

Report: Functional capacity gaps and strengthening needs among SUN country actors in Government

March 2018

Background and methodology

Functional capacities are core competencies which are important for ensuring progress within a given area of work, in this case multi-stakeholder, multi-sector action on nutrition. SUN partners, led by a team at the SUN Movement Secretariat, are developing a capacity strengthening strategy for key SUN actors at country level, with a special focus on SUN Government Focal Points, and other Government officers that participate in multistakeholder platforms for nutrition at country level.

Systematic information gathering by the SUN Movement, such as the SUN Joint Annual Assessment and requests for Technical Assistance, provide a broad outline of these actors' capacity gaps and needs. But consulting them directly was considered essential to detailing the functional capacity gaps they face in their role to scale up nutrition in their respective countries, and to choosing between alternative capacity strengthening approaches. These insights will shape the strategy, and any specific capacity building events and tools. The consultation consisted of a face-to-face discussion with all SUN Focal Points held at the 2017 SUN Global Gathering on November 8th 2017 and led by Namukolo Covic (IFPRI), complemented by a subsequent survey in conducted in December and January of 2018. This report, prepared with the support of MQSUN+, compiles the findings from both sources.

Approach of the SUN Global Gathering session:

1. Participants were arranged into small groups; with some groups being made up exclusively of SUN Focal Points and others of the remaining Government representatives
2. Each member in the group was first asked to write down three functional capacity gaps which if addressed would accelerate progress under current circumstances
3. Each group was then asked to come together to discuss and agree on three priority functional capacity gaps, drawing on what each member of the group had written down

Approach of the follow-up survey:

Following the Global Gathering, a draft report was circulated to all countries inviting them to identify additional capacity gaps not captured in the report, to further the gaps with explanations and specific examples, and to propose approaches the strategy should use to cover those capacity gaps. 10 countries responded to the follow-up survey.


Findings




It is worth noting that some participants indicated not understanding what “functional capacity” means compared to other capacity gaps such as technical or infrastructural capacities. Therefore, the information obtained from this session also helped participants get a better understanding of what “functional capacity” entails using the examples they presented.

Session findings from group work

The capacity gaps identified are presented below, separated into gaps identified specifically by SUN Focal Points, and those of other SUN Government actors.





Priority Capacity Gaps identified by SUN Focal Points


Priority Capacity Gaps	Specific capacity gaps mentioned	Examples of how countries have experienced the capacity gap as a challenge	Suggested approaches to bridge the gaps
Strategic advocacy, communication, negotiation and networking (intersectoral)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining relationships Advocacy to mid-level managers in government Encouragement skills Reaching a consensus Mobilizing support vertically and horizontally Working with politicians Lack of engagement at the level of donors and international organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some partners are hesitant to share or partner with us The ability to reach the political support is limited as it is connected with the politicians’ personal gains and interests There is conflict of interest between the partners especially between the UN agencies Difficulty communicating in English between locals and internationals Participation in multisectoral nutrition meetings is often limited in terms of the number of participants representing government structures. This explains the limited number of annual multisectoral meetings Difficulty negotiating for nutrition funding particularly in other sectors Limited capacity for exercising advocacy for nutrition Difficulty establishing a multi-sectoral platform with political and programmatic input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodical meetings are required to remind partners of the importance of our partnership and to follow on their plans and activities Build the skills of the secretariat on strategic advocacy and how to build strategic partnerships Organize exchange visits between SUN countries to highlight successful experiences in strategic advocacy Support the secretariat on communicating with politicians, possibly using UN channels of communication Build the capacity of SUN Focal Points on how to foster political will Teach English to staffs Support SUN Focal Points on cross-sectoral communication and negotiation Organize meetings with country focal points and donors at the headquarters level to have the same visions and focus on means and approaches.
Engagement with private sector*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding common ground Determining suitable investment approaches Involving and mobilizing private sector in process of strengthening nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge about the partnership with the private sector Absence of the private sector in the national platform despite various attempts to involve them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning from best practice Supporting negotiation and communication skills with private sector actors to demonstrate their comparative advantage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignorance of the potential of nutrition for the private sector, especially in terms of value chains • The formal national private sector is very small • Low control of this sector • How to manage conflicts of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The private sector is currently characterized by personal agendas • After holding the nutrition business forum very few companies are committed to support and follow the recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening networking in the sector is needed to share the risk of start-up operational costs that remain very high • Sector mobilization through Sun Business network • Official guidelines around the participation of the private sector • Have a common plan of action when mobilizing the private sector.
<p>Leadership and management (particularly at sub-national level) *</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing people • Setting priorities • Facilitation skills • Enhancing the quality meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge about the strategic leadership • Multiple tasks/work load for provincial/district staff • Lack of clear vision and weak leadership to ensure regular meetings of all partners • Lack of facilitation skills particularly coordinating regional and operational bodies • Insufficient HR in quality and quantity • Turnover of focal points • Staff have insufficient knowledge on nutrition • Limited articulation from leaders on the proposed actions for health and nutrition management at the local level. • Poor reporting capacity after meetings • Difficulty integrating activities for joint planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity of the strategic leadership (involving all the secretariat's team); • Build better strategies to work more effectively • Provision of guidance and advice to the focal point • Training and study trip • Supporting nutrition leaders at the decentralized level on culture of accountability, working with all stakeholders, visioning and managing resources wisely • Articulate better how the actions for governing nutrition between the national, regional and local levels • Increase the quantity and quality of human resources at each level of management: national, regional and local. • Support to use different media for the project communication. e.g. accessible website for local staff to connect with central • Training on nutrition particularly for provincial/district level.
<p>Resource mobilization and financial planning</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the mechanisms of the available resources • Lack of legal support • Lack of domestic resource • Insufficient definition of nutrition for funding parties • Insufficient indicators on the financing of nutrition • Insufficient evidence on nutrition financing especially at decentralized levels • Limited technical and financial cooperation from international organizations for middle-income countries, which limits the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A political crisis impacts public resources leading to lack of domestic resources • Long process of financial mobilization causes delays to activities • Bodies produce very little data on nutrition funding for mapping • No available budget estimates causes difficulties in reaching the objectives of the plan • Plans are based on the available budget allocation of each participating institution • The presence of international organizations has reduced affecting budgets and therefore the level of specialized human resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from best practice • Centralized financial system and faster process to approve funds • Need a financing plan • System to monitor funding at all levels • Establish a specific budget for nutrition action • Reinforce the international cooperation through access to experts located out of the region

