

Operations Group Country Delivery Working Group Report

07 May 2021

1. Introduction

The Framework for Action of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement declared already ten years ago (2011) “that what ultimately matters is what happens at the country level. Individual country nutrition strategies and programmes, while drawing on international evidence of good practice, must be country-‘owned’ and build on the country’s specific needs and capacities.” This principle was practised by countries and the working group identified key examples of country leadership and multi-stakeholder collaboration. It also identified many issues that are holding countries back from real progress, action, and impact.

The mid-term evaluation found that “there is a sense amongst stakeholders that the country’s membership in SUN has advanced the national nutrition agenda”, but it also stated that the specific added value of SUN is “hard to quantify” (Mid-Term Review, 2018: 13). The Strategic Review (2020) recommended to “develop a country-driven, country-led and country-centred SUN Movement strategy”.

The new strategy SUN 3.0 stipulates “that the Movement must be rooted in country structures, supported by a global system that is equally country-focused, also supporting countries to finance country nutrition priorities and drive needs-based, context-appropriate, and evidence-based nutrition impact, at scale” (next steps, summary of SUN 3.0). This is also embedded in its strategic objectives: “develop and align shared country priorities for action” (SO2); “build and strengthen country capacity with technical assistance and knowledge management” (SO3); and “SUN governance supports country leadership” (SO4). Table 3 (p. 31) of the SUN 3.0 Strategy defines the expected roles and responsibilities of SUN movement members and structures.

The SUN Operationalisation Group (Ops Group) established four working groups to drive the SUN 3.0 change process. These cover: Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning; finance; governance and accountability; and this working group, on country delivery. All groups are contributing to a country-led movement.

2. Scope

The goal of this working group was to focus on the critical factors needed to support country stakeholders to translate the SUN 3.0 strategy to the country level and drive their national nutrition agendas. Its specific objective was to offer tangible, practical recommendations, based on best practice and reflective of SUN country realities, to be considered in the implementation of the SUN 3.0 Strategy.

The discussions focused on context, challenges, and ways to strengthen countries to drive the nutrition agenda in relation to national nutrition governance. This includes multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), the role of country coordinators, strengthened accountability frameworks, and requirements for capacity development and technical assistance to SUN countries.

While this group was designed to work out the essential country delivery requirements, the other working groups also reviewed their themes with a strong country focus. The recommendations from this working group are contributing to the general direction of travel and should be considered together with the recommendations from the other working groups. The group is available to accompany the implementation of the recommendations.

3. Methodology

This working group (WG) consisted of seven members from different countries, two of them youth representatives (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Zambia); the Sun Business Network (SBN) facilitator; representatives from the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS); and it was facilitated and supported by the Hi5 consultancy group. The representative from Afghanistan acted as Chairperson (Annex 1: list of participants).

The WG members met virtually as a group and communicated between meetings. The members built their work on existing information, case studies, review of documentation from MQSUN+, and the mid-term and strategic review, as well as on expertise available in the group. Some members held further in-country discussions and fed them back into the work. Expertise on capacity building was sought from DAI/TASC. The group was supported by staff from the SMS, and the process was facilitated and documented by the Hi5 team. Hi5 also carried out interviews with key informants, from which relevant information was fed back into the work of this group.

The major limiting factors of this process were the short timeframe within which this work had to be conducted, and the challenge of assembling a truly representative group reflecting the main constituencies and the diversity of the movement. Not all regions were represented. Due to time differences, there was no member from Latin America. COVID-19 related work demands, and restrictions placed additional stress on the group members, who could only meet virtually. The exchange with other working groups was limited.

4. Strategic Issues Analysis

Several strategic issues which are adversely influencing nutrition actions and the implementation of SUN 3.0 were identified:

- Many multi-stakeholder platforms (MSP) are providing only limited 'safe spaces' to think together and discuss the nutrition agenda free of organisational positioning. In some countries MSPs are not well established and not all nutrition-relevant stakeholders are participating. The participants often lack the ability to take, assign, and monitor decisions. In some cases, they are mere information exchange fairs rather than centres of coordination and joint planning.
- Countries where national nutrition plans (NNPs) are not part of national development strategies and budgets or other national instruments, or countries which do not have crafted NNPs, are disadvantaged and do not achieve nutrition indicators.
- One of the greatest challenges identified by the group is frequently changing nutrition focal points within governments, as well as changing staff at UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). This hampers reliable and consistent progress of nutrition action.
- Another major challenge is the lack of capacity development strategies in several countries and the limited availability of technical assistance, as well as insufficient bespoke support to SUN focal points and country coordinators.
- One major area requiring more SUN Movement engagement is the coordinated and proactive risk-informed attention and support to fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS) and countries affected by sudden disruptive events.
- Country representatives also found there is a lack of mutual accountability and dialogue between countries, regions, and especially between global governance and countries.

