The inaugural meeting of the SUN Civil Society Network took place on June 11, 2013, following the Sustaining Political Commitments to Scaling Up Nutrition event that took place on June 10. It aimed to identify and agree on key priorities for the SUN Civil Society Network. The meeting counted over 66 representatives from SUN countries national civil society, SUN civil society alliances, SUN countries focal points and international civil society organisations, with over 32 countries present.

**A favourable global context & a unique window of opportunity**

This meeting took place in a favourable global context with a growing momentum, building on incredible progress made in the past five years. A plethora of nutrition related high level events happening in June 2013 such as the Nutrition for Growth event, the Sustaining Political Commitments to Scaling Up Nutrition, the G8 meetings, important commitments from governments (as many as 40 countries now signed up to SUN) and the new landmark Lancet publication series on nutrition reinforcing the importance of focusing nutrition efforts on the 1000 days from conception to a child’s second birthday and identifying SUN as the main vehicle for scaling up nutrition worldwide. These provide a unique window of opportunity that the SUN Civil Society Network must capitalize on.

With nutrition being high on the global agenda and having a renewed and improved understanding of malnutrition, its determinants and effective interventions, how can civil society contribute to building capacity to ensure we deliver and be the driving force to secure break through?
Priorities of the CSN

Plenary and working group sessions’ discussions focused on participants agreeing on priorities to shape the SUN CSN agenda and actions. The plenary discussion was lively and various Civil Society Participants from SUN countries contributed their perspectives on what the global Civil Society Network should focus on.

The agreements were as follows:

1. Supporting capacity building for Alliances, where they are already formed.
2. Ensuring adequate flow of information within and among countries as well as within and between different languages spoken in the various countries – sharing of knowledge, experiences, processes, evidence, opportunities for raised visibility and advocacy.
3. Supporting the establishment of civil society alliances in countries where they do not exist yet.
4. Developing and providing guidelines to support CS throughout the Movement (e.g. structure, governance, CSA membership, conflict of interest management, multi-sectorial efforts, monitoring, steps towards establishing a network (based on success examples e.g. Peru), etc.).
5. Developing an “advocacy tool kit” with key messages to enable us all to “sing the same song”.
6. Providing support for multi-sectorial partnerships (including guidance on how to engage with private sector, farmers group, etc.; facilitating connections when possible; connecting with broader SUN efforts and dialogue on public-private partnership).
7. Playing an evaluation role if possible to evaluate impact and assess what else should be done.
8. Advocating: influencing donor policies and priorities, specific policy changes and integration of nutrition in global policies.
9. Channeling opportunities for funding toward countries in need.
10. Organizing sub-networks to facilitate efforts (e.g. francophone Africa, Eastern Africa, Latin American, …)
11. Supporting actors throughout the Network to mobilise citizens and get grassroots organisations involved in SUN, working towards a groundswell of grassroots support for nutrition and SUN

A panel discussion on experiences of setting up Civil Society Alliances presented case studies from Peru, Malawi and Uganda, providing an opportunity to learn from country experiences and share good practices and challenges.

Key recommendations from the panelists

- Reaching a common vision for government and business communities;
- Gathering a strong body of country context specific evidence of what works;
- Coordinated coalitions have a stronger voices;
- Mobilising grassroots communities;
- Establishing processes to manage conflicts of interest and ensure clear expectations within civil society alliances;
- Leveraging district-level support and establishing district level civil society platforms;
- Go for the highest level of political commitment;
A future challenge for all will be that of sustaining momentum of these coalitions and managing changes in leadership and potential resulting loss of passion, interest, engagement.

**Breakout groups**

Breakout groups took place in the afternoon covering various aspects of how the CSN should function, and looking in more detail as to what its priorities should be. The group discussions focused on the following areas:

A. *What support do countries with established Civil Society Alliances (CSA) need from the CSN Secretariat/Steering Group?*

B. *What support do countries without established CSA need from the CSN secretariat/Steering Group?*

C. *What support does country-level civil society need from the CSN secretariat/Steering Group? (discussions in French)*

D. *How should the CSN share information.*

E. *Advocacy mandate of the Secretariat / Steering Group.*

F. *Membership and participation: how should the national and global CSN relate to the wider nutrition community and other groups?*

**The group discussions identified key activities for the SUN CSN and specifically the need for:**

- Guidelines and support to be provided on specific, identified matters.
- Improved information exchange between SUN countries to share best practices and lessons learnt.
- Guidance or a road map on how to form Civil Society Alliance and identify leaders.
- Human resource mapping and networking globally to be done by SUN to bring in connectivity for vertical alignment by Civil Societies.
- Providing an advocacy method using success stories of other countries to help countries that want to come into SUN or develop a SUN CSAs.
- The CSN international network to have a role to play in nutrition advocacy towards international forums and processes.
- Establishing a West African sub-Network to facilitate information exchange regionally, and having resources translated to ensure equity in access.
- The Network to empower national alliances to support information sharing, to develop systematic approaches to information sharing, and to support transmission of what’s happening globally (including information from the SUN Secretariat) to national civil society and CSAs.
- The SUN CSN to develop a set of criteria for which international forums to focus on and take part in, and map what key priorities for advocacy within the SUN CSN are. Suggestion that the post-2015 process and the lead up to Brazil 2016 were key opportunities to work together on as the SUN CSN to influence. SUN CSN needs to be clear on the independence of the Network.
- Working closely with other SUN networks to ensure that SUN CSN efforts are linked with the broader movement.
- Having a united nutrition agenda in order to engage with multiple bodies. It was raised that all should assist in mapping and identifying the key stakeholders to engage with.
Outcome SUN CSN Declaration

Participants ratified the SUN CSN declaration, shaped by the day’s discussions, to be translated and disseminated broadly. This will be made available on the SUN website.

Closing remarks

The meeting was a success with very rich discussions that have identified challenge areas to address and started identifying priorities for our work as a CSN. We as civil society need to ensure sustained and increased commitment locally, nationally and internationally along with ensuring governments act on their commitment. The SUN CSN needs to be active, innovate, experiment, inclusive, multi-sectorial and must be a key contributor to scaling up nutrition efforts around the world.

The day was an inspiring moment, reflecting on how real the cause is and a good reminder that mobilizing and empowering grassroots communities must be central to our work.