

# **Strategic Review of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, 2019–2020**

Final report

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# About This Report

This Strategic Review (SR) of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, 2019–2020, was produced by an independent expert team, commissioned through the Maximising of Scaling up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+) programme. The team included the following: Dr Deborah L. Rugg, evaluation expert and team leader; Dr Donna A. Espeut, nutrition / monitoring and evaluation (M&E) expert; David Hales, M&E expert; Kathy Attawell, programme design and M&E expert; Dr Geeta Bhakta Joshi, Asia regional SUN expert; Dr Peninah Masibo, Africa regional SUN expert; Dr Akim Dharmawan Skm, East Asia regional SUN expert; Susana Raffalli, South America regional SUN expert; and Shalini Eragoda, SR research assistant.

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# Table of Contents

Abbreviations .....	iv
Executive Summary .....	vi
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Objectives .....	1
1.2 Methodology .....	1
2. Overview of Strategic Review Findings .....	1
2.1 Key findings .....	1
2.2 Findings and insights related to SUN's focus and niche .....	1
2.3 Findings and insights related to SUN's approach .....	2
2.4 Findings and insights related to SUN's structure and governance .....	3
3. Strategic Issues and Recommendations .....	6
3.1 Vision and scope .....	6
3.2 Strategy and focus .....	11
3.3 Governance and structures .....	15
4. Conclusion .....	30
Annex 1: Relevant External Factors and Trends .....	32
Introduction .....	32
Making a difference .....	32
Resistance to change .....	33
Urgency .....	33
Values .....	34
Democratic vs. autocratic / participatory vs. authoritarian / empowered vs. subordinate / inclusive vs. exclusionary .....	35
Connections and networks .....	35
Frontline actors and activities .....	36
Entrepreneurial approaches .....	37
Interdisciplinary approaches .....	37
Standardisation vs. customisation/personalisation .....	38
Implications for the SUN Movement .....	39
Annex 2: Country Illustrations .....	41
Annex 3: References .....	66

## Abbreviations

AARR	average annual rate of reduction
AFSeN-A	Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda
CRF	Common Results Framework
CSA	Civil Society Alliance
CSN	Civil Society Network
CSO	civil society organisation
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DUNCNN	Donor and UN Country Network for Nutrition [Indonesia]
ExCom	Executive Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GFF	Global Financing Facility
GNR	Global Nutrition Report
GSS	Global Support System
IDR	Indonesian Rupiah
INGO	international nongovernmental organisation
INI	Integrated Nutrition Interventions [Indonesia]
JAA	Joint Annual Assessment
KNAP	Kenya Nutrition Action Plan
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MSNAP	Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan
MSP	multi-stakeholder platform
MQSUN+	Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus

MTR	Midterm Review
NCD	noncommunicable disease
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
NI	Nutrition International
SBN	SUN Business Network
SC	Save the Children
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDN	SUN Donor Network
SMS	SUN Movement Secretariat
SR	Strategic Review
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TA	Technical Assistance
TAN	Technical Assistance for Nutrition
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNN	United Nations Network
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNSCN	United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition
UNSG	United Nations secretary-general
VfM	value for money
WFP	World Food Programme
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

# Executive Summary

The Strategic Review (SR) of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement was conducted by a multidisciplinary team of independent consultants between July 2019 and January 2020. The purpose of the SR was to make recommendations for the next phase—SUN 3.0—focusing on how the Movement needs to change its vision, strategy, structure and capabilities to support countries to achieve better nutrition results. The SR used a range of methods to collect and review evidence. These included:

- Review of the findings and recommendations of the Midterm Review of the SUN Movement.
- Desk-based review of SUN Movement documents and other literature related to nutrition, external trends and global partnerships and initiatives.
- Development of nine country and two regional case studies and vignettes through document review, stakeholder consultations and country visits.
- Attendance at SUN network meetings, a meeting of the Lead Group and the SUN Movement Global Gathering in Nepal in November 2019.
- Key informant interviews and constituency-based consultations with stakeholders inside and outside of the SUN Movement.

The SR team interviewed and consulted almost 200 people. These included:

- SUN Movement Coordinator and Lead Group members, including the Chair.
- Executive Committee (ExCom) members, including the Chair and Vice Chair.
- SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) staff, including the Director.
- Coordinators and staff from SUN global network Secretariats and selected country networks.
- SUN Focal Points and other country stakeholders in attendance at the 2019 SUN Global Gathering.
- Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) providers.
- United Nations Office for Project Services staff.
- Global nutrition thought leaders and other global experts and stakeholders not involved in SUN.

This report summarises the SR findings and recommendations. Section 1 summarises the SR objectives and describes the methodology used. Section 2 provides an overview of key findings and issues of strategic importance for the SUN Movement and its ability to catalyse nutrition scale-up. It highlights changes in the nutrition landscape since SUN came into existence, SUN's contribution to raising the visibility of undernutrition within global and national agendas and the challenge of identifying SUN's added value in improving nutrition outcomes. It also highlights issues related to SUN's focus and niche within the nutrition landscape, its approach and its governance and structure.

Section 3 discusses the key findings in more detail and sets out the SR recommendations. The detailed findings and recommendations are structured around the following priority areas:

- SUN Movement vision and scope.
- SUN Movement strategy and focus.
- SUN Movement governance and structures.

The draft version of this report elicited a wide range of comments and questions that were beyond the remit of the SR team to respond to but will be critical issues on which SUN Movement stakeholders will need to achieve consensus in developing the SUN 3.0 strategy.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Objectives

The purpose of the Strategic Review (SR) is to make recommendations to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement for the next phase of the Movement—SUN 3.0—for 2021 to 2025. As outlined in the SR terms of reference (TOR), the team was expected to build on the findings of the 2018 SUN Midterm Review (MTR) and to make recommendations on how the SUN Movement needs to change its vision, strategy, structure and capabilities to support countries to achieve better nutrition results. There was also an expectation for the team to both assess issues specific to the SUN Movement and cull insights and learning beyond SUN, including outside of the nutrition arena.

## 1.2 Methodology

The SR was conducted by a team of independent consultants between July 2019 and January 2020. The team comprised multidisciplinary and multinational experts, including from SUN member countries (Indonesia, Kenya and Nepal) and regions (Latin America). The team took a mixed-methods approach to collecting and analysing evidence to inform the findings and recommendations. Methods used to collect data included (1) document review, (2) country visits and the development of written country illustrations in the form of case studies and vignettes, (3) key informant interviews and (4) meeting observation and attendance.

### 1.2.1 Document review

The team conducted a desk review of key documents. These included:

- Findings and recommendations of the 2015 Independent Comprehensive Evaluation of the SUN Movement and the Final Report for the 2018 MTR of the SUN Movement, including the MTR case studies and findings from the MTR 360-degree survey.
- SUN Movement documents and reports (e.g. SUN annual progress reports; country profiles; the SUN Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning [MEAL] dashboard and database; case studies, ‘deep dives’, annual country profiles and other forms of country documentation produced by the SUN Movement Secretariat [SMS], Technical Assistance for Nutrition [TAN] partners and other SUN Movement constituencies; working arrangements and TOR, including for the SUN coordinator, Lead Group, Executive Committee [ExCom] and networks; Network Convergence Plan; SUN Movement meeting reports and Pooled Fund reports; SUN SMS budget; and four SR summary documents reflecting the perspectives from each of the four SUN networks.)
- Documents related to technical assistance (TA) provided under the auspices of the SUN Movement and other nutrition-related TA provision to countries.

- Documentation on hosting arrangements for global partnerships and potential options for SUN's status and hosting arrangements.
- Literature related to nutrition and the nutrition landscape (e.g. Global Nutrition Report [GNR] 2018, State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019, State of the World's Children 2019, United Nations (UN) Decade of Action on Nutrition, peer-reviewed journal articles on multisectoral nutrition action at global and country levels, country case studies produced by the World Bank, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the International Food Policy Research Institute).
- Review of literature related to wider external trends, including in nutrition-related and other sectors (e.g. agriculture, communications, development, education, environment, fishing, food processing, health, marketing, science and sustainability).
- Review of literature, reports and evaluations related to global partnerships and initiatives.

### **1.2.2 Development of written country illustrations**

The team developed nine country and two regional case studies or vignettes through document review, in-person and virtual stakeholder consultations, meetings with country delegations during the SUN Movement Global Gathering in November 2019 and country visits. The selection of countries was based on the following criteria:

- Representation of a range of SUN regions and countries.
- Duration of country SUN membership (early adopters and countries that have joined more recently).
- Diverse contexts (including humanitarian risk severity).
- Nutrition dynamics (e.g. predominant forms of malnutrition).
- Progress in meeting global nutrition goals (e.g. World Health Organization [WHO] global nutrition targets).
- Strategic issues relevant to SUN (e.g. scaling up nutrition in countries with decentralised governance, addressing climate change and nutrition, addressing structural drivers of malnutrition).
- Opportunities for learning from successes and challenges.

Country case studies or vignettes were developed for 1) Africa: Burkina Faso, Kenya, Rwanda 2) Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia 3) Latin America and Caribbean: Costa Rica, Guatemala and 3) Middle East and North Africa: Yemen.

In addition, regional case studies were developed for Africa and Latin American and the Caribbean,

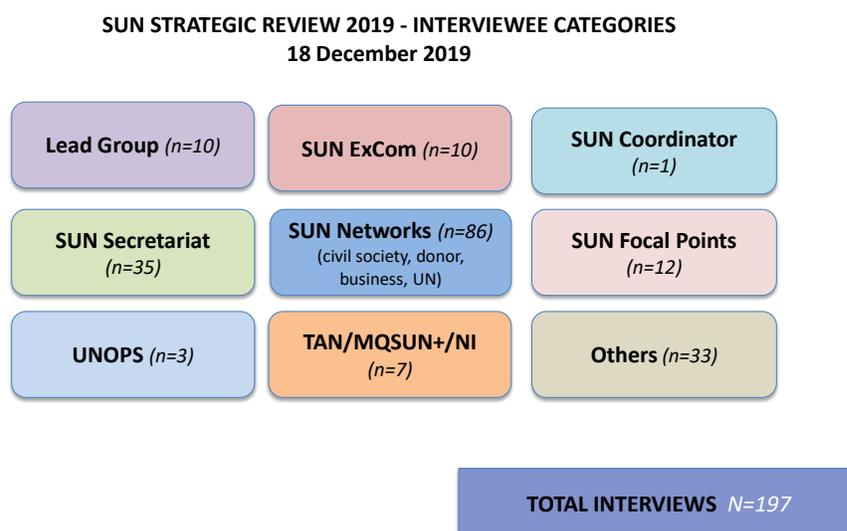
The team did not intend for each country case study or vignette to provide a comprehensive nutrition overview of the focus country. Instead, each focused on a specific learning theme or area of strategic importance to SUN moving forward.

