

The Joint Annual Assessment report

GUIDANCE FOR COUNTRIES



Scaling Up
NUTRITION

ENGAGE • INSPIRE • INVEST



The Joint Annual Assessment (JAA) has been revised in 2021 to align with the new [Scaling Up Nutrition \(SUN\) Movement Strategy](#) for its third phase (2021-2025). This guidance note aims to support countries and global stakeholders to interpret and optimise use of the revised JAA.

The SUN Movement strategy prioritises country leadership and focuses on supporting systemic change at the country level. All parts of the Movement – member governments, the four SUN Networks, the SUN Movement Coordinator, the SUN Movement Secretariat, the SUN Movement Executive Committee and the SUN Movement Lead Group – are expected to step up in equal measure and intensify their efforts to accelerate the delivery of nutrition outcomes at scale, and to work together to align and focus those efforts on priorities within countries.

The Strategy sets out four Strategic Objectives:

1. Strengthen and sustain strong policy and advocacy environments at the subnational, national, regional, and global levels to position nutrition outcomes as a key maker and marker of sustainable development.
2. Develop and align shared country priorities for action.
3. Build and strengthen country capacity to develop, prioritise, finance, implement and track country actions through strengthened technical assistance and knowledge management.
4. Ensure governance of SUN that promotes country leadership and responsibilities of government, aligns the resources of all Movement stakeholders behind country priorities, and strengthens mutual accountability between Movement stakeholders and to those most at risk of malnutrition. Robust mechanisms should be put in place to encourage and ensure such promotion, alignment and mutual accountability is realised.



The JAA consists of two components: the consultation meeting (see separate guidance) and the JAA report. The consultation meeting feeds into the completion of the report.

The purpose of the JAA is to

- enable a participatory and transparent review of country advancement in accelerating progress on national nutrition targets, informed by the country's most recently available monitoring information.
- document progress that has been achieved collectively over the past year.
- celebrate success, providing an opportunity for SUN (in-country) networks to discuss progress, successes and areas for increasing collaboration.
- jointly identify continuing or new bottlenecks impacting on progress.
- share information with the SUN Movement Global Support System (GSS) on capacity gaps anticipated in addressing the bottlenecks.
- provide the basis for the development of a country compact with the SUN Movement GSS in relation to technical support.
- share experiences and lessons within the country and with the broader SUN Movement.
- serve as a communication tool within the SUN GSS, providing up-to-date information in relation to the Strategic Objectives of the SUN Movement and contributing to learning.

The JAA will also

- enable countries to use the process to build trust and strengthen accountability.
- provide countries with opportunities to contribute to the overall development of the SUN Movement.
- contribute to the overall SUN MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) system.¹

¹ See: <https://scalingupnutrition.org/progress-impact/monitoring-evaluation-accountability-and-learning-meal/>

The **primary focus** of the JAA is therefore to strengthen country collaboration and support. It should provide the basis for a discussion on country-level bottlenecks, actions agreed by country stakeholders to address those bottlenecks and identification of critical capacity gaps and technical support needs of countries.²



The **secondary focus** is enabling monitoring of progress within the SUN Movement countries. This overview of progress across SUN countries will assist the Movement to identify common challenges and opportunities and will influence advocacy and support strategies. It will also facilitate sharing and learning in relation to good practices among countries by identifying commonalities in successful practices.



The JAA is an opportunity for

1. country-level stakeholders to demonstrate their contribution to overall progress, document alignment of energy and investments with country priorities and model their commitment to accountability as a participant in the SUN Movement.
2. advocacy for nutrition within the country, by including a wide range of stakeholders and influencing senior government leaders, and advocacy at the global level through demonstrating the country's ongoing commitment to nutrition and sharing pivotal learning, good practices, and challenges.



This detailed guidance aims to clarify how each area within the JAA can be useful to the country and how other stakeholders are expected to interact with and respond to it. The guidance also provides information on alignment with the SUN Movement Strategy.