5. Guiding Principles for a Country-led, Country-driven, and Country-centred SUN Movement

The following guiding principles for reliable, consistent, and results-orientated, country-driven work have been branded:



Context: Success is only achievable if context is understood as the most relevant factor for country leadership and support. Approaches, plans and partnerships must be tailored to contexts. This applies to sub-national, national, regional, and global collaboration.

Governance: A well-functioning national governance is necessary to nurture collaboration and to achieve sustainable impact in each country. Country-based multi-stakeholder platforms are responsible for coordination, resource mobilisation, technical support, learning, attention, and care. They should be supported in this by harmonised regional and global support.

Accountability: Accountability should be understood as demonstrating ownership and being responsible for nutrition action – developing national nutrition plans and programmes, implementing them, and reporting on them. Every member of the SUN movement needs to trust that they can count on other members. Shared accountability needs to be established largely among members of country MSPs, as well as regional and global stakeholders, and trusting relationships must be built.

Alignment, synergy, and harmonisation: Alignment and synergy need to hold true at global level as well as country level. Networks need to cooperate better within and across countries and harmonise plans and action. All stakeholders should get involved in the formulation and implementation of NNP.

Capacity development and technical assistance: This is the essential element to make country platforms and stakeholder operations more efficient. Capacity development requirements at the country level need to be assessed and translated into strategies and hands-on accompaniment. Tailor-made technical support and capacity building should be strategically delivered in a way that meets national needs and helps unblock bottlenecks.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Governance

Global SUN Movement governance structures should be assembled with strong country representation, to elevate country voices and increase country ownership of the Movement.

Country focal points should represent regions in the SUN Executive Committee (ExCom) and coordinate dialogue within and between regions, between countries, and with the ExCom. Humanitarian actors should also be represented. The ExCom should reach out proactively to country members.

How at the global level: Review composition and ensure majority of country representatives at all governance levels. A schedule of ‘sounding board’ meetings should be set up throughout the year,

ideally with individual countries. Global governance structures should be designed with strong country representation to elevate country voices and increase national ownership of the Movement.

How at the country level: The country SUN Movement governance needs to be based on solid MSPs, which are responsible for coordination, resource mobilisation, technical support, learning, attention, and care. They should become ‘safe spaces’ where participants can openly discuss nutrition issues without organisational positioning. MSP values workshops to be held annually, and criteria for ‘safe space’ to be developed and monitored. Safe space guidance to be developed, accompanied by training.

6.2 Accountability

Each government is accountable for healthy nutrition action to its people. Nutrition must be written into national plans, budgets, and legal frameworks, even constitutions; ensuring national decrees translate into more stability and sustainability of nutrition action.

How: MSPs set up and implement a monitoring mechanism to ensure consistency of nutrition action, even when protagonists in ministries and other stakeholders change.

SUN countries should hold global structures accountable for providing advice and guidance and coordinating support when required to help drive national-level action, as a chief element of the new mutual accountability of the SUN movement.

How: Define and compile an official request form for high-level support, based on level of urgency, with a system to track response and action. A mechanism must be put in place to allow SUN countries to hold global structures accountable for providing the support required to help drive national-level action.

6.3. Alignment and multistakeholder collaboration

Consider and map options to ensure alignment of efforts and plans at different levels. The main hub for multi-stakeholder collaboration needs to be the MSP.

How: Establish annual joint workplans, including government and network stakeholders. Define roles and responsibilities for implementation and enrich the cross-functional diversity of MSPs by inviting stakeholders who cover the span of the development and humanitarian nexus. Encourage more nutrition institutionalisation at the national level, in support of a more consistent and long-term planned approach.

6.4. Focus on risk-informed support

The SUN Movement must be better risk informed and strengthen the humanitarian and development nexus in supporting fragile and conflict-affected countries. Also, countries affected by sudden events, such as natural disasters or abrupt political changes, and slow onset events, such as pandemics and climate change.

