progressing towards establishment of platforms for the academia (Indonesia, Tajikistan, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, DRC, Congo Brazzaville, Togo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Conakry, Madagascar, Zimbabwe and The Gambia). While some countries highlighted a lack of human resources others felt that they have a critical mass of academics and professionals though their availability was frequently a constraint. Experts in nutrition focusing on aspects of health, medicine, agriculture and education are involved through universities, research centres and institutes or through technical groups within the MSP. The contribution of scientists and nutrition professionals is mostly done on an *ad hoc* basis. It includes:
 - Technical contribution for the design of nutrition programmes, policies, strategies and drafting of guidelines; and the design and implementation of nutrition surveys or surveillance systems;
 - Support for dissemination of nutrition knowledge and awareness raising in the population;
 - Training through integration of nutrition into curricula at different educational levels and for different professions (medical and agricultural staff as well as students specialising in nutrition);
 - Implementation of research studies on specific topics. Masters students, in particular, are a potential source for carrying out specific research projects.
2. ***What are the challenges of working with nutrition scientists, academics and professionals and how can they be addressed? (Question 2)***
 - Lack of coordination between government or planning institutions and research institutions, and lack of coordination between scientists and researchers themselves. This means that support to government tends to be 'one-off' rather than sustained and built around key priority areas.

- No common national research agenda and no common programming framework. As a result, research is frequently driven by external agenda and not linked to the priorities of policy-makers. Sometimes there are competing interests in prioritization of interventions between government and scientists and within the scientist community as well. The focus of current research is academic, geared towards publications and obtaining a degree. It is appropriate to have research that meets the highest academic standards but often the scope of this research is too narrow to be of use for stakeholders and decision making.
- Limited financial resources. Lots of countries also face the challenge of insufficient human resources.
- Poor communication between policy-makers and scientists or researchers. Those providing evidence need to translate and communicate findings in a format that speaks to policy makers i.e. provide it in a format that stakeholders can understand and implement. Users of evidence need to improve the way they ask for information and define research needs, to make sure researchers can address those questions effectively. Stakeholders need to understand better what questions researchers can answer and which ones are too broad.
- The time-scale for research is at odds. Governments and decision-makers often need evidence quickly to inform the decisions. Scientists or researchers often have a longer time-scale which provides 'answers' too late. Approaches that aim to integrate nutrition research for decisions will need to ensure that needs and time constraints of policy makers are addressed in a timely fashion.

3. What needs to be done to leverage scientific evidence and capacity to scale up nutrition more effectively? (Questions 3 and 4)

There was a general consensus that more can be done, in particular with regard to communication and networking within the scientific community, and between scientists and decision makers.

- Enhance the coordination between the governments and research institutes by formalising partnerships to ensure concerted involvement of science and academia through extending the MSP and or establishing specific networks.
- Specific networks at national level can be linked with regional level institutions while south-south cooperation can be enhanced.
- Mechanisms to define and agree research priorities could be set up based on the key requirements of a country for scaling up nutrition, and involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders.
- Mechanisms to disseminate research findings more widely and in a clear manner which is helpful to decision-makers could be useful. Potential examples are through policy briefs and information-sharing workshops. The SUN Movement Secretariat can help to disseminate results and evidence of research from global level to national level.
- National nutritional policy and strategy documents could integrate the national nutrition research priorities and research agenda.

- Mechanisms to increase funding for relevant research could be set up which ensures that the common and agreed research agenda of the MSP in SUN countries is met. A specific budget line for nutrition research would help to ensure that decision-makers can commission research that is useful for them. The donor community needs to align itself more with country research priorities. Appropriate financing mechanisms were proposed by several countries.

2) Progress made by countries

PROCESS 1

- **Launch of SUN or high-level event emphasizing nutrition:** Launch of SUN is planned in *Vietnam* in December. Representatives from Government, academia, UN, civil society and private sector will participate in the event.
- **UN Network, REACH Initiative:** In *Democratic Republic of Congo*, the UN network is now headed by UNICEF ;
- **Commitment of civil society in SUN multi-stakeholder platforms:** *Burkina Faso* is setting up a civil society network with the support of ACF and has organised a study tour in Niger to this end. *Democratic Republic of Congo* is currently setting up a civil society platform with support of HKI. In *Mauritania*, Civil Society Organisations are working to set up a steering committee with national and international NGOS.
- **Bringing all sectors into the multi-stakeholder platform and reinforcing bodies in charge of coordinating national efforts to boost nutrition:** *Benin* has identified a service contractor to undertake a mapping of actors in nutrition. *Burkina Faso* has passed a law to create a fortification alliance and has several meetings with AGIR. *Togo* has initiated several meetings with civil society and government so as to set up a platform before the end of the year. *Mali* has led activities to strengthening capacities of the MSP and trained the focal points in nutrition matters in various sectors (health, education, agriculture, social development). *DRC* developed a SUN implementation roadmap which encompasses the development of a strategic plan, CRF (Common Results Framework), budgetisation... *Guinee-Bissau* set up a committee within the Ministry of health in charge of elaborating a multisectoral protocol (to set up the platform) and awareness raising among relevant actors has been made. *Zambia* has completed the self-assessment exercise and it will be shared with partners for feedback. *Mozambique* has established technical working groups to support the relevant sectors to incorporate the nutrition sensitive and specific interventions in the annual plans and align the sectoral and provincial plans with national plans. *Tajikistan* completed its mapping exercise with help of Civil Society Network (CSN) and findings will be share at MSP meeting.
- **Improving donor coordination and alignment:** In *Democratic Republic of Congo*, the donors' network is now headed by the World Bank. In *Mozambique* USAID has been assigned as donor convener.