During the Movement's second phase (2016-2020), the JAA emphasised tracking progress markers. This focus has contributed substantially to developing a strong understanding of the overall global picture and has enabled SUN to target resources on areas of common concern. Substantial progress has been made over the first decade of SUN and most countries have established the basic systems and structures that are essential to strong governance. As the third phase (2021-2025) focuses on ensuring that those systems and structures are effective in achieving progress, the emphasis on the original progress markers has decreased and more attention will be paid to very specific country challenges that require support.



The revised JAA comprises five core sections, followed by specific sections for networks. The core sections comprise a 'basic information' section, followed by four sections that align with the Strategic Objectives (SOs) of the SUN Movement strategy (2021-2025).

These are

- Section 1:** Basic country information (SO1, SO4)
- Section 2:** Coordination, alignment, and results (SO2, SO3, SO4)
- Section 3:** Finance (SO3, SO4)
- Section 4:** Policy, advocacy and communication (SO1)
- Section 5:** Knowledge-sharing and learning (SO3)
- Section 6:** SUN Networks

The JAA contains 15 progress markers to ensure a minimum level of continuity in relation to overall monitoring at both country and global level. The markers allow countries to self-reflect and rank their progress in important areas at the end of each section.

² Following the JAA, a strategic discussion between the SUN GSS and the country should lead to a documented compact, through which an agreed set of support actions will be implemented over the coming year. The compact will be reviewed during country calls and adjusted through mutual agreement. Countries will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the support received through the Movement. The SUN Movement strategy for its third phase (2021-2025) describes multiple options for technical support, including scheduled and time-bound mentoring, in-country technical expertise, exchange visits among countries, in-country support through networks and international technical expertise provided remotely or in-country.

SECTION 1 BASIC COUNTRY INFORMATION

This section responds primarily to SO1 and SO4 of the SUN Movement Strategy.

SO1: Strengthen and sustain strong policy and advocacy to position nutrition outcomes.

SO4: Ensure SUN governance promotes country leadership and government responsibilities, aligns resources and strengthens mutual accountabilities.



Each country or State that has committed to being part of the SUN Movement provides information on the existence of country infrastructure for overall planning, management, and coordination of nutrition (governance structure). It is well understood that each country or State has designed their nutrition governance architecture at national and sub-national levels in ways that work best in the individual circumstances. The purpose of this initial series of questions is to enable countries to describe the individual parts of the governance systems and the role of the SUN Country Coordinator (formerly known as the Focal Point) within the overall governance structure. It also gives stakeholders an opportunity to acknowledge their participation in the governance structures and consider whether all the necessary structures are in place, including those for emergency preparedness and response.

- The information will be entered by the country and most areas will need updating only when changes occur.
- The SUN Movement GSS would like to understand more about which models of governance and coordination work best, so lessons can be shared for overall acceleration of progress.
- The SUN Movement has been developed on the premise that governance systems need to be supported by appropriate policies and legislation.
- The term ‘multi-stakeholder platform’ (MSP) refers to the main coordination mechanism for nutrition in use at the national level in the country and generally consists of multiple government ministries, stakeholders representing various interests/networks (e.g., civil society, private sector, UN, donor, academia) and multiple sectors.
- The SUN Focal Point/Country Coordinator has an opportunity to share concerns related to challenges, which will provide valuable information to the SUN GSS on areas potentially needing additional support.





SECTION 2 COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND RESULTS

This section responds primarily to SO2, SO3 and SO4 of the SUN Movement Strategy.

SO2: Develop and align shared country priorities for action.

SO3: Build and strengthen country capacity with technical assistance and knowledge management.

SO4: Ensure SUN governance promotes country leadership and government responsibilities, aligns resources and strengthens mutual accountabilities.



