



Strengthening the Capacity
of SUN Countries to Scale Up
Nutrition through

“Learning Routes”: The Learning Route experience in

Peru and Senegal



As a global Movement, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) brings together different actors - governments, civil society, United Nations, donors and businesses- in a worldwide effort to eliminate all forms of malnutrition. Launched in 2010, today, the SUN Movement includes 54 countries, where half of the chronic malnourished children of the world live.

In their action to improve nutrition, SUN countries recognize that, despite their socio-economical and cultural distinctiveness, many problems and challenges are the same: therefore, the need for sharing opportunities to learn from each other's experience has become a clear priority for the Movement.

In response to that, in 2014 the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) partnered with PROCASUR Corporation to develop a pilot programme to improve sharing and learning initiatives between SUN countries. In preparation for the pilot programme, the SMS invited SUN Government Focal Points to work within their multi-stakeholder platforms to map countries' learning needs as well as the existence of best practice.

The two part pilot programme is supported with SUN Movement Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) resources within a capacity building environment known as a Learning Route.

A “Learning Route” is a capacity-building tool built up as planned journey with specific learning objectives. Throughout an on-going peer-to-peer training process, it makes room for discussion, analysis and reflection encouraging an active and mutual knowledge exchange between participants and their hosts. The final aim is to develop the ability of the Learning Route's participants to identify potentially useful innovations that can be adapted and then applied in the framework of their organizations in their own country.

For more information on the Learning Route methodology visit:

www.procasur.org

The Learning Routes

SUN country teams included actors from government, civil society and the private sector who contribute to national multi-stakeholder platforms for nutrition. Two Learning Routes were held as part of the programme: the first one in Senegal, from the 26th of May to the 1st of June, under the coordination of the Fight Against Malnutrition Unit –Cellule de Lutte contre la Malnutrition (CLM); the second one in Peru, where visiting delegations were hosted by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS) from the 8th to the 14th September.

In all, 40 participants from the following 14 SUN countries were selected to join the pilot programme.

- Latin America: El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru;
- West Africa: Benin, Burundi, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone;
- East Africa: Madagascar, Tanzania;
- Asia: Lao PDR, Sri Lanka.

Objectives

The Learning Routes had the following main Objectives:

- Improve knowledge of SUN members about successful initiatives in nutrition;
- Better access to hands-on methods and practical tools to scale-up nutrition;
- Strengthen partnerships and networking;
- Systematic, continued cross-fertilization among countries.

The learning exchanges focussed on a set of inter-related Thematic Areas that participating countries themselves had identified and proposed:

- **Institutional Coordination**, inter-sectorial and inter-governmental coordination, and articulation between the State and the Civil Society, to concert the design and implementation of social policies and programmes to fight Chronic Child Malnutrition.
- **Decentralised Approach to Nutrition**, including operational strategies to involve Regional and Local Government Authorities and their communities in the



From left to right: Dr Phoxay Chandavone, Deputy Director General, Hygiene- Health Promotion Department, Lao PDR Ministry of Health and SUN Focal Point; Douglas Romero, Secretary of Social Inclusion, El Salvador; Onisoa Joiselle Rafidy, Director General, Madagascar Federation of Chamber of Commerce; Minister Paula Bustamante, Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, Peru; Pau Blanquer, SUN Movement Secretariat, during a working session, Learning Route in Peru.

planning, execution and monitoring of nutrition-oriented interventions with territorial focus.

- **Financial Management and Fund-Raising Mechanisms**, giving special attention to performance-based budgeting and incentive funds to increase effectiveness of social programmes.

- **Communication Strategies** to promote the change of population's behaviour towards a better nutritional status.



Nadine Heredia, Peru's First Lady and SUN Lead Group member, with Karin Yessenia Tuquer Tuquer, Youth Leader from Guatemala during a field visit, Learning Route in Peru. The high level and long-term political commitment to nutrition is a key factor to reduce Chronic Child Malnutrition.