A deliberate effort was made to minimise travel to SUN member countries. The team determined that it was only necessary to travel to two of the selected countries—Indonesia in October 2019 and Costa Rica in November 2019.

All case studies and vignettes appear in Annex 2.

### 1.2.3 Key informant interviews

As summarised in the figure below, the SR team consulted a broad spectrum of stakeholders, both internal and external to SUN, via key informant interviews. This form of stakeholder consultation and engagement was extensive and documented the diversity of perspectives and experiences related to SUN. In total, the team consulted 197 people through face-to-face meetings or telephone interviews (see summary below). An estimated 27 percent (53) of the total 197 formal interviews reflected the perspectives of country-level stakeholders. However, it is important to note, the 197 people do not include dozens of other people who provided information to the national and regional team members for the country illustrations; nor does it include informal discussions with multiple informants held at the Global Gathering or the individuals who requested anonymity as a condition of their participation.



*Abbreviations:* ExCom, Executive Committee; MQSUN+, Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus; NI, Nutrition International; SUN, Scaling Up Nutrition; TAN, Technical Assistance for Nutrition; UN, United Nations; UNOPS, United Nations Office for Project Services.

A breakdown of the figure is as follows:

- Interviews within the SUN Movement included the Chair of the Lead Group, the former Lead Group chair and the former SUN Movement Coordinator; the Chair and Vice-Chair of the ExCom; and the Coordinators of SUN global network Secretariats and individuals from country networks (e.g. SUN Business Network [SBN] members in Colombia and Indonesia; SUN Donor Network [SDN] members in Indonesia; SUN Civil Society Network [CSN] members in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritania and Somaliland; and SUN United Nations Network [UNN] members in Costa Rica and Indonesia). Interviews with the SMS included the Director of the SMS, Country Liaison Team, Network Facilitation Team, Communication and Advocacy Team and other Secretariat staff.

- The team conducted interviews or meetings with 86 stakeholders from the four SUN networks (7 from the SUN Business Network, 29 from the SUN Donor Network, 38 from the SUN Civil Society Network and 12 from the SUN UN Network).
- The team also interviewed 12 SUN Focal Points and Technical Focal Points from Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru, Rwanda and Somaliland.
- Interviews were also conducted with global nutrition experts and thought leaders, other global nutrition initiatives (Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition [GAIN], Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, HarvestPlus and Alive and Thrive); nutrition TA providers (TAN network providers other than the SMS—namely, Emergency Nutrition Network, PATH / Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus [MQSUN+] and Nutrition International); former SMS staff; and representatives from global partnerships, donors and the private sector outside the SUN Movement.

#### **1.2.4 Meeting observation and attendance**

The team observed the SUN Lead Group meeting at the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2019 and two SUN network meetings—the SDN meeting of senior officials in Rome in October 2019 and the SUN CSN virtual business meeting in October 2019.

In addition, the team attended the SUN Movement Global Gathering in Kathmandu in November 2019, including the SUN Focal Point preconference meeting and several constituency meetings, such as the Focal Point workshop; joint meetings of the ExCom and Lead Group and the ExCom and Focal Points; and ExCom meetings with the four SUN networks. During the Global Gathering, team members made themselves available for interactions and requested interviews by country delegates. This open invitation enabled the team to engage an array of SUN country delegates and achieve a greater understanding of the nuanced experiences of different constituencies within SUN.

#### **1.2.5 Analysis**

To ensure a systematic approach and evidence-informed findings and recommendations, the team mapped data collected during the SR data-collection phase against a matrix of issues of strategic importance for the SUN Movement.

## 2. Overview of Strategic Review Findings

### 2.1 Key findings

The following are key findings of the SR:

- **When SUN came into existence in 2010, the nutrition landscape was vastly different than it is now.** *The Lancet* 2008 series on maternal and child undernutrition provided compelling justification for a new way of working,<sup>a</sup> and there was consensus to redouble efforts related to stunting, with a particular focus on ‘The First 1,000 Days’.<sup>1</sup>
- **Over the past decade, SUN has contributed to raising the visibility of undernutrition within global and national agendas.** During its first two phases, SUN has supported the development of multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), Common Results Frameworks (CRFs) and costed plans for nutrition across SUN member countries. SUN also provided tools and capacity building for tracking nutrition investments.
- **Evidence of SUN’s added value in improving nutrition outcomes is nevertheless limited.** According to the 2018 GNR, 23 SUN member countries are not on track to meet World Health Assembly (WHA) nutrition targets.<sup>2</sup> With an estimated 149 million children under five years old being stunted in 2018 (22 percent global child-stunting prevalence), stunting remains the predominant form of undernutrition.<sup>3</sup> SUN countries such as Guatemala (see Guatemala case study in Annex 2) have all the SUN-promoted ‘architecture’ but are not making nutrition strides. Other SUN countries (see Costa Rica case study in Annex 2) have made nutrition strides without adopting the prescribed SUN path.

### 2.2 Findings and insights related to SUN’s focus and niche

The epidemiology and drivers of malnutrition have changed considerably since SUN’s inception, but **SUN’s strategic focus has not evolved at a pace and scale that is responsive to on-the-ground realities in SUN countries** (see sections 3.1 and 3.2). Worldwide, 2 billion adults and over 40 million children under five years old are overweight or obese, contributing to other adverse outcomes, such as diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) that contribute to 4 million deaths worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Low- and middle-income countries—SUN’s core constituency—have the highest risks of dying from NCDs.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-seven of the 41 countries with a triple burden of malnutrition (high rates of stunting, anaemia and overweight) are SUN member countries, accounting for almost half of SUN’s membership.<sup>2</sup>

Both the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WHO acknowledge that ‘poor diets are a major contributory factor to the rising prevalence of malnutrition in all its forms’. **As the issue of healthy diets has justifiably come to the fore, the SUN Movement has not been as visible and vocal as it**

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<sup>a</sup> Published on 16 January 2008 and available for download at <https://www.thelancet.com/series/maternal-and-child-undernutrition>.

should be in advocating for and addressing that issue as a key driver of various forms of malnutrition.<sup>6</sup> Within SUN's membership there are pioneers on this issue. For example, Costa Rica is a frontrunner in terms of adopting a food systems approach (see Annex 2). **Despite an appetite within SUN to be more involved in the food systems arena, relevant analyses, lessons learnt and expertise within the Movement are not being highlighted or leveraged for the betterment of all countries** (see the Latin America and the Caribbean case study in Annex 2).

There is tremendous variation in the malnutrition burden within SUN member countries. As highlighted in the 2019 State of the World's Children, the greatest burden of all forms of malnutrition is shouldered by children and young people from the poorest and most marginalised communities.<sup>7</sup> However, **the SUN Movement's strategic focus and approach do not fully reflect the 'leave no one behind' concept** that underpins the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Consequently, there have been missed opportunities by SUN to orient global and country stakeholders towards addressing key underlying and structural drivers of malnutrition through tailored approaches.** As a global movement, SUN has been slow to infuse considerations such as climate change, urbanisation, conflict, insecurity and human mobility—phenomena that are observed in several SUN countries with political instability, protracted population displacement, recurring hazards (e.g. drought, flooding), human rights violations (including but not limited to issues of gender equality) and food crises.

## 2.3 Findings and insights related to SUN's approach

*How* nutrition issues are being addressed across the Movement is as important as *what* is being addressed. Generally speaking, **standardisation, not customisation, has been an underlying characteristic of SUN's work.** SUN's approach and Global Support System (GSS) do not reflect the diversity that exists with respect to country and regional dynamics, capacities and Theories of Change (TOCs). In Africa, there has been an *increase* in the number of stunted children. Southern Asia has the highest wasting prevalence, and several SUN member countries in Latin America are grappling primarily with overnutrition, not undernutrition.

Some SUN countries are **mainstreaming nutrition within grassroots service delivery**, as well as within the social fabric of the country (see the Rwanda case study in Annex 2). Others, such as Ethiopia, are formalising the **link between nutrition outcomes and social protection** efforts (see also case studies from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guatemala and Rwanda in Annex 2). Countries such as Bangladesh and Costa Rica have pioneered the development of policies and strategies related to **climate change and the environment.** However, these isolated examples have developed outside of SUN's influence.

There are a myriad of contextual factors impacting SUN countries, and **SUN's increased focus on nutrition in humanitarian settings and fragile and conflict-affected states is encouraging.** However, as alluded to in the 2018 SUN MTR report, it behoves all countries to plan and manage their multisectoral responses through a risk-informed approach. Countries such as Burkina Faso (see case study in Annex 2) serve as a reminder that, even when a country has achieved some nutrition success, vigilance is required to position nutrition as central to national security, growth and development. It cannot be viewed as a competing, lower priority relative to other issues. Across the Movement, several countries have unpredictable sociopolitical and/or economic local contexts, limited funding to address nutrition through an integrated lens and challenges around transparency

and multi-stakeholder collaboration (see the Africa regional case study in Annex 2). These dynamics call for a nimble approach to advocacy, governance and coordination (see the Yemen case study in Annex 2).

**Within the Movement, there are divergent views on what and who constitute SUN.** Amongst some stakeholders, there is the perception that the SMS forms SUN. For others, SUN is the amalgamation of the member countries. Yet another subset of stakeholders regards the entire GSS, not just the member countries, as SUN. The lack of a common understanding of the Movement's structure, roles and responsibilities continues to cause confusion around SUN's governance, approach and accountability.

**There is also an unclear distinction between a country's overall nutrition system and SUN's contribution to it.** Both SUN's CSN and individual civil society organisations (CSOs) have been very vocal in raising the issue of subnational implementation. Across the Movement, CSOs are implementing nutrition-related programmes, as well as helping national and subnational stakeholders with the adaptation of multisectoral national nutrition action plans at the subnational level (see the Kenya case study in Annex 2).

Although some SUN constituencies, including CSOs and UN agencies, are involved in the implementation of nutrition programmes, **SUN as an international movement is not structured, nor does it have the mandate or capacity, to play an active role in the implementation of nutrition programmes within its member countries.** However, **there is a place for SUN-supported advocacy, TA and capacity building centred on critical success factors** in effective implementation of nutrition plans and programmes.

TA provided under the umbrella of the TAN programme, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), has been delivered within the parameters set by the SUN Movement. **However, there is a need to optimise the types of TA, delivery arrangements (e.g. better leveraging of technical expertise within SUN's regions of focus) and mechanisms to access that support** (see section 3.3.2). There is also a need to take a critical look at the size and configuration of the SMS, which is also part of TAN. In its current state, the SMS does not have the necessary mix of capacities to support SUN's diverse membership and needs, nor do SMS staff have the latitude to provide on-the-ground support and enhance their own substantive understanding of issues faced by countries. There is a need to explore different models for identifying and prioritising country support needs and linking country stakeholders with timely, effective support.