	advancement of actions to promote nutrition		
Other issues that were provided by Countries after the session			
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of capacity in M&E 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties in issuing an M&E report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building the secretariat's capacity in MEAL
Managing nutrition in a conflict setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constrained government capacity due to conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A political crisis impacts public sector management at national and regional level and also influences international actors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training package in conflict-sensitive management

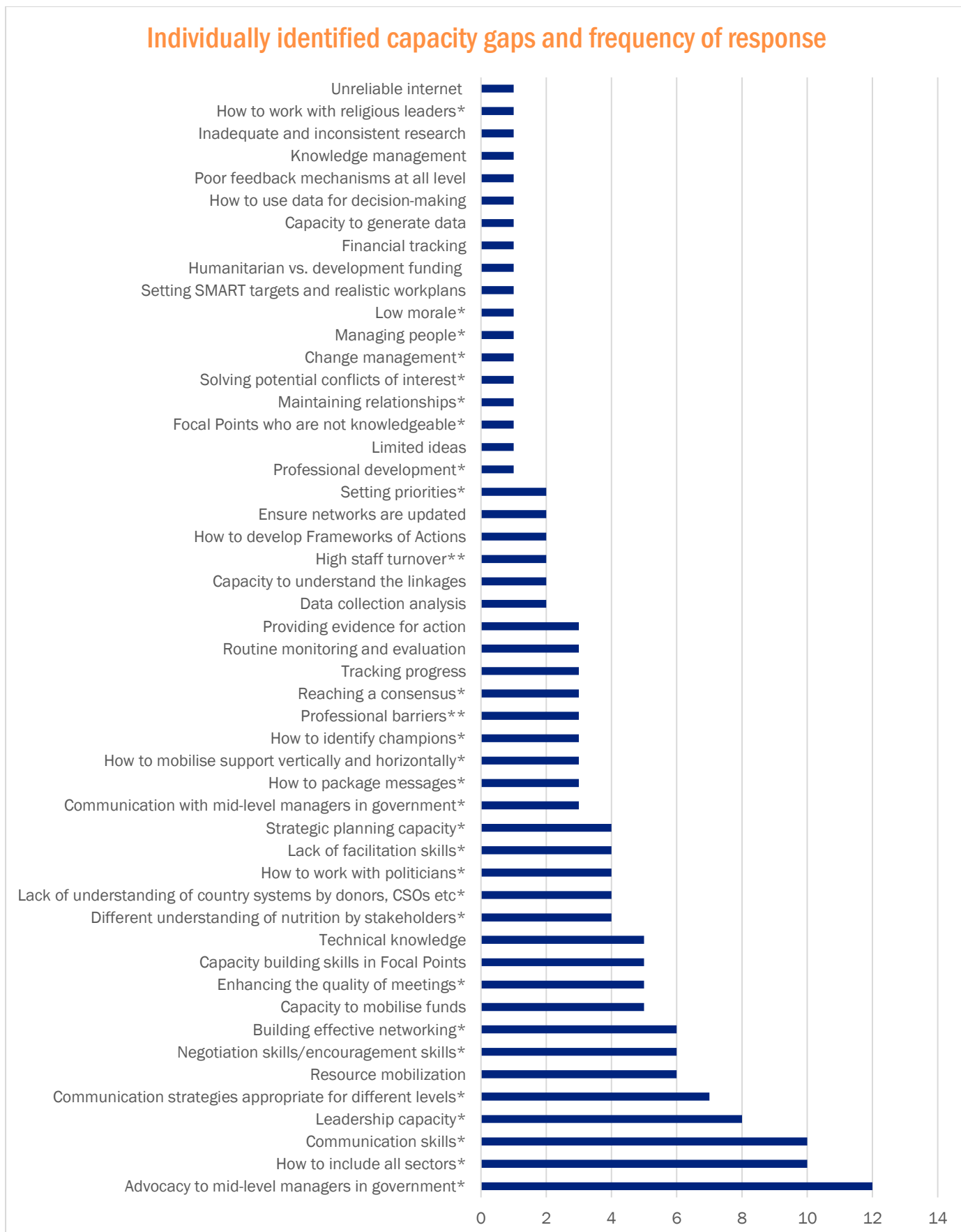
Priority Capacity Gaps identified by other Government Representatives