How: The SUN Movement should prepare a risk and accountability framework, which can then be used by its members for planning and decision making. This working group could continue to accompany its design during the implementation phase. This framework should allow countries (governments, MSPs, country coordinators), the ExCom, and the SUN Global Support System (GSS) to better understand and present risk information for nutrition planning. Risk data can be used to distinguish member countries by pertinent risks, degree of fragility and suggested mitigation measures.

The suggested approach for risk-informed support is described in Annex 2.

6.5. Capacity and risk self-assessment, and capacity development

Capacity development, based on a facilitated self-assessment, is a fundamental recommendation from countries. It is considered the most important means of becoming a movement of strong country-based nutrition actors. It is recommended to design a consistent and regular approach for capacity assessment and capacity development needs. It is also recommended to review the SUN pooled fund as a source of funding for capacity development strategies.

How: A facilitated capacities and risk self-assessment should be carried out upon the initiative of a SUN country team or by invitation of ExCom. These assessments will identify technical and functional capacity development needs and assess risks which could hamper a consistent and planned approach (including. Institutional risks, context-related risks, slow-onset disasters, and rapid disasters). They will also consider aspects like community engagement, gender and diversity, and political economic analysis. Policies to guide such a process could be prepared by this working group in the coming months and shall be inspired by MQSUN+ guidance documents.

The suggested process of capacity assessment and capacity development is described in Annex 3.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: List of Country Delivery Working Group Members

Name	Stakeholder Group	Role
CHAIR: Dr Said Shamsul Islam Shams	AFSeN-A-Afghanistan	Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat of the AFSeN-A and the technical SUN Focal Point
Dr. Mofijul Islam Bulbul	SUN GOV - Bangladesh	SUN Government Technical Focal Point
Musonda Mofu	SUN GOV - Zambia	Acting Executive Director, National Food and Nutrition Commission
Mike Khunga	CSN - YOUTH Malawi	Youth Leader for Nutrition
Maxwell Mumba	CSN - YOUTH Zambia	Youth Leader for Nutrition
Abel Jorge Dabula	SBN - Mozambique	SBN National Coordinator
Soe Nyi Nyi	UN-Nutrition - Myanmar	National REACH Facilitator
Laouratou Dia	SBN - Côte d'Ivoire	SBN Coordinator Côte D'Ivoire
Emily Heneghan	Global Support System Coordination to Operations Group	SBN Network Facilitator
Stephen Williams	SMS	Working group support
Savita Malla	SMS	Working group support
Samantha Rudick	SMS	Working group support

Annex 2: 'HOW TO' provide risk-informed support

Risk informed planning and decision making. Suggestions for a Risk and Accountability Framework

The country delivery working group has strongly recommended that the SUN Movement should enhance its engagement with fragile and conflict-affected countries (FACS) by better engaging and partnering with all stakeholders, across various sectors, with the experience and competencies to deal with uncertainty and risk. In general, the SUN Movement should better incorporate risk in its planning and decision making, including at global and regional level.

This requires more risk-informed data, planning and decision making. Such data can also be used to better inform the priorities of the movement.

There are multiple sources of information and data about risks (related to disasters, technology, conflict, politics, food security, health, etc.) available. Starting with the information collected by ministries, as well as regional (from regional organisations ASEAN, SAARC, OAU, EU) and global sources. To mention only a few: The WEF World Risk Report; the ACAPS instrument; global publications from SUN members (UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, etc.); EMDAT (international disasters database); as well as nutrition-specific reports on the state of food security and nutrition in the world, and the Global Food crises report. Useful additions to provide a wider view on risks include the trust indices from the Edelman Trust Barometer and country reports from the Crises Group.

The SUN Movement should help make sense of this wealth of information from a nutrition perspective. It should make it easily available to its members to ensure that all nutrition plans, and by extension all national development plans, are sufficiently risk informed. This will allow them to adapt and respond to any human-made or natural crisis, thereby avoiding the loss of hard-fought nutrition gains, mitigating the nutritional impact of a crisis, building nutrition resilience of the population, and better preparing for an immediate post-crisis recovery.

The SUN Movement should draft a risk and accountability framework, which can then be used by its members for planning and decision making. This framework should entail the assembly of risk and mitigation matrices for countries to allow them to better present and understand risk information for nutrition planning. This can also be used at regional and global levels. Such a matrix compares risk data and can rank member countries by pertinent risks and degree of fragility, while suggesting mitigation measures.