While Section 1 focuses on background information and needs only occasional updating, Section 2 refers specifically to this year's JAA consultation meeting in the country. The SUN Movement Strategy recognises the progress made in establishing systems and structures for nutrition governance and now places heavier emphasis on the functioning of these systems and structures. This section therefore focuses on the progress towards achieving common goals over the past year and the agreement among stakeholders on challenges, bottlenecks and, most importantly, agreement on the shared priorities and actions for the coming year.

1 Governance and coordination update

This presents an opportunity to document adjustments to the country governance system, demonstrating how systems evolve as countries strengthen their overall structures. It also allows for reflection on the intensity of MSP activity outside the annual JAA meeting.

2 This year's JAA participation

This subsection allows countries to record and communicate the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder nature of the JAA meeting. Countries have an opportunity to recognise contributing stakeholders and networks and, where relevant, to reflect on non-participating networks, providing helpful information for the overall Movement to inform advocacy and other supportive actions.

Countries also have an opportunity to share their experiences on how meetings are organised and facilitated, which contributes to the overall learning of the Movement and supports internal learning to inform the subsequent year's JAA process.

Experiences in working with high-level influencers, particularly where this has had a tangible result, can also be shared as an inspiration to other countries.

3 Country reflects on own progress and identifies critical bottlenecks to achieving progress

This subsection relates to discussions during the JAA meeting in which the SUN Focal Point/Country Coordinator and participants reflect on the latest country reports on nutrition, with reference to both country and global targets. It is likely that annual reports from the national nutrition plan and other information resources will be used to frame the discussion. This question is aimed at country discussion and reflection, using available sources of evidence from the preceding year, i.e., do the country stakeholders consider that they are moving in the right direction (a more qualitative analysis than a simple examination of the published data, such as Global Nutrition Report statistics).

4 Review last year's priorities

This subsection presents an opportunity to reflect on whether last year's actions addressed the bottlenecks identified last year, thus potentially leading to strengthening the design of actions and commitments for the coming year. Stakeholders will share progress on their support of the country's nutrition priorities over the course of the past year, which will also be an opportunity to discuss alignment and to reflect on accountability.

Have stakeholders honoured commitments to support and implement last year's priorities? Did last year's priority actions enable progress to be made in the country, particularly in addressing any major bottlenecks?

5 Coming year's priorities

This discussion will conclude with agreement around some of the key bottlenecks and challenges being experienced in country. Stakeholders will be expected to state how they will contribute to addressing those bottlenecks. It is recommended that stakeholders focus on the top priorities for the coming year and consider the feasibility of working together on these to achieve effective outcomes. The format allows for up to five priorities, although a country may decide to include fewer priorities to ensure that stakeholders are confident in their capacity to deliver on their responsibilities within the timeframe.

The discussion will also identify critical capacity gaps and consider options for addressing them. Capacity gaps will be further discussed with the SUN GSS. Options for supporting the country will be explored and a plan (compact) agreed, following the JAA meeting and submission of the report.



SECTION 3 FINANCE

This section responds primarily to SO3 and SO4 of the SUN Movement Strategy.

SO3: Build and strengthen country capacity with technical assistance and knowledge management.

SO4: Ensure SUN governance promotes country leadership and government responsibilities, aligns resources and strengthens mutual accountabilities.



Slow progress on increasing financial allocations and expenditure on nutrition was identified as a continuing challenge for all SUN countries at the end of the second phase (2016-2020). To promote action, understand challenges and inform advocacy approaches, the third phase (2021-2025) JAA includes a more detailed focus on finance. This section prompts the country to examine and record actual progress in ensuring the availability of costed plans and the means to track increasing investment and spending for nutrition more closely. It also prompts the country to identify specific challenges that require additional support.

This section includes a focus on how well both government and external stakeholders are aligning resources with national nutrition plans and priorities and how advocacy is being used to engage further sources of innovative financing.

The questions aim to prompt discussion during the JAA that supports the stakeholders to identify gaps and successes within the country's financial framework and financing strategy and to review and agree approaches to address them. The section also provides information to the SUN GSS on progress across countries in strengthening financial frameworks and, moreover, ensures that each country has the opportunity to raise any challenges, concerns or requests for support from across the Movement.