Priority Capacity Gaps	Specific capacity gaps mentioned	Examples of how you have experienced the capacity gap as a challenge	Approach you suggest to address this gap
Moving/ reassignment of technical nutrition staff (leading to lack of technical knowledge on nutrition) * 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing people; Professional development; High turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement or departure of the focal point means no continuity of activities Centralized management of HR. (Assignment of staff irrespective of their skills or the needs of the role) Lack of continuous capacity building (no continuing education or retraining) Lack of nutrition professional in the Ministry of Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms to provide new staff with regular training. Appointment of two focal points for each platform for a definite minimum duration. Sharing experience between focal point Nutrition training for more staff in various public institutions
Management of conflict of interest* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited experience on the subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited capacity to adequately manage interests and conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent support to the local implementer Develop appropriate capacity to manage interests and conflicts
Identification of champions* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choice Management and Person Identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult choice between two high level political leaders given their political commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define annually the criteria for the selection of ambassadors and support countries to evaluate them.
Ensuring transparency* 			

<p>Data collection for advocacy and decision making (including lack of a database)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no efficient and updated national information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient funding for conducting national surveys and having databases • There are various initiatives that include data management of different institutions that are not well articulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening funding for research • Have a national system which allows access to data relevant to nutrition and which facilitates the reporting of accounts and allows decision making
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Session findings from individual responses

The priority capacity gaps originally identified by **individuals** are presented below ranked by the frequency with which they were mentioned.