## 2.4 Findings and insights related to SUN's structure and governance

SUN ascribes a high value to the national MSP. **SUN country experiences suggest a need to adjust expectations of what MSPs can actually do.** In most SUN member countries, MSPs are large in size, meet infrequently (e.g. once or twice per year) and are not focused on the practicalities of multisectoral, multi-stakeholder *action*. In reality, there is often a smaller nucleus of players—often led by the health sector, with implementation support from UN agencies and civil society—that are engaged in the *delivery* of nutrition-related services and interventions. In Afghanistan, where there is a recently established MSP, a subset of stakeholders has formed a smaller committee that meets monthly to address operational issues related to the country's multisectoral, multi-stakeholder

nutrition response (see case study in Annex 2). Experiences from Yemen (see case study in Annex 2) show that the fidelity of a government-led, national nutrition MSP can be tested in the midst of political instability and a humanitarian crisis. These observations should prompt further examination of the premium that SUN places on national MSPs as a lynchpin for nutrition transformation in a country (see section 3.3.3).

**One key lesson learnt is that SUN Government Focal Points are important cogs in multisectoral nutrition responses, but their role, engagement and support within a truly country-driven, country-led effort need to be revisited.** As a political appointee, there can be high turnover in this position. Some SUN countries have identified SUN Technical Focal Points from within the government sector, in addition to having a Political Focal Point. However, it is noteworthy that, unlike other SUN constituencies, Focal Points are not organised globally as a network (see section 3.3.2). Observations and consultations at the 2019 SUN Global Gathering in Nepal indicate that (1) there is a need for formal mechanisms for peer exchange and support between countries, (2) a tremendous burden rests with a single individual serving as SUN Focal Point and (3) the way in which different constituencies work in a synergistic manner, with the strengths of each constituency being fully leveraged and all parties being held accountable for actions that support common nutrition goals, is key.

**Experiences within and across SUN member countries show that ‘bringing people together’ in a manner that is conducive to nutrition transformation requires due diligence around conflicts of interest and the dynamics between constituencies** (see section 3.3.1). The conflict-of-interest issue has been raised in several forums and via several processes, such as the 2018 SUN MTR. Experiences, insights and lessons learnt from outside of the nutrition arena (see Annex 1) underscore the importance of ‘values’ (i.e. principles, ethical standards) being reflected in an organisation structure and operations. However, the ten SUN Movement Principles of Engagement<sup>b</sup> are not consistently reflected in SUN’s governance, globally or at the country level.

Despite SUN’s mantra of being ‘country driven and country led’, country voices and priorities are secondary to the agendas and interests of some multilateral entities and donors that have considerable power and influence within the governance of the Movement. There is a lack of clarity between the various global governance structures and players that comprise SUN’s GSS (see section 3.3.1), with **the current governance arrangement and locus of control within the Movement not being conducive to transparent and inclusive decision-making in the best interest of SUN member countries.** This finding is not merely based on SR consultations with individual SUN stakeholders and constituencies; it has also been raised in critical analyses and reflections on SUN’s genesis and the power dynamics that exist within the Movement.<sup>8,9,10</sup>

A second conflict-of-interest concern relates to the role of some business and private-sector players (see section 3.3.1) in perpetuating malnutrition (e.g. through marketing of and increasing access to unhealthy, processed foods).<sup>11</sup> The SUN CSN has been very vocal on this issue, and several SUN countries (see Costa Rica and Guatemala case studies in Annex 2) are grappling with **holding the business sector accountable for actions that contravene healthy diets and nutrition improvement.** This is a matter of great significance for the entire global Movement, not just for the SBN or individual countries, particularly in light of the Lead Group’s recommendation to increase the role of the private sector in SUN’s activities.

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<sup>b</sup> <https://scalingupnutrition.org/about-sun/the-vision-and-principles-of-sun/>

**Concerns around business-sector engagement are symptomatic of broader issues related to how SUN constituencies/networks operate as a coherent movement rather than reflecting constituency or institutional interests.** At present, SUN has a constellation of structures that generally operate within their own silos. As different networks have evolved over the life of SUN, they have largely concentrated on intranetworking dynamics and issues rather than internetworking collaboration. **There are, however, examples of collaboration and joint action.** For example, in Indonesia, donors and UN agencies operate under the auspices of a single network, the Donor and UN Country Network for Nutrition (see Annex 2). In Afghanistan, the UNN has facilitated capacity building and the provision of technical support to Civil Society Alliance (CSA) members (see Annex 2). In Burkina Faso, the UNN and the country's CSA have been active supporters in the rollout of a multisectoral nutrition response. However, in other countries, CSOs are organised as a platform but do not have much power in nutrition governance (see Guatemala and Costa Rica case studies in Annex 2).

With so many moving parts, and global governance and organisational development issues that divert attention away from countries, SUN's added value has been both hard to articulate and hard to measure. **SUN's current MEAL system does not aid in telling SUN's story, nor does it meet the evidence and knowledge-management needs of the Movement.** SUN's contribution to the nutrition narrative emerging within and across SUN countries is not being systematically captured, and SUN's global TOC is not sensitive to country and regional dynamics and drivers of nutrition. As recommended in the 2018 MTR, there is a need for a reimagined MEAL system. This SR confirms the importance of countries developing their own nutrition TOCs, which should be based on country-level contextual and causal analyses through a nutrition lens.

In its present form, SUN's MEAL 'system' centres on the MEAL Dashboard, which is accessible via SUN's website. A significant amount of time and resources have been dedicated to the Dashboard. However, the Dashboard contains very little data that demonstrate SUN's contributions to nutrition transformation. Most data are either one-off milestones (e.g. related to the creation of MSPs or development of costed plans) or relate to conventional nutrition indicators, which is highly duplicative of data-collection and consolidation efforts by other entities. Relevant non-SUN efforts—for example, the annual GNR—provide more robust analysis of progress and critical issues vis-à-vis nutrition scale-up than what is currently produced by SUN. Theoretically, SUN's MEAL system should also aid the SMS and other GSS actors to curate the nutrition landscape (e.g. what new global nutrition evidence has emerged, what funding is available and what TA and capacity-building opportunities exist) and illustrate relevant links between SUN and other global agendas (e.g. climate change, food systems). However, the current MEAL system does not serve this function.

The SUN Movement Annual Progress Reports,<sup>c</sup> the Movement's website and the Global Gatherings are largely celebratory in nature. Whilst there is merit in highlighting successes, it is equally important to critically reflect on the progress countries are or are not making, challenges faced and innovations emerging from countries and regions. Critical analysis will provide a more robust understanding of different country trajectories towards scaling up nutrition and the extent of SUN's contribution.

There is a strong desire on the part of donors to see evidence of the impact of SUN's contributions to nutrition, but there is also an acknowledgment by several constituencies that tools and processes such as the Joint Annual Assessment (JAA) have limitations.<sup>12</sup> The self-evaluative nature of JAAs introduces the potential for biased assessments of current realities. Several stakeholders describe

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<sup>c</sup> <https://scalingupnutrition.org/progress-impact/sun-movement-annual-progress-report/>

an inherent pressure for countries to report progress rather than objectively identify areas that are faltering within a country's multisectoral nutrition response.

The above issue is related, in part, to the broader culture of learning that needs to be cultivated within SUN. **The country-to-country interface is potentially one of the most dynamic elements of the Movement, and there is a need to systematise country-to-country exchange and cooperation as part of SUN's agenda.** Countries such as Nepal and Peru, which have been frontrunners in multisectoral nutrition responses, have hosted learning exchanges, with support from country CSAs, the CSN, specific donors and UN agencies. There are also examples of how linking 'new' SUN member countries with long-standing SUN members can yield 'quick wins' for the new SUN members and spur further country-to-country cooperation (see the Afghanistan case study in Annex 2).

Through the introduction of dynamic, user-friendly processes, not just databases and tools that are updated on an annual basis, SUN's MEAL system could leverage the esprit de corps of SUN countries and foster a culture of critical analysis, reflection, replication of best practices and innovative problem-solving.

To conclude, as SUN's second phase draws to a close, there is a need to reorient the locus of power and decision-making and the focus of the Movement towards SUN member countries. There is tremendous potential in adopting a thematic focus on sustainable, affordable and healthy diets for all as the key that unlocks nutrition transformation. This paradigm shift will need to be reflected at all levels of the Movement and will require a strong commitment amongst all SUN constituencies to being truly 'country driven, country led and country centred'.

## 3. Strategic Issues and Recommendations

### 3.1 Vision and scope

#### 3.1.1 Vision and mission statements

##### *Overview*

Vision and mission statements have long been considered de rigueur for organisations of all types but tend to be generic or vague, which means they have little value in defining the specific goals, strategies or tactics of the organisation. It would be difficult to find a credible nutrition organisation that would not say it is in favour of ending malnutrition or ensuring that people have access to healthy food. The existing vision statement of the SUN Movement is clear, concise and time bound: 'by 2030, a world free from malnutrition in all its forms'. But, because it is so generic, it does not differentiate SUN from the many other organisations working to end malnutrition. The fact that the SUN Movement does not have a mission statement further undermines the value of its generic vision statement.

##### *Recommendation*

**(1.) Focus on strengthening the SUN strategy rather than investing time and resources in developing new vision and mission statements.** The process of developing vision and mission statements can be

a time-consuming and resource-intensive process where the end result is often not worth the investment. Strategy should be the priority, and improving the strategy should include ways it will play out in practice and not simply on paper (e.g. scenario planning with key stakeholders to understand the tactical implications). SUN may want to invest in developing vision and mission statements at some point in the future, but it is unlikely the absence of either will reflect poorly on the organisation.

### 3.1.2 Scope

#### *Overview*

‘Malnutrition in all its forms’ is a significant expansion from SUN’s original focus on the First 1,000 Days. Despite the implications of this wider scope, SUN’s global focus has continued to centre on undernutrition, particularly amongst children under five years old. Essentially, the organisation’s vision statement communicates one message, but its actions convey quite a different one. Current references to scope within the SUN Movement indicate that mothers and children are the institutional priority, at least at the global level. Amongst key stakeholders, there are divergent opinions on whether SUN should retain its focus on mothers and children or address nutrition issues amongst other population groups. It is clear that, at the country level, plans and activities are moving towards being more inclusive of all people facing nutrition challenges.

The Lead Group’s interest in further expanding the scope of the SUN Movement to include other nutrition-related issues (e.g. environmental factors, climate emergencies, humanitarian assistance, food systems, nutrition for disease prevention and treatment) is reasonable in light of the importance and relevance of these issues in the wider development context.<sup>d</sup> However, any expansion in scope will require the SUN Movement to clearly specify the extent of its involvement in different issues, including its position, priorities and activities.