The matrices could then be used as guidance to pay particular attention to high-risk countries and the need for tailor-made support to governments, MSPs, technical teams and country coordinators. Risk assessments should be part of the capacity development and risk assessment process (see recommendation 6 and Annex 2) and the SUN Joint-Assessment (JAA).

In direct relation to the risk-informed approach, the working group also recommends planning and working along a humanitarian development nexus (HDN). HDN partners should be invited to join MSPs, and global and regional governance structures.

SUN and the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) have already started work on this. To provide guidance and insight to SUN and GNC country stakeholders on the added value of closer cooperation between the two groups, SUN/GNC just published a global report on the Humanitarian Development Nexus for nutrition: <https://scalingupnutrition.org/share-learn/humanitarian-development-nexus/>. Three country experiences were analysed: Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Niger. For each country, the opportunities, and challenges for strengthening humanitarian and development linkages for nutrition were reviewed and have been translated into actual nutrition plans. This global report is intended to show the combined lessons learned from these three examples and highlight key lessons and recommendations.

Annex 3: ‘HOW TO’ provide support in capacity development

Suggested process for a capacity and risk self-assessment and the design of capacity development strategies

Facilitated capacities and risk self-assessments should be carried out upon the initiative of a SUN country team or by invitation of the ExCom. Policies to guide such a process need to be prepared and shall be inspired by MQSUN+ guidance documents.¹

Self-assessments will identify technical and functional capacity development (CD) needs. They will also assess risks which could hamper a consistent and planned approach (including Institutional risks, context-related risks, slow-onset disasters (health, climate change) and rapid natural and technical disasters and political changes. They will also consider aspects like community engagement, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), and political economic analysis.

The self-assessment will focus on essential categories such as:

- **Technical capacities** associated with areas of professional expertise, such as nutrition, food systems, social protection, agriculture, etc.
- **Functional capacities** that enable national, regional and district actors to plan, manage, change, and sustain the technical capacities. They can be cross-cutting, multisectoral and relevant across various levels. These should include capacities to engage stakeholders; assess a situation and define a vision; formulate policies and strategies; finance and budget; manage and implement; and evaluate.

Examples from MQSUN+ are:

- **At the national level:** Analysis of finance for nutrition actions (e.g., costing of multisectoral plans, budget analysis and financial tracking).
- **At the sub-national level:** Improving intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral coordination, capacity, and community platforms.

Support mechanism

Based on the self-assessment, the appropriate support mechanism will be agreed. This could entail tailor-made short-term technical assistance or more long-term capacity development pathways supported by CD teams. Depending on the context and the CD requirements, a combination of national, regional, or global CD support teams can be established. Establishment of the teams will be coordinated by the country coordinator and nutrition technical country teams, involving the MSPs in the country and brokered by the SMS, as well as the country responsible focal point in the ExCom. It can be composed from country resources, SUN networks, and/or external advisors from other movements or organisations, among others. Existing global tools and best practice from other countries will be used (e.g., budget analysis framework, MSP toolkit).

Process

Following the assessment, a CD strategy will be designed and implemented, including SMART recommendations and milestones for review. For the longer-term CD, different implementation phases and reviews will be carried out with partners. Partners could be other countries with similar or different development requirements, or a group of countries, including neighbours, regional peers, or global peers. The implementation phases of the plan and the reviews shall benefit from support from networks, regional organisations, centres for excellence and hubs.

¹ See MQSUN+ multisectoral planning for nutrition toolkit chapter 6.2: Creating a Capacity Development Strategy for Nutrition. There has been huge collaboration with SUN countries to develop these toolkits. https://mqsunplus.path.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MQSUN-Multisectoral-Nutrition-Planning-Toolkit_Module-6_24Nov2020_final.pdf#page=10

Roles and responsibilities

- The SMS shall act as broker and direct supporter.
- The country coordinator and the country technical team will lead and own the CD plan.
- ExCom shall monitor and provide advice and take ownership for global coordination.
- The Lead Group shall promote the process with the respective government and partners.
- Selected organisational or individual members of SUN shall act as mentors and coaches (this could be ministries, academia, SUN networks, or organisations like UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, WB, ADB, etc.)

Dissemination

CD strategy, self-assessment, and review reports can be published on the SUN website in a safe space. Depending on the wish of the respective country teams, the assessment can be kept confidential or made available to all partners and the public.