PROCESS 2

- **Assessment of nutrition legislation and national assets:** The senate in *Haiti* voted a fortification law, which is awaiting approval by the members of Parliament. It is currently finalizing various plans with partner and the public sectors, so that the nutrition policy element are integrated into sectorial plans. *Zambia* has initiated the review process of the food and nutrition laws, extensive consultations with

stakeholders including civil society alliance has been carried out. Ministry of Health is coordinating the process and will finalize the legislation. **Namibia** MSP has agreed to develop a National Nutrition policy with support from stakeholders and will focus on International Code of Marketing of Breast milk substitutes, food fortification, food safety and quality. **Vietnam** completed its policy revision of Universal Salt Iodisation and breast milk substitutes and it is being processed for approval. **Indonesia** is in mid of the planning for the five years development plan and Scaling Up Nutrition has been included as a priority.

- **Setting-up of new laws:** 15 government sectors, technical and financial partners (WFP, UNICEF) and civil society from **Congo-Brazzaville** all validated a strategic framework against malnutrition (document which will serve as the basis of SUN governance in the country). They will now elaborate an operational plan before the end of 2014.

PROCESS 3

- **Programs:** **Haiti** started a nutrition-sensitive program to strengthen WASH activities in schools. The program is supported and undertaken by the office of the First Lady in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. **Rwanda** has started implementation of 1000 days campaign while a documentary has been prepared to share with SUN countries. **Swaziland** with technical support from MQSUN is preparing a comprehensive Stunting Prevention Project. **Namibia** has started the local production of Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF).
- **Information systems:** **Burkina Faso** realized a SMART survey and is awaiting the finalization of results. **Congo-Brazzaville** has initiated a SMART survey on fortification of manioc flour, for which funds have been secured. **Togo** validated the results of a SMART survey in three regions. **Swaziland** has completed the cost of hunger study and shared it at the SUN Movement global gathering. **Mozambique** carried out annual review of National Nutrition Plan (PMARDC) and discussions are underway to scale up the interventions and establish an M&E system. In fact as step forward the surveillance system has been redesigned to become food and nutrition surveillance system. **Mozambique** has established information sharing mechanism at national and sub national level to promote the better understanding of the nutrition problems and enhance coordination.
- **Development of Joint Results Frameworks:** **Yemen** MSP has endorsed its National Nutrition Multisectoral frame work document and it will be forwarded to the cabinet for approval. **Malawi** has completed its planning and costing of Nutrition strategic plan which will help the country in scaling up.
- **Decentralization of national plans to provincial level:** **Mali** has set up SUN alliances at the regional levels and elaborated subsequent action plans. It is also programming the dissemination of the National Nutrition Policy and of the multi-sectoral action plan for nutrition at the national and regional levels. **Mozambique** has established technical working groups to support the relevant sectors to incorporate the nutrition sensitive and specific interventions in the annual plans and align the sectoral and provincial plans with national plans. **Malawi** has documented progress in the past few months i.e. scaling up of the interventions to cover all the targeted districts. The Civil Society Alliance in **Nepal** is supporting the implementation of SMAC (Social Mobilisation, Advocacy and Communications) interventions to districts. **Zimbabwe** (ZCSOSUNA) is currently establishing sub national structures at Provincial level.

PROCESS 4

- **Financial monitoring and mobilization of resources:** *Benin* organized a regional workshop with support of UNICEF, World Bank and the SUN Movement Secretariat with several francophone countries on financial tracking and budgeting which enabled participants to be trained on the use of existing tools. *Mali* is currently identifying financial gaps related to the implementation of the nutrition action plan. *Guinee-Bissau* is lobbying so that the 2015 budget integrates a budgetary line for nutrition activities to be led by the Ministry of Health. In *Mozambique* a donor mapping is being carried out to improve the coordination and allocation of resources. The information from this exercise will be shared with all the stakeholders through a website. Civil Society for SUN in *Swaziland* has been carrying out a budget review funding commitment to nutrition interventions 2015 and to review budget lines across different ministries. Ministry of health *Swaziland* with support from Clinton Health Access Initiative has started the financial tracking to ensure the adequate resources allocated for nutrition. Government of *Zambia* has approved pool funding which includes the SUN fund resources which will be distributed to reach the districts and to start implementation of “minimum package” of nutrition specific and sensitive intervention.

3) Important communications of the SMS to countries:

- Feedback from the Lead Group meeting held on 22 September 2014 in New-York
 - Presentation of the programme of the 2014 SUN Movement Global Gathering
 - Update on the Independent and Comprehensive Evaluation of the SUN Movement
 - Update on the preparation of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)
- (please refer to the Talking Points sent before the calls)*