Lessons Learned from the Routes

The main lessons learned from the Routes, participating SUN member countries have highlighted, are the following:

- **Turn the eradication of malnutrition in all its forms into state policy.** Fighting hunger and malnutrition has to be a political commitment that transcends the government currently in power; in this sense, long-term commitment to nutrition is a key factor to improving nutrition for all.
- **High-level anchorage of the government body in charge of coordinating nutrition-related issues and policies greatly aids facilitation of collaboration among the various stakeholders and sectors.** In Senegal, thanks to its position within the Office of the Prime Minister, CLM can interact directly with all related ministries.
- **The presence of a legal framework, consistent with inter-governmental and inter-sectoral social policies is critical.** When the framework is under the leadership of a government institution authorised to convene different sectors and levels, it provides the necessary institutional framework to implement nutrition-oriented interventions.
- **Strengthening multi-sectoral and inter-governmental spaces for coordination between government, civil society, the private sector and donors encourages alignment behind a common results framework.** When every actor is aware and empowered, they can contribute their specific expertise to scaling up nutrition. For example, in Peru, efforts of civil society were key to place nutrition on the public agenda and to commit the political will of national, regional and

local authorities to articulate social programs to fight malnutrition.

- The sustainable implementation of nutrition interventions has a greater chance of succeeding when they are led and owned by local communities.** This starts with recognizing the individual needs of each community and ensuring that the policies, programmes and actions formulated are consistent with the environmental, socio-economical and cultural identity of each region. It also requires capacity development to ensure that local players and institutions acquire the right competencies and skills to drive changes to improve nutrition within their own communities. As the experience of Peru and Senegal shows, enhancing decentralized governments' capacities to lead nutrition programmes is effective in fostering ownership of nutrition interventions by local government authorities and their communities.
- Effective financial management is key to mobilising resources.** A multi-sectoral and decentralized approach to nutrition calls for an efficient management system, including strong financial monitoring of the activities. In Senegal, the responsibility for implementing nutrition projects is delegated to local government authorities, NGOs and technical ministries. The CLM provides close monitoring and supervision of funded activities, as well as capacity building and training in administrative and financial management to local staff. In Peru, the management of public funds based on the Budgeting by Results strategy has proven to be successful in linking the allocation of resources to measurable products and outcomes.

Kids from the Early Childhood Centre of Kaolack region, Senegal, show their local and healthy products for a balanced diet during the Learning Route. There are more than 700 Early Childhood Centres in Senegal; they use a holistic approach that starts with monitoring and nutrition advice for expectant mothers and follow the children until they are six years old. Nutrition, hygiene and environmental education are at the core of the activities run by the Centres.



- **Clear, well-targeted communication is instrumental in improving people's health and nutrition-related behaviour.** Nutrition education that relies on tools that suit the local context and involve the community is key to success. This is demonstrated by the CLM's approach in Senegal which employs communication strategies anchored in local beliefs and values in order to change people's choices towards better nutritional and health status.

The Way Forward

As the Learning Routes in Peru and Senegal helped to highlight, lasting solutions to fight malnutrition are already practiced by local actors from the SUN Movement. While we don't necessarily need to find new ideas to scale up nutrition, it is vital to create a favourable environment to facilitate sharing of the available solutions among the key players across all networks. The Learning Routes offered SUN countries tailored learning platforms that enabled the sharing of skills and mutual enrichment.

At the end of the Routes, each country team was invited to prepare an **action plan** as a way to institutionalise and apply the learning from the Routes to their own context. As result, 14 action plans have been designed and are currently being developed at the national level, adding value to existing initiatives and complementing the current efforts made by countries to improve nutrition.

While each action plan reflects the complex environments of each participating country, a few common themes have been identified in the 14 action plans including the need to:

- **Increase coordination among national multi-sectoral platforms** by identifying roles and responsibilities of the actors involved and their contribution towards reaching collective goals;
- **Enhance skills and strategies to strengthen advocacy** with national, regional and local government authorities in order to **place nutrition as a priority on the public agenda**. This also involves ensuring that nutrition is integrated into broader plans for national development and the identification of nutrition commitments and expenditure by government;
- **Improve technical and managerial skills of government staff at all levels** to implement nutrition-oriented programmes in order to ensure that policies and programmes designed at central level could be effectively implemented at local/territorial level.



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