When considering an expanded scope, it is important to acknowledge that other organisations have more expertise in these issues than SUN. Whilst it is unrealistic for SUN to take an active role in tackling issues when other organisations are better placed to do so, SUN can contribute to a better understanding of the links between its nutrition priorities and these other issues. It is also important to note that many of these issues—for example, climate change—are highly complex, with many facets and factors that have nothing to do with nutrition. Nevertheless, there are aspects of global agendas such as climate change for which SUN can make a compelling argument concerning their impacts on nutrition and, thus, human development. Related to this, there is a need for SUN, and the SMS in particular, to strengthen its links with nutrition experts or those with an interest in nutrition within other policy communities.

#### *Recommendations*

**(2.) Maintain SUN’s commitment to addressing malnutrition in all its forms.** The SUN Movement should maintain its commitment to addressing malnutrition in all its forms (i.e. the various forms of

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<sup>d</sup> The multiple references to nutrition in the SDGs are a clear demonstration of its connections to a wide range of issues. SDG 2—which aims to ‘end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture’—is the primary nutrition reference. SUN has stated that ‘at least 12 of the 17 Goals contain indicators that are highly relevant to nutrition’.

undernutrition and overnutrition). Taking that overall stance will not preclude SUN member countries from identifying particular forms of malnutrition as priorities based on their local nutrition dynamics.

**(3.) Expand the scope of SUN to actually include all people affected by all forms of malnutrition.** It is clear that, at the country level, plans and activities are moving towards being more inclusive of all people facing nutrition challenges. And in light of the above recommendations, it makes sense to expand the scope to include population groups other than mothers and children, whilst recognising that the focus will depend on the country context. For example, in many member countries where stunting remains high, a focus on mothers and children will continue to be a priority, whilst in others with a multiple malnutrition burden, the population scope will need to be widened.

**(4.) Develop a clearly articulated position on a healthy diet.** SUN should have a clearly articulated position on this issue. The fact that a prominent nutrition organisation has no public position on a healthy diet is a significant gap, which undermines its credibility. There are various resources that could be drawn on to develop this position, including ‘Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems’;<sup>12</sup> *Sustainable Healthy Diets: Guiding Principles* from FAO and WHO<sup>7</sup>; and GAIN’s definition of ‘nutritious and safe food’.<sup>e</sup> Again, this could be developed by the SMS in consultation with SUN constituencies or commissioned from relevant external organisations/experts.

**(5.) Expand the scope of SUN to include important nutrition-related issues such as climate change, food systems and NCDs.** This should be done in close consultation with member countries to ensure the expanded scope reflects country priorities vis-à-vis those issues. It will also be important to demonstrate how the Movement’s nutrition priorities are linked to other issues. A good example of this approach is the 2019 report on the global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition and climate change, published by the *Lancet* Commission.

**(6.) Develop related SUN position papers that address wider issues through a nutrition lens.** SUN should develop a clear position on how nutrition and related issues are linked—based on available data, evidence on how nutrition in SUN countries is affected by these issues and member country knowledge and experience—and develop position papers. SUN’s position should also inform how the Movement engages with other global initiatives that are addressing these issues. These papers could be developed by the SMS or commissioned from relevant external organisations and/or experts.

### **3.1.3 Membership and partnerships**

#### *Overview*

With a few exceptions, SUN members have largely been low-income / lower-middle-income countries. However, there is reported to be some interest amongst a few high-income countries in joining the Movement. This interest is motivated by an increasing awareness of the importance of nutrition in their own countries (e.g. rising rates of overweight and obesity, nutrition’s role in disease prevention and treatment, the nexus of nutrition, agriculture and climate change) and a sense that nutrition issues are a shared problem.

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<sup>e</sup> <https://www.gainhealth.org/about/strategy>

Amongst key informants, there are widely differing views about whether membership of the SUN Movement should be broadened to include additional upper-middle- and/or high-income countries. However, there is a strong consensus that nutrition issues facing low-income / lower-middle-income countries should remain a priority for the Movement and that this could be diluted by the perspectives of high-income countries. There is also recognition that middle- and high-income countries are diverse—for example, middle-income island nations would have different priorities and capacity from high-income countries in Europe.

The existing criteria for countries to join the SUN Movement is prescriptive and narrow in focus. Prospective members are expected to make commitments to activities—some of which may not be relevant to the country context—and to adopt the SUN model (e.g. forming or strengthening MSPs, identifying Government Focal Points, developing costed plans and CRFs). High-income countries are unlikely to adopt many aspects of this model.

Partnerships are central to the SUN Movement and have evolved with the Movement. This has occurred more by circumstance than design. Consequently, there is no clear strategy for engaging with partners, including global initiatives that have emerged since SUN was established and partners working on issues related to nutrition.

### *Recommendations*

**(7.) Maintain SUN’s membership focus on low-income / lower-middle-income countries and explore the potential to expand membership to include other middle-income countries.** SUN, through the SMS, should consult with existing member countries and the SUN networks and develop a discussion paper, clearly outlining the advantages and potential disadvantages of expanding membership, to inform decision-making on this issue.

**(8.) Explore other options, including partnership between high-income and low-income countries brokered through SUN.** SUN should explore the potential for different types of membership<sup>f</sup>—it could be upper-middle- or high-income countries becoming affiliate members or partners of SUN—and different types of relationships. For example, some high-income countries have expressed an interest in ‘twinning’ with current members to share knowledge and experience. There is also an interest in leveraging the capacity of high-income countries to provide more extensive TA. SUN could explore options with interested prospective members and interested current members that add value to the Movement and to member countries.

**(9.) Develop a clear strategy for SUN Movement engagement with global partners.** This should define the objectives, priorities and terms of engagement for partnerships and should be developed by the SMS in consultation with SUN networks and other key stakeholders, including members of the Lead Group. The strategy should also be used to assess the value of existing partnerships and to plan a more results-oriented approach going forward.

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<sup>f</sup> The membership of four Indian states has already set the precedent of different types of members in the SUN Movement.

### 3.1.4 Advocacy

#### *Overview*

Advocacy around critical nutrition issues has been the most significant achievement of the SUN Movement since its inception. SUN has played an important role in raising the profile of these issues at global and national levels, and its ability to combine high-profile advocacy with high-level country engagement has set it apart from many other nutrition organisations and initiatives.

There is a need to scale up financing for nutrition. This is one of the five critical steps to speed up progress identified in the 2018 GNR. At the global level, the goals of Nutrition for Growth include securing new financial and political commitments from governments, donors, civil society, the UN and business; others are also advocating for increased commitment. The role of the SUN Movement in global and domestic resource mobilisation for nutrition is unclear, and there is no documented record of effectiveness.

The SUN Movement has an impressive cadre of ambassadors—in the Lead Group, in the networks and in the countries—with the knowledge and influence to speak to diverse audiences on nutrition issues. Whilst the need for overarching advocacy for nutrition continues, the range of issues and audiences has multiplied. Targeted advocacy will, therefore, be critical in the future. The challenge for SUN is to maximise impact through the use of its ambassadors in a more coordinated and coherent way and to maximise use of opportunities for advocacy with other initiatives and events—for example, Universal Health Care 2030 and Nutrition for Growth 2020.

SUN member countries rarely speak with a collective voice, and little effort has been made to bring countries together to articulate shared concerns or to speak collectively on key nutrition issues. For example, the ‘Kathmandu Declaration’, released at the conclusion of the 2019 Global Gathering in Nepal, was not drafted or endorsed by SUN member countries. Speaking with a collective voice is a significant missed opportunity, given the number of SUN countries and the potential strength and credibility of this voice.

#### *Recommendation*

**(10.) Develop an advocacy strategy, linked to the objectives of the overarching SUN Movement strategy.** The SMS should work with the Lead Group, SUN networks and member countries to develop a cohesive advocacy strategy. It should set out clear objectives, messages, actions and responsibilities that support a focused and coordinated approach to advocacy across the Movement. Advocacy should be the core function of the Lead Group (see section 3.3.1), but the strategy should also set out the contribution of countries—and global and country networks, in addition to other SUN structures—in supporting agreed advocacy themes and messages. For example, SUN countries should work together to develop and implement a sustained advocacy campaign based on agreed themes and messages that leverage the power of the full membership in the SUN Movement.

## 3.2 Strategy and focus

### 3.2.1 Country-driven, country-led, country-centred strategy

#### *Overview*

Strategies are developed to define the approaches needed to achieve a goal or goals. The current SUN Movement strategy includes a disjointed set of elements: a vision, a transformational pathway (i.e. TOC), goals, strategic objectives, expectations of country actions and Principles of Engagement.<sup>g</sup> As a result, the strategy has no clear focus, no clear priorities and no clear agenda.<sup>h</sup>

The proliferation of goals—including the six WHA Global Nutrition Targets for 2025; the diabetes and obesity target for 2025 in WHO’s Global Monitoring Framework for NCDs; and multiple and wide-ranging goals related to the underlying causes of undernutrition in agriculture and food systems, clean water and sanitation, education, employment and social protection, health care, support for resilience, women’s empowerment and community-led development—is a fundamental weakness of the strategy. Stunting, in addition to being included in the WHA Nutrition Targets, is highlighted separately in SUN’s list of goals, together with the factors that contribute to it (e.g. poor maternal nutrition, poor feeding practices, poor food quality and early pregnancy), as a measure of impact for the SUN Movement.<sup>i</sup> The number of goals and the poorly defined nature of many of them make it almost impossible to define a coherent strategy.

The list of expectations of country actions—many of which are complex, are difficult to implement and could have limited effect—is another example of the lack of focus and priorities in the existing strategy. The expectations also suggest that the strategy is not based on needs and priorities identified by countries, and there is nothing in the strategy that acknowledges the different contexts, priorities or capacities of member countries. The current strategy is also very process driven (e.g. ‘developing or revising national policies, strategies and plans’), and multiple informants for the SR commented that country nutrition programmes often look good on paper but fall short in practice.

As described in the preceding section on key SR findings, at the global level the SUN Movement espouses the principle of being country driven and country led, but in practice this is not always the case. Countries have a limited role in the global governance of SUN and limited influence on determining what support is provided to them through SUN; in addition, as noted above, they are expected to adhere to a model and metrics that may not reflect their national priorities. Informants suggested that the areas identified as a priority for the SUN Movement in the 2019 Progress Report<sup>j</sup> are driven largely by the SMS and not by the member countries. Also, as highlighted in the two regional cases included in Annex 2, there are regional and subregional economic, trade and

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<sup>g</sup> SUN Movement Strategy and Roadmap (2016–2020).

<sup>h</sup> SUN’s expectations for new members better articulate the current strategy of the SUN Movement rather than the Strategy and Roadmap.

<sup>i</sup> It is possible to see stunting as a clear priority in the strategy, which reinforces the perception amongst many informants that the SUN Movement is ‘the stunting organisation’.

<sup>j</sup> The four priority areas identified in the SUN Progress Report for 2019 are as follows: (1) engaging parliaments for nutrition impact; (2) scaling up gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; (3) integrating nutrition into universal health coverage; and (4) ensuring a food systems approach to nourish people and the planet.

governance platforms that are currently underutilised in amplifying nutrition-related advocacy and action for issues that are not confined to the borders of a single country.