SECTION 4 POLICY, ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

This section responds primarily to SO1 of the SUN Movement Strategy.

SO1: Strengthen and sustain strong policy and advocacy to position nutrition outcomes.



As the first SO of the third phase (2021-2025), a strong focus on policy and advocacy is central to progress in nutrition. While substantial progress has been made in relation to the development of policy and legislation at country level, challenges in implementation and enforcement are significant. This section provides an opportunity to articulate more specific progress, commitments and challenges at country level related to advocacy. By reflecting on the progress of current advocacy approaches, countries will also learn about which areas merit additional investment. A question about the influence of global advocacy initiatives on country progress is also included to monitor the relevance of global events to countries.

The JAA meeting also presents an opportunity to advocate with senior decision-makers or politicians on challenges related to policy issues. Participation of senior decision-makers is most likely to have a positive outcome if a specific issue to advocate is identified in advance of the meeting (or during the meeting) and the 'ask' (action that the group wishes the person to undertake) is very clear. Briefing notes, preparation of press releases and opportunities for the senior decision-makers to interact with the media can increase the possibility of a commitment being made and documented.

SECTION 5 KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND LEARNING

This section responds primarily to SO3 of the SUN Movement Strategy.
SO3: Build and strengthen country capacity with technical assistance and knowledge management.



One of the primary objectives of the SUN Movement is to ensure country capacity is built through exchange of knowledge, technical assistance, and other approaches, primarily through the interactions among stakeholders in-country. This section offers an opportunity to confirm capacity gaps identified in earlier section discussions and to hold a discussion on ensuring capacity gaps are addressed.³ The SUN Movement Strategy encourages the exploration of multiple options for technical support, which might include: scheduled and time-bound mentoring, exchange visits among countries, in-country support through networks, engagement of academia, and international technical expertise provided remotely or in-country.

A question on uptake and utilisation of material resources and online opportunities is included here, to identify which resources are useful to countries. It also serves as an advocacy and dissemination opportunity, by ensuring that all countries are fully aware of the resources available to them and, especially, of new resources developed over the course of the preceding year. This list will be updated annually.

Subsection 6 invites countries to reflect on the effectiveness of previous technical support received.

SUN countries are expected to be both beneficiaries and contributors of knowledge and learning. In this section, and throughout the tool, countries are invited to share lessons on their experiences.



³ This discussion, between the SUN GSS and the country should lead to a documented compact through which an agreed set of actions will be implemented over the coming year. The compact should be reviewed during country calls and adjusted through mutual agreement. Countries will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the support received.

SECTION 6 NETWORKS

This section, which is broadly similar for the four existing networks, will aim to provide basic information about the networks' functionality in country. A form is also provided for Academia Networks, where these exist. Information in this section may complement separate assessments undertaken by SUN networks. It is expected that the Civil Society Network will include national, community-based and international organisations as well as representatives of young people.

The information provided will help the networks and the SUN GSS monitor the level of network engagement across SUN countries. It will also offer governments insight on the contributions of each network.



Thematic and sub-national review and reporting

Unlike in the 2020 JAA format, separate sections for sub-national and thematic reporting are not presented in the new tool. Critical areas are, however, incorporated, where they can be linked to specific information needs or specific actions. They may also be integral to JAA discussions prompted throughout the tool concerning programming, coordination, financing or policy bottlenecks and successes.

Sub-national coordination (where it exists) varies significantly among countries, both in structure and functionality. The SUN Movement does not therefore propose the use of a generic tool, given the diversity of situations in which it will be used. Instead, it is anticipated that national SUN platforms or sub-national coordination mechanisms themselves will select the sections of the tool or lines of enquiry that are most relevant to them, focusing on a critical review of progress, identification of bottlenecks and the means through which stakeholders will aim to address them.