*Identified gap reflects aspects of functional capacity

** Identified gap reflects aspects of functional capacity but the solution is beyond the scope of the SUN Movement

Annex: List of participants

Name	Title	Organization	Country
Bambona Alex	Assistant Commissioner Food and Nutrition Secretariat	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries	Uganda
Kou T Baawo	Director, SUN Focal Point	Ministry of Health	Liberia
Mameni V Linga	Nutrition Director	Ministry of Health	Liberia
Dr Chandavone	Director, SUN Focal Point	Ministry of Health	Lao PDR
Dr Ferew Lemma	Senior Advisor, SUN Focal Point	MoH/FAO	Ethiopia
Dr Chris Isokpunnu	Director of Nutrition, SUN Focal Point	Federal Ministry of Health	Nigeria
Dr Sisay Sinamo	Senior Program Manager	Ministry of Health	Ethiopia
Eugenia Villalobos	Jefe de Unidad de Investigación y Vigilancia	Programa Nacional de Centros Infantiles de Nutrición	Costa Rica
Daysi de Marquez	Directora Ejecutiva, SUN Focal Point	CONASAN	El Salvador
Maria Eugenia Mujica	Viceministra, SUN Focal Point	Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social	Peru
German Gonzalez Diaz	Secretario de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional, SUN Focal Point	SESAN	Guatemala
Dr Mohamed A Farah	SUN Focal Point	OPM	Somalia
Dr Said Shamsu Islam		Council of Ministers Secretariat	Afghanistan
Aslam Shaheen	SUN Focal Point	Planning Commission	Pakistan
Felix Phiri	Director, Nutrition, SUN Focal Point	Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS	Malawi
Tisetso Elias	Regional Food and Nutrition Coordinating Officer	FNCO (Prime Minister's Office)	Lesotho
Mutahar Al-Falahi	SUN Focal Point	SUN Focal Point	Yemen
Rebecca Alum	Director of Nutrition, SUN Focal Point	Ministry of Health	South Sudan
Gladys Mugambi	Head Nutrition and Dietetics, SUN Focal Point	Ministry of Health	Kenya
Omalenna Neshebe	Chief Dietitian	Ministry of Health	Botswana
Gomoleno Tselakyo	Chief Community Development Office	Ministry of Local Government	Botswana
Otto Tean	Assistant Secretary – Social Monitoring	National Planning	Papua New Guinea
Lawrence Duguman	Assistant Secretary – Social Monitoring	National Planning	Papua New Guinea
Eileen Dogimab	Technical Advisor - Nutrition	Department of Health	Papua New Guinea
Kebabonye Molefhi	Chief Economist – Food Security Division	Ministry of Agricultural Dev. & Food Security	Botswana
Maria Bernadita T Flores	SUN Focal Point	National Nutrition Council, Department of Health	Philippines
George Kembo	Director, SUN Focal Point	Food and Nutrition Council	Zimbabwe
Nalaka Kaluwewe	Additional Secretary to the President, SUN Focal Point	Presidential Secretariat	Sri Lanka
Almeida Tembe		SETSAN/MASA	Mozambique
Truong Tuyet Mai	Planning technician and facilitator of the Multisectorial Technical Working Group	National Institution of Nutrition – Ministry of Health	Vietnam
Roxana Quader	Additional Secretary Health Services Division, SUN Focal Point	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Bangladesh
Mirhamiddin Kamolou	Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection	Ministry of Health and Social Protection	Tajikistan
Otabek Saltonov	National SUN Secretariat	GIZ	Tajikistan
Malehat Shabonzua	Nutrition Officer	UNICEF	Tajikistan
Erminbek	SUN Movement Coordinator	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry	Kyrgyzstan
Bermet Sydygalie	MQSUN Consultant		Kyrgyzstan
Modou Phall	Executive Director	NaNA	The Gambia
Miguel Pereira	Legal Adviser to the Minister	Ministry of Health	Guinea Bissau
Marjorie van Wyk	Director, SUN Focal Point		Namibia
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Name	Title	Organization	Country
Joseline Marhone	Unité de Coordination du Programme National d'Alimentation et de Nutrition	Ministère de la santé	Haiti
Bernard Boua	Directeur Général des services	Ministère de la santé	République Centrafricaine
Hugues N'Gossoh		Ministère de l'agriculture	Gabon
Andréa HOUINDOTE	Responsable de la. Cellule Suivi-Evaluation	Conseil National de l'Alimentation	Benin
Ernest NIYOKINDI	Chef de cabinet Adjoint et Point Focal SUN	Deuxième Vice-Présidence de la République	Burundi
Fatouma Hadji	Point focal nutrition	Ministère de la santé	Comores
Jean-Baptiste Ondaye	Ministre	Secrétaire Général de la présidence	République du Congo
Mamady daffe	Directeur de la nutrition	Ministère de la santé	Guinée-Conakry
M Abdoulaye Ka	Coordonnateur National	National du Bureau exécutif National (Cellule de lutte contre la malnutrition	Sénégal
Ousmane Nassirou	Directeur de la nutrition	Ministère de la santé	Niger
Djibril Bagayoko	Chef	Cellule de Nutrition	Mali
Dr Bouraima Mouawiyatou	Chef Division de la Nutrition, point focal SUN	Ministère de la Santé et de la Protection Sociale	Togo
Himeda Makhoulouf	Directeur de la nutrition	Ministère de la santé	Tchad
Cheikhna Chavei	Chef de service	Ministère de L'Economie et des Finances	Mauritanie
Prof. RANDRAMASIHARIJAONA Harinelina,	Chef de Service de Nutrition	Ministère de la santé,	Madagascar
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