### *Recommendations*

**(11.) Develop a country-driven, country-led and country-centred SUN Movement strategy.** The strategy should be focused on and respectful of the perspectives and priorities of member countries;<sup>k</sup> such a strategy should be significantly more effective in contributing to substantive improvements in nutrition outcomes in these countries. A key aspect of this is distinguishing between being country led and country driven and being government led and government driven; the emphasis should be on the former, and this needs to be reflected in country governance structures (see section 3.3.3).

**(12) Ensure the SUN strategy is concise, focused and prioritises actions that will support countries to scale up nutrition programmes, improve effectiveness and achieve results.** Strategic objectives should be based on the 80/20 rule<sup>l</sup> but should be flexible enough to encompass differences in country context, priorities and capacity. The strategy should also champion flexible and innovative approaches to the nutrition challenges that countries face. In addition, the strategy should reflect the time frame of SUN—many key informants suggested that the Movement should have a finite lifespan<sup>m</sup>—with activities designed to achieve specific objectives by a specific date.

**(13.) Facilitate country collaboration to address common challenges and issues.** SUN, and specifically the SMS, can play an important role in facilitating SUN countries that face similar challenges in working together to better understand the problems, as well as identify and test possible solutions. This collaboration could be done bilaterally or via working groups convened to focus on specific issues—for example, the impact of climate change on stunting (see Bangladesh case study in Annex 2).

## **3.2.2 Country priorities and implementation**

### *Overview*

A common criticism of the SUN Movement is the lack of meaningful results and, more specifically, the lack of improvement in key outcomes in some SUN countries. Many stakeholders highlighted concerns that policies, plans and platforms are not translating into implementation to address nutrition challenges. There is a pressing need to shift away from process and towards actions and results.

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<sup>k</sup> In January 2020, David Malpass, the president of the World Bank, announced a reorganisation of the Bank's activities to ensure greater focus on country programmes. In the announcement, he said this change 'will strengthen our focus on country programmes and ensure that the GPs [Global Practices] and [Development Economics Vice Presidency] are better able to embed innovative, high-quality global expertise and knowledge in regional and country programmes'.

<sup>l</sup> The premise of the 80/20 rule is that 80 percent of the output is generated by 20 percent of the input; in other words, focus on the 20 percent of actions that will generate 80 percent of the results.

<sup>m</sup> In alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SUN documents have proposed 2030 as the end date for the Movement.

A related problem is that many national nutrition plans, including costed action plans, encompass an extensive array of issues that countries would like to address were the resources available. Chronic underfunding of nutrition programmes has contributed to this ‘laundry list’ approach, with plans including issues and activities that donors might be willing to support. Without clearly defined, agreed priorities, it is difficult for countries to focus attention and resources on activities that will generate results.

### *Recommendation*

**(14.) Support SUN countries to identify a limited set of actionable priority areas that are currently unaddressed or underperforming.** This support should be provided through the SUN networks and other components of the GSS. It should be feasible to distil these actionable priorities from existing strategies and plans; their selection should be supported by solid reasoning and evidence. It is also essential that ‘actionable’ is defined realistically (i.e. actions with clearly defined steps that can be implemented with available resources and that will accelerate scale-up to achieve nutrition results). The aim should be to leverage knowledge and experience in the country and to encourage innovative, collaborative and rapid implementation to achieve results, using a more focused team of national and subnational actors.<sup>n</sup> This could include ‘piloting’ or testing innovative approaches to addressing problems,<sup>o</sup> and such approaches could be supported through the SUN Movement Pooled Fund (see section 3.3.2).

## **3.2.3 Support for the strategy**

### *Overview*

A country-led, country-driven and country-centred strategy reinforces the role of the SMS as the lead support structure for the member countries who are at the core of the SUN Movement. As the lead support structure, the priority of the SMS should be the provision of core services that enable countries to better address their nutrition priorities and to facilitate rather than lead initiatives. Amongst existing members of SUN, there is strong interest in enhanced country-to-country dialogue and exchange of experience. Although the strategic objectives of SUN include shared learning, there is currently limited SMS support for this; the website provides minimal information about nutrition issues or learning. SUN has also made limited use of the opportunity presented by its extensive links, member countries and networks to contribute to the nutrition evidence base, including identifying effective approaches to implementation.

Informants for the SR raised a number of concerns about the MEAL system (see section 2), including the fact that it is largely an aggregation of data that is readily available from other sources. It includes little or none of the contextual information that is found in the primary sources of the data—contextual information that provides some of the most useful insights for countries looking to improve the effectiveness and scale of their nutrition activities—and it adds to the reporting burden amongst member countries. According to the MTR, ‘Country feedback gleaned during the MTR

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<sup>n</sup> Such as the example from Afghanistan of the smaller committee that meets monthly to address operational issues related to the country’s multisectoral, multi-stakeholder nutrition response (see case study in Annex 2).

<sup>o</sup> There is a reluctance on the part of some stakeholders within the SUN Movement to pilot different approaches, but it would be useful, for example, to demonstrate the ability of high-performance, interdisciplinary teams to take accelerated action and show results on distinct priorities.

process indicates that some country stakeholders perceive the MEAL system as little more than a one-way flow of information from countries to the SMS and that it is sometimes difficult to see its direct applicability in-country'. There are also concerns about the amount of time that SMS staff invest in maintaining the MEAL system and whether this represents value for money (VfM).

There are also concerns about the value and VfM of the JAAs. In principle, self-assessments can be useful tools, but the JAA process is widely perceived as an externally imposed requirement similar to the programme reviews conducted by donors. It is resource intensive but provides limited value in terms of learning. There are also very few examples of where the JAA process has improved outcomes or mutual accountability.

### *Recommendations*

**(15.) Strengthen the role of the SMS as a linking organisation with an enhanced evidence and knowledge-management function.** In its support for countries, the SMS should focus on providing countries with a range of resources that strengthen and support nutrition action. This role would include synthesising and disseminating nutrition information in a way that is useful to countries; providing links to evidence on critical nutrition issues that can be used by countries for advocacy, planning and implementation; working with partners to collate and share normative guidance on nutrition and nutrition-related issues; and providing links to evidence on wider issues that influence nutrition.

**(16.) Strengthen the role of the SMS in facilitating cross-country learning and exchange of experience.** The SUN Movement should expand opportunities for knowledge exchange amongst member countries and networks. A key aspect of this is making better use of technology to support effective and efficient exchange and interaction. Currently, the SMS is underutilising opportunities presented by technology—for example, online seminars and virtual meetings. Increased support for knowledge exchange should also include improved tracking of its value and outcomes.

**(17.) Strengthen the role of the SMS in collaborating with countries to generate data for action.** The SMS should build on the added value of the SUN Movement's links to countries and its extensive networks to facilitate documenting and sharing country activities, knowledge and experience, new ideas and innovative approaches. This 'database' of country information would support meaningful learning and exchange across countries by providing them with access to information on what other countries are doing. This would add more value than the current MEAL Dashboard, which provides summary data on global nutrition indicators that are already available from other sources. The aim is to generate useful data for action, including frontline and community-based research and evaluation, to help guide programme planning and implementation and, in particular, gaps in data relevant to identifying and assessing priorities; designing, costing and implementing effective activities; and assessing performance. Collection of data for action could also be an area of activity that could be supported by the Pooled Fund.

**(18.) Review the value and VfM of SUN investment in the MEAL system and in the JAA process.** The ongoing investment in the MEAL system should be reconsidered in light of concerns amongst stakeholders and the SR team about its value and its VfM. Assessment of the value of MEAL should be driven by SUN member countries with support from the SMS. The ongoing investment in the JAA process and its value in holding SUN stakeholders to account at the country level should also be considered, in view of similar concerns. Again, the assessment should be driven by SUN member countries and should reflect the observations and experiences of different in-country constituencies involved in nutrition action.

**(19.) Explore the potential for a merger with the GNR.** Rather than duplicate the work of the GNR, a reinvigorated, country-centred SUN Movement with a strong commitment to generating and sharing data for action could merge with the GNR. There are already many overlaps between the two, including multiple members of the GNR Stakeholder Group who have a formal or close relationship with the SUN Movement. Bringing these two initiatives together could be an effective way to combine the well-respected data platform of the GNR with an action- and results-oriented SUN Movement. If a merger is not feasible, SUN should explore ways to collaborate more closely with the GNR in ways that are mutually beneficial.

## 3.3 Governance and structures

### 3.3.1 Global governance and management

#### *SUN Movement Lead Group and ExCom*

##### Overview

The key governance structures are currently the Lead Group and ExCom. The Lead Group comprises around 25 members, is chaired by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and is appointed by and reports to the United Nations secretary-general (UNSG). The Lead Group has overall responsibility for progress towards the SUN Movement's strategic objectives, preserving the Movement's unique character and acting as high-level emissaries. It is also expected to provide high-level oversight of the ExCom and the coordinator. The Lead Group meets once a year to review progress. The ExCom comprises 16 members, including 6 Government Focal Points and 10 members from the SUN networks (3 donor, 3 civil society, 2 UN and 2 business representatives), and is currently chaired by the World Bank. Members are proposed by the networks and confirmed by the Lead Group chair.

The SR identified a number of issues related to these structures and the governance of the SUN Movement:

- **The SUN Movement is not maximising the potential value of the Lead Group as champions for nutrition.** The Lead Group does not have a clear strategy or work plan linked to SUN objectives or plans, or to country priorities and needs. Its roles and responsibilities are somewhat vague—for example, 'champion goals and values', 'advocate on specific issues related to challenges encountered across the SUN Movement', 'embody the spirit and principles of the Movement', 'bang the drum for nutrition' and 'highlight SUN's role and reputation'. The expected contribution of Lead Group members is unclear, and the extent to which Lead Group members are active varies. The process of identifying and selecting Lead Group members is also unclear: its TOR state that 'members of the movement will be invited to provide suggestions for membership in a process to be decided'.
- **The MTR recommended clearer delineation between governance structures and that the ExCom be responsible for overseeing development and implementation of strategy and monitoring performance.** Although SUN now states that the ExCom acts on behalf of the

Lead Group to oversee the development and implementation of the SUN strategy and operating modalities, there is still a lack of clarity about the delineation between these two structures. The ExCom's other roles and responsibilities are somewhat vague—for example, supporting the Coordinator to galvanise political commitment, overseeing efforts to align support for all SUN countries to achieve results and developing deliverables for approval by the Lead Group. Neither the Lead Group nor the ExCom function as a formal board or similar decision-making body, and in practice, the Lead Group does not take line responsibility for the achievement of SUN's strategic objectives.

- **SUN Movement and external stakeholders are unclear about roles and responsibilities in SUN's governance and, in particular, about where and how decisions are taken and about lines of reporting and accountability.** More engagement of networks and member countries in setting the agenda was suggested by multiple stakeholders. Some informants commented that the effectiveness of current governance structures is undermined by their UN-like processes, which reflects the fact that the Coordinator is an Assistant Secretary-General and that the Lead Group and ExCom are both currently chaired by representatives from organisations within the UN system. There is consensus that processes need to be less bureaucratic and that SUN could potentially be a model for other global partnerships. Other informants raised concerns about the imbalance of power and voice between different constituencies and the domination of governance structures by the Anglophone world.
- **The SUN Movement needs to be more proactive in identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest, in line with its Principles of Engagement to act with integrity and in an ethical manner and to do no harm.** Examples where concerns were raised include the following: organisations or individuals represented on multiple structures; organisations playing multiple roles (e.g. being strategically placed to identify or influence TA needs and then being contracted to implement or provide the TA); conflicting agendas of SUN and the private sector; and conflict of interest between acting as a representative of donor or UN institutional interests and serving as a SUN Lead Group or ExCom member.

### Recommendations

**(20.) Transform the ExCom into a functional governing board.** The ExCom should assume the responsibilities that are standard practice for boards or management committees and should be renamed the SUN Movement Board to reflect this.<sup>p</sup> For example, the Board should be responsible for establishment of broad policies and priorities, oversight of SUN's strategy development implementation, approval of plans and budgets and review of financing and audited financial reports. Identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest is a critical governance issue, and this should also be included in the remit of the Board. A permanent finance subcommittee should

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<sup>p</sup> Examples of other similar organisations with a board include the following: the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, which has a democratically elected Steering Committee with clearly defined roles and responsibilities; the RBM (Roll Back Malaria) Partnership to End Malaria, which has a Partnership Board that includes representatives from malaria-affected countries, civil society, donors and the private sector; and the Stop TB Partnership, which is governed by a board whose responsibilities include setting strategic direction, providing oversight and guidance and approving budgets.

be in place to ensure that the many financial issues facing SUN receive the requisite attention. Ad hoc committees or time-limited task forces could be established as required to deliver specific Board input or output. The Board should meet formally at least twice a year, with a clear agenda, including decision points. The SMS should be responsible for servicing the Board and liaising with the SUN networks to ensure that they have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda and to prepare papers for Board meetings. More effective communication of Board decisions and of how these are or will be followed up is also required. This overarching recommendation to reform the ExCom is consistent with the MTR recommendations that SUN needs a board. Light-touch oversight is not sufficient given the need for effective accountability and transparency and the financial resources invested in SUN. The ExCom should assume responsibility as the primary governance mechanism of the Movement and should become the key forum for holding the Secretariat and networks to account.

**(21.) Revise the composition of the Board.** The current balance of representation on the ExCom should be revised to increase country representation and to add members who have no association with SUN, including an independent chair. A reasonable composition of the Board would be as follows: the independent chair; ten country representatives nominated by the network of SUN Country Focal Points; two UN, two donor, two civil society (regional and country) and two private-sector representatives, nominated by their respective networks; and three independent members with expertise relevant to SUN's strategic objectives, including an external global nutrition expert. The Board would include the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the SUN coordinator and the SMS director as ex officio members.

**(22.) Revise the Lead Group's role and title.** The Lead Group should become a Council of Ambassadors<sup>9</sup> which includes the SUN coordinator and focuses on ambassadorial and advocacy activities. Whilst it should still provide input into the SUN Movement strategy, it should not have responsibility for strategy development or for monitoring progress towards achievement of strategic objectives. The Council should plan its activities around the SUN Movement's strategy and identified country priorities, meeting once a year to review its performance during the previous year and to make plans for the coming year. The SUN Movement Board should also review the performance of the Council to ensure it is being used to maximum advantage. This overarching recommendation is also consistent with the MTR recommendation that the Lead Group should focus solely on its emissary role to deliver political impact at the country level and globally.

### ***SUN Movement coordinator and Secretariat***

#### **Overview**

The current role of the coordinator includes leadership, representation of the SUN Movement and advocacy, as well as internal management, including oversight of day-to-day implementation of the SUN strategy, leadership of the SMS, line management of the SMS director and coordination of the SUN Country Focal Points. The coordinator is appointed by and reports to the UNSG, is accountable to the Lead Group, is guided by the ExCom and is an ex officio member of both the Lead Group and the ExCom. The coordinator's role, as currently defined, lacks focus and clarity of purpose, which raises questions about conflicts of interest and transparency. The coordinator's involvement in internal management and operational issues creates a blurring of roles with the SMS director; in

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<sup>9</sup> Other organisations, such as World Wildlife Fund, have Councils of Ambassadors.

addition, the provision of administrative and logistical support for the coordinator consumes a significant amount of SMS staff time. The coordinator also lacks expert advice and technical support on relevant nutrition issues.

The SMS comprises the SMS director and staff responsible for policy, communication and advocacy, country liaison, finance and administration. Currently the SMS director reports to the coordinator. According to the SUN website, the SMS liaises with countries and networks, tracks and communicates progress and shares stories, organises meetings and workshops and collects and analyses information from the countries.

### Recommendations

**(23.) Clarify and revise the respective roles of the coordinator and the SMS director.** There is a need for a clearer delineation of responsibilities between the coordinator and the SMS director. The coordinator should primarily have an external focus, on SUN external relations and advocacy, as well as provide input into the development of the SUN strategy. The SR review recommends that the coordinator have a small, dedicated team to support the coordinator's activities; the team should include a senior nutrition adviser. The coordinator's role should not include oversight of day-to-day implementation of the SUN strategy, leadership of the SMS and line management of the SMS director or coordination of the Country Focal Points. This is consistent with the MTR recommendation that SUN should maximise the impact of the coordinator's role in generating political commitment.

The director of the SMS should primarily be responsible for management and operational issues, including oversight of day-to-day implementation of the SUN strategy and leadership and management of the SMS. The SMS director should report to the Board, and the Board should be responsible for reviewing the performance of the director and the SMS.

**(24.) Review the focus and role of the SMS.** In line with the proposed role for SUN and the SMS discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.2, the structure of the SMS and the roles and skill requirements of its staff should be revised. Responsibility for coordination of the Focal Points should shift from the coordinator to the SMS; given the increased focus on a country-centred and country-led strategy recommended by the SR, it will be important for the SMS to strengthen liaison with and support for member countries. The SMS will need to strengthen its knowledge management, external relations and partnership functions; the latter is critical if SUN is to effectively position nutrition within wider issues and initiatives. In addition, the SMS needs more well-rounded nutrition expertise, including the capacity to understand nutrition policy and programming and specific functions, such as the development or commissioning of position papers, knowledge management (e.g. synthesising emerging evidence) and documentation of country experiences.

#### **Summary of proposed roles for the SMS**

- Being a linking organisation with an enhanced evidence and knowledge-management function.
- Facilitating cross-country learning and exchange of experience.
- Collaborating with countries to generate data for action.
- Servicing the post-ExCom Board.
- Coordinating the Focal Points and providing stronger liaison with and support for member countries.
- Supporting stronger external relations and partnership functions.
- Supporting the CSN Secretariat.
- Identifying proactively country TA needs through regular consultation with Country Focal Points and CSAs and communicating this to TA providers to inform the scope of their activities.

- Maintaining an overview of TA providers and available TA and communicating this, together with information about accessing TA, to country stakeholders via the SUN networks, Focal Points and SUN Movement website.
- Assisting in linking country structures to other networks, including the Nutrition Decade Action Networks, which are intended to share experience, promote improved coordination and build political commitment.

### *Hosting arrangement*

#### Overview

The SMS is hosted by UNOPS in Geneva. Under this arrangement, UNOPS issues contracts to staff and provides services related to human resources, performance reviews, procurement, legal issues and financial and grant management. The current arrangement has considerable advantages (Table 1), although there have been some serious issues related to SMS staff contracts.<sup>1</sup> The SR team was asked to consider alternative arrangements. Options considered included maintaining the current hosting arrangement; having another UN organisation do the hosting; having a nongovernmental organisation (NGO) do the hosting; and establishing SUN as an NGO, foundation or association. Table 1 summarises the advantages and disadvantages of these options.

**Table 1. Advantages and disadvantages of options for hosting arrangements.**

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Maintain hosting arrangement with UNOPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its location within the UN, which strengthens legitimacy and convening power</li> <li>• Current SUN status of an international organisation in Geneva through the host country agreement with UNOPS</li> <li>• Independence, neutrality, no conflict of mandate or interest with SUN</li> <li>• Experience and track record in provision of support services</li> <li>• Effective and accountable financial management and capacity in grant management</li> <li>• Global presence</li> <li>• Competitive management fee (7%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN bureaucracy</li> <li>• Unresolved issues relating to staff contracts</li> <li>• Geneva as an expensive location</li> <li>• Limitations to advocacy on more controversial issues due to sensitivities of Member States</li> </ul>
Have another UN organisation do the hosting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location within UN, which strengthens legitimacy and convening power</li> <li>• Global presence</li> <li>• Ability of any UN host to contract services from UNOPS on behalf of SUN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN bureaucracy</li> <li>• Expensive location still since other UN organisation headquarters are in locations as expensive as Geneva</li> <li>• Increased likelihood by some UN organisations (e.g. WHO, UNICEF, FAO, WFP) to have conflict of mandate or</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The SUN Movement coordinator (assistant secretary-general) plus two senior staff (D1 and P4) are employed on UN fixed-term contracts. The rest of the SMS was, until recently, employed on Individual Contractor Agreements. Due to uncertainty about entitlements of Individual Contractor Agreement holders under Swiss law, which UNOPS had not anticipated and which caused considerable stress for staff, SMS staff were offered temporary appointments until the end of December 2020.

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
		<p>interest with SUN; disadvantage with others less likely to have conflict of mandate (e.g. UNESCO, UNDP) due to less experience and lower track record in provision of support services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Necessity for SUN to pay two sets of management fees if hosted by a UN organisation that contracted services from UNOPS on its behalf</li> <li>• Amount of time needed to shift to another UN organisation, which would disrupt activities and be unlikely to offer significant advantages over UNOPS</li> <li>• Likelihood of higher management fee for other potential host UN organisations (e.g. WHO charges 13% of donor grants to a health organisation with a similar structure as SUN)</li> <li>• Limitations to advocacy on more controversial issues due to sensitivities of Member States</li> </ul>
Have an NGO do the hosting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independence, although not significantly more than with the current hosting arrangement</li> <li>• Potential to move to a location that is less expensive than Geneva and to reduce operating and staff costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of multilateral legitimacy, convening power and other advantages associated with being part of the UN, particularly with government stakeholders</li> <li>• Under Swiss law, SUN's inability in its current formation to meet the criteria to be treated as an international organisation were it to leave the UN</li> <li>• Infeasibility of continuing current relationship of the coordinator and Lead Group, appointed by the UNSG, to SUN</li> <li>• Amount of time needed to shift to an NGO, disrupting activities</li> <li>• Necessity to renegotiate donor funding agreements</li> <li>• Risk of being perceived as only a CSO network</li> </ul>
Establish SUN as an NGO, private foundation or association (e.g. along similar lines to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independence, although not significantly more than with the current hosting arrangement</li> <li>• Potential to move to a location that is less expensive than Geneva and to reduce operating and staff costs</li> <li>• Increased scope to solicit funds from wider range of donors, although some potential funders may not conform to SUN's Principles of Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of multilateral legitimacy, convening power and other advantages associated with being part of the UN, particularly with government stakeholders</li> <li>• Infeasibility of continuing current relationship of the coordinator and Lead Group, appointed by the UNSG, to SUN</li> <li>• Amount of time and cost involved in setting up a new legal entity; necessity to renegotiate donor funding agreements</li> </ul>

Abbreviations: CSO, civil society organisation; FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization; NGO, nongovernmental organisation; SUN, Scaling Up Nutrition; UN, United Nations; UNDP, United Nations Development Programme; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; UNOPS, United Nations Office for Project Services; UNSG, United Nations surgeon-general; WFP, World Food Programme; WHO, World Health Organization.

There is little to be gained from changing the hosting arrangement at this time, and there are some potential risks associated with alternative hosting arrangements. The package of services offered by UNOPS is comprehensive, and the quality of support available to hosted organisations is seen to be generally good. In addition, the UNOPS management fee is competitive and supports SUN's 'be cost-effective' Principle of Engagement. Based on these factors, together with the finite time frame expected for the SUN Movement, there is not a strong case for an alternative to the current arrangement.

UNOPS and other agencies in Geneva are reported to be considering a potential new contract modality that will enable UN entities to attract skilled and experienced staff but without the offer of a long-term career in the UN. If or when this will happen is unclear. However, it should be feasible for the SMS to attract and retain high-calibre staff without offering fixed-term UN contracts.

Although contractual issues have been a factor in the high staff turnover in the SMS, the impact of suboptimal management and workplace dynamics on staff retention and performance must also be acknowledged and addressed.

### Recommendation

**(25.) Maintain the current hosting arrangement with UNOPS.** SUN is not maximising the range of services that UNOPS can offer and should explore the potential for UNOPS to provide additional services within the current hosting arrangement. The human resource team within UNOPS should work with existing and former staff members to better understand and address the challenges they face or faced in the workplace.

### *SUN funding and VfM*

#### Overview

There are concerns about the financial sustainability of SUN, in particular funding for its core costs. A clearer strategy and stronger focus on relevance and results will be critical to maintain donor interest in SUN. There is also scope for SUN to reduce costs, increase efficiency and demonstrate greater VfM, which will make it a more attractive proposition for donors. 'Be cost-effective' is one of the SUN Principles of Engagement, but there is little evidence that SUN systematically considers cost containment or VfM in strategy, decision-making or operations. This, together with SUN's future financial sustainability, is an area that an effective oversight board should address with some urgency; it is also a key reason to have a finance subcommittee, which can work with SMS staff and UNOPS on critical issues.

The SUN SMS budget for 2019 was around US\$9.5 million. Most of this was spent at the global level (see 'Pooled Fund' subsection in section 3.3.2 below). Personnel costs represent the largest proportion of the SMS budget at around \$5.4 million, which includes UNOPS direct costs, followed by operating expenses at around \$2.7 million, which includes costs associated with the Global Gathering (see below), followed by the UNOPS fee at around \$0.6 million and then travel costs at around \$0.5 million.

According to SUN, the Global Gathering 'serves as a global platform for the renewal of commitment to the mission and purpose of the SUN Movement, for global high-level advocacy and for achieving broad consensus on strategy and priorities'. Whilst face-to-face meetings can be very valuable, they also have a high cost. According to the SUN SMS budget, the Global Gathering in November 2019

cost around \$1.2 million, which is a significant amount for one meeting, as well as representing a significant proportion of the total budget for 2019. The SUN Movement needs to be more proactive in reducing its carbon footprint through using alternative, more climate-friendly approaches to meetings and communication. In addition, some informants raised concerns about the effectiveness of such large gatherings and, in particular, their value as a venue for exchange of experience and learning.

### Recommendations

**(26.) Review opportunities to achieve cost savings.** The priority should be to reduce staff count by rationalising and prioritising the activities of the SMS and the coordinator support team (see above); reducing the travel budget; sharing resources or activity costs with partners; making better use of technology; and outsourcing key functions and activities, including to SUN Movement partners. The functions and costs of supporting the activities of the coordinator and the SMS should be clearly delineated.

**(27.) Review the value and VfM of the Global Gathering and consider more effective and cost-effective alternatives.** Many organisations have shifted away from large-scale events in favour of more cost-effective alternatives. As a Movement, SUN should consider other ways to bring its many stakeholders together. Smaller, regional or thematic action-oriented meetings could provide better opportunities for face-to-face discussions at a lower cost, especially if they used member- or partner-operated venues such as conference facilities run by governments, donors and the UN. Similarly, regular online seminars, which are not currently used by SUN, have proved to be a cost-effective way to bring audiences together for learning and dialogue.

## **3.3.2 Global structures and mechanisms for country support**

The SUN GSS includes the SMS and the SUN networks, as well as mechanisms for grant making and provision of TA. The SR considered the merits of decentralising components of the GSS, in particular establishing support structures at the regional level. The SUN CSN is supporting emerging regional civil society platforms, and these are reported to be playing a useful role in networking between countries and providing support to national CSOs. However, whilst there is support for regional meetings and learning exchange, and potentially for regionally based TA providers, there is no support for the creation of regional SUN Secretariats or regional donor, UN or business networks. It is also unlikely that the SUN Movement would be able to finance such structures. The SMS's role in supporting countries is discussed earlier in this report, in section 3.2.3. This current section focuses on the SUN Movement networks, TA and the Pooled Fund.

### *SUN networks*

#### Overview

The SUN Movement has four networks: the SUN CSN, the SDN, the SUN UNN and the SBN. The Secretariats for these networks are hosted by Save the Children (SC), the Swiss Development Cooperation, the World Food Programme (WFP) and GAIN, respectively. There have been concerns that the global networks have not been sufficiently aligned with and responsive to country contexts and needs, have operated in isolation from each other and have lacked realistic plans and targets.

The Draft SUN GSS Collaboration Framework 2019–2020 was developed to try to address these concerns. The Framework states that the global Secretariats of the SUN networks will strengthen collaboration and agree to a core set of joint activities, complementing their existing work plans, including a focus on strengthening of leadership and commitment, MSPs, subnational capacity for coordination, planning and implementation, strengthening of national systems and structures and use of existing capacities and resources of network members. Based on the GSS collaboration framework, three joint network-SMS task teams have been established to jointly advance GSS work on advocacy, capacity building and MEAL. Feedback from informants to the SR suggests that the global networks have a clearer direction and that collaboration between the networks has improved.

The SR highlighted specific issues relating to the individual networks, and these are summarised below:

- **The CSN** now encompasses around 50 national CSAs, more than 3,000 organisations and emerging regional networks in four regions. The CSN has played an important role in the development of regional and country networking structures through support for fundraising, capacity development and learning. The sustainability of the CSN and the Secretariat’s ability to support it in the future is a concern. Informants also highlighted challenges regarding the current hosting arrangements for the CSN Secretariat, including ensuring that the Secretariat receives the support services it requires to function effectively, managing differences in priorities (e.g. SC’s priority is child nutrition, whilst the SUN CSN has a wider remit), protecting the independence and autonomy of the network Secretariat and ensuring there is a clear demarcation of roles. Other issues related to the CSN include the perception that the network, and its representation in SUN Movement governance structures, is dominated by international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs) from the global north and English-speaking countries and that it lacks clarity about the respective roles of the network and the SMS in knowledge management and learning.
- **The SBN** aims to support business to grow its role in nutrition and SUN countries to develop national business engagement strategies. In addition, the SBN aims to support 35 SUN countries to establish SBNs by the end of 2020 via the country offices of GAIN and WFP. Concerns regarding the SBN include the extent to which the network is being driven by private-sector priorities rather than country priorities, the ability of governments in some countries to engage with the private sector and the risk that private-sector involvement could undermine pro-poor and equity aspects of the national nutrition response. SUN stakeholder concerns regarding conflicts of interest often allude to business practices that are in direct conflict with nutrition improvement; there are also concerns about actions of SBN members in related arenas—including, for example, climate change. Some stakeholders also noted that SUN could be more proactive in engaging with private-sector partners that are not directly involved in nutrition—for example, communications, digital and print media companies that have expertise in promoting behaviour change. With respect to business participation in SUN, there is a lack of clarity and rigour about the SUN and SBN ‘rules of engagement’ and the corresponding standards and behaviours expected of private-sector companies that wish to join the SBN at national or global levels.
- There are plans to merge **the UNN** and the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN). This will improve efficiency—it makes no sense to maintain two separate Secretariats—and potentially improve the coherence of UN global efforts and country support. The

UNN/UNSCN has the potential to play an important role in strengthening country-level UN support for nutrition through existing UN mechanisms and agencies present in-country.

- **The SDN** supports donor coordination and alignment with national nutrition plans at the country level and ensures that lessons from SUN inform wider processes. Donors also have the potential to promote SUN Movement objectives at a global level through internal and external advocacy, international meetings and events and their influence on global financing mechanisms. It is difficult to judge whether donor behaviour is influenced by being part of the SDN; however, there is a sense that there is value in the ongoing dialogue.

There are diverse views about whether the SUN Movement should expand to include additional networks—including, for example, media, academia and youth networks. At a country level, some SUN members already have such networks. Some constituents within SUN are strongly in favour of establishing a youth network, but others are strongly opposed to doing so.

The different networks are individually providing important support at the country level. This is illustrated by examples from SR country case studies (see Annex 2). In Afghanistan, the UNN is supporting the national nutrition Technical Secretariat. In Rwanda, the UNN and CSA have been prominent in the national response—the UNN has provided TA and the CSA has played an important role in advocating for increased investment in nutrition. In Indonesia, the SBN is supporting a range of nutrition-related workplace initiatives; in Sri Lanka, the road map for the SBN includes creating consumer demand for healthy foods.

However, several of the case-study countries (e.g. Guatemala and Indonesia) highlighted the need for improved coordination and collaboration across constituencies to optimise nutrition action and results. In some contexts, this is challenging—for example, in countries where the relationship between government and civil society is difficult or where civil society is wary of engaging with the private sector. It is unclear to what extent SUN is willing to use its influence (e.g. through the coordinator, Lead Group, SMS and Focal Points) to address issues that undermine collaboration, such as government restrictions on the civil society sector.

### Recommendations

**(28.) Accelerate activities to strengthen the role of the SUN global networks in supporting increased coherence and collaboration across constituencies in support of the national nutrition response at the country level.** The global networks have the potential to improve understanding of how the efforts of different constituencies can complement each other in pursuit of common goals and, in particular, to optimise the contribution of civil society. This should be linked to support for multi-stakeholder mechanisms (see section 3.3.3) and for implementation of national plans. Consideration could be given to joint funding across networks for joint action at the country level—for example, through the Pooled Fund—rather than funding individual organisations.

**(29.) Support the CSN Secretariat to develop a plan for sustainability and to address issues related to hosting and representation.** This support should be provided by the SMS. With respect to the CSN Secretariat hosting arrangements, the SMS should establish rules of engagement and work with the CSN and SC to develop a memorandum of understanding that sets out clear roles and responsibilities and the principles of independence, autonomy and noninterference. If a satisfactory arrangement cannot be reached in the short term, consideration could be given to identifying an alternative host.

**(30.) Set clear and high standards for business participation in SUN at the global and country levels.**

The scale and scope of private-sector involvement in nutrition and nutrition-related activities are massive; the production, processing and distribution of the world's food supplies depend almost entirely on the private sector. However, companies whose activities are not consistent with the SUN Movement Principles of Engagement—in particular, Principle 8 ('Act with integrity and in an ethical manner') and Principle 10 ('Do no harm')—or are contributing to nutrition problems or undermining global efforts to promote a healthy diet should not be part of SUN. Related to this issue, there is scope for SUN to promote corporate social responsibility around nutrition and nutrition-related issues and, potentially, independent benchmarking of performance. As recommended for the CSN Secretariat, a memorandum of understanding between the SBN and GAIN should be developed that sets out clear roles and responsibilities and the principles of independence, autonomy and noninterference.

**(31.) Build a network of SUN Country Focal Points and strengthen the communication between the Focal Points and the four SUN global networks.** There is no formal network for Government Focal Points, although the SMS refers to this as a 'network' and liaises with Focal Points through the SMS Country Liaison Team. There is scope for a more structured approach, particularly to ensure that country perspectives inform strategy and decision-making and to strengthen sharing of knowledge and experience between countries (see section 3.2.3). For example, the Guatemala country case study highlighted a desire to learn from the experience of other countries in engaging non-health sectors in the nutrition response.

**(32.) Encourage existing networks to be more inclusive of young people.** Rather than create a separate network, it is recommended that existing SUN networks are more proactive in involving young people and that the CSN take steps to promote inclusion of youth organisations in national CSAs. The appointment of a youth representative to the Lead Group has been an important and positive step.

### *Technical Assistance*

#### Overview

TAN, which is funded by DFID, has been delivered through four partners: Nutrition International, the Emergency Nutrition Network, MQSUN+/PATH and the SMS. This is intended to support SUN countries and to complement TA provided by UN agencies (e.g. Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition [REACH]) and other bilateral and technical agencies.

There is a perception amongst some SUN stakeholders that TA is ad hoc and 'supply driven' rather than being comprehensive and responsive to country needs. For example, the Afghanistan country case study highlighted unmet need for TA in knowledge management and research, behaviour change, advocacy to increase nutrition financing, programming, capacity strengthening related to the humanitarian-development nexus and engagement with the private sector around food fortification. The Bangladesh country case study highlighted the need for TA to review existing policies and plans through a climate change lens and to design climate-smart programmes.

Mechanisms for (1) supporting countries in systematically identifying and prioritising their TA needs, (2) linking them with timely, effective TA (modality and provider) and (3) assessing the quality and impact of that TA can be optimised under SUN 3.0.

There is limited global coordination between the DFID-funded TAN providers and the UN agencies providing nutrition-related TA (through REACH and the UN Nutrition Decade Secretariat, which works to provide countries with reference materials and tools to support implementation of nutrition commitments). Informants commented that the relationship between SUN Movement TA providers and the UN agencies can be competitive rather than collaborative.

There is a lack of clarity amongst country stakeholders about the scope of TA available and how to access it. CSOs are reported to have experienced difficulties in accessing TA through the SMS and, in some cases, in-country, where access is controlled by the Government Focal Point.

To date, TA has focused mainly on developing or reviewing policies, plans, budgets and results frameworks. These provide the necessary foundation for country action; but, as noted earlier in this report and at the SDN workshop in June 2018, these developments are not translating into scaled up financing, action or results. Specifically, much of the support around financing has focused on planning, costing, tracking and coordination. There is a need for an increased focus on how to more effectively access financing for nutrition in SUN countries, both from global sources and domestic resource allocations. The impact of TA is difficult to determine, as there is no systematic follow-up to assess quality or results.

As countries move from planning to implementation of national nutrition plans, subnational coordination, planning and implementation will become increasingly important. And in countries such as Kenya which have devolved governance, this is especially critical. The SR Kenya case study notes that there are significant financial and technical considerations in shifting from 'bringing people together' around nutrition at the national level to ensuring effective implementation at the subnational level. SUN country networks, in particular the CSA, and TAN have been critical in supporting this shift.

### Recommendations

**(33.) Enhance the role of the SMS as a source of information about TA.** This should include maintaining an up-to-date roster of providers and types of TA available and information on how to access it and communicating this regularly to country stakeholders via the networks and the SUN Movement website. The roster and information should include sources that are internal and external to SUN.

**(34.) Proactively identify country TA needs through the SUN networks.** The SMS should proactively identify country demand for TA through regular consultation with Country Focal Points and CSAs and communicate this to TA providers to inform the scope of their activities. Revamped JAA processes can also be used as an opportunity for the SMS to jointly identify gaps and needs with country stakeholders and for countries to determine whether to access UN or TAN support.

**(35.) Strengthen coordination between SUN TA providers and between SUN and UN TA providers.** There is scope to improve coordination between the SUN TA mechanisms and ensure that, together, these mechanisms provide a comprehensive and complementary range of TA that meets country needs. The UNSCN (UNN) has an important role to play in establishing a stronger relationship with SUN Movement TA providers at a global level. Consideration could also be given by current TA providers and any future one-stop shop (see below) to making better use of UN agencies to provide TA in areas where they have a comparative advantage.

**(36.) Shift the focus of future TA to support for implementation of national plans tailored to country priorities and contexts.** This may require a different approach to TA (e.g. providing longer-term or

mentoring support rather than short-term input). Consideration needs to be given to how SUN networks and other country support mechanisms, including TA, can support subnational implementation. In addition, SUN TA will need to be more responsive to the specific needs of countries transitioning from donor support and those defined as fragile and conflict-affected states.

**(37.) Consider joint donor funding for nutrition-related TA.** Joint funding by donors of TA could potentially be more efficient and effective than current arrangements, as well as improve coordination and increase transparency for those seeking TA (although the SR team recognises that there will be other TA providers and that coordinated supply of TA is difficult to achieve). A 'one-stop shop' could be modelled on DFID resource centres, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS Regional Technical Support Facilities or other similar mechanisms and managed by an organisation or consortium of organisations with relevant capacity and experience, identified through a competitive tender. The scope of work would include liaising with the SMS to keep abreast of country and civil society TA needs, ensuring all relevant stakeholders are aware of the TA available and how to access it, supporting stakeholders to develop TA requests where necessary (this was highlighted as an issue for CSOs, in particular those in non-Anglophone countries), reviewing requests, identifying appropriate providers of TA and assessing the quality and impact of TA provided.

### *Pooled Fund*

#### Overview

The SUN Movement Pooled Fund was established in 2017 and is due to end December 2020. Managed by UNOPS, the scope of the Pooled Fund is determined by the Consultative Group, which comprises the fund's donors and representatives of the SUN networks and which is chaired by the SUN Movement coordinator. The Pooled Fund was intended to be a source of funding for MSPs in SUN countries and, according to SUN, is intended 'to promote engagement of additional relevant actors in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of multisectoral and multi-stakeholder national plans for nutrition at national and subnational level[s] ... and to support catalytic and innovative projects which contribute to ... national plans to scale up nutrition'.

As of June 2019, the Pooled Fund had received \$13.4 million from donors (with additional funding of around \$5 million under discussion). Under Window I (i.e., the first round of grants), projects were to focus on 'actions that deliver results for nutrition',<sup>s</sup> but grants could also involve support for the start-up or expansion of national SUN CSAs, national SBNs and other partner networks to participate in the MSP to ensure a coordinated, aligned and effective national response to malnutrition. Window I included 51 grants to national CSAs and 12 to national SBNs. Under Window II, grants were intended to strengthen MSP linkages and collaboration at national and subnational levels, with projects aiming to 'achieve the transformation of national and subnational nutrition policies into concrete actions',<sup>s</sup> together with a focus on capacity building and learning. Window II included 12 grants to MSPs.

The Pooled Fund has largely been used to support CSAs and MSPs. Informants report that it has been instrumental in establishing and strengthening national CSAs and in supporting national CSOs. In some cases, grants have funded INGOs that are leading national CSAs; some informants

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<sup>s</sup> <https://scalingupnutrition.org/sun-supporters/sun-movement-multi-partner-trust-fund/>)

questioned whether the Pooled Fund should fund INGOs (as well as whether it is appropriate for INGOs to lead country alliances). The Pooled Fund has provided grants totalling \$3 million to support 12 national SBNs. Given the significant resources available within the national and international private sectors, it is debatable whether supporting the establishment and functioning of business networks is an appropriate use of donor funds and the Pooled Fund.

Calls for proposals (in English, French and Spanish) were published on the UN Global Marketplace and the SUN Movement website; the SMS and the SUN CSN also advertised the calls through social media and emails to solicit applications. Proposals were assessed by a Grant Evaluation Committee. Despite this approach, informants suggested that there is a need for better communication about the fund and how to access grants and for more transparency about how funding decisions are taken.

The impact of the Pooled Fund and the outcomes of specific grants have not been evaluated. It is also unclear to what extent grants have funded projects focusing on actions that deliver results for nutrition or what results have been achieved.

There are diverse views about the future purpose and focus of the Pooled Fund and any subsequent SUN funding for country activities. Some informants think that it should provide core funding for MSPs, regional and national CSAs and CSOs, whilst others are of the view that it should focus on activities that contribute to scale-up of nutrition. Some think that it is not appropriate for the SUN Movement to provide grants, whilst others see grant making as a way of making it more tangible and as 'having something to offer'. The management costs are quite high relative to the total budget: around \$3.5 million out of a total budget of \$18.5 million. These costs include personnel, travel and the UNOPS management fee.

### Recommendations

**(38.) Focus SUN Movement grant making on concrete actions that will contribute to scale-up of nutrition, not on core funding for country structures.** Funding for MSPs and CSAs has been important to establish the foundations for multisector, multi-stakeholder national nutrition responses, but the sustainability of these structures should not depend on the SUN Movement for core funding. If they are effective and add value, it should be possible to make the case for funding by government and donors in-country. As discussed above, the SUN CSN should take responsibility for supporting CSAs to secure core funding. Future grants should prioritise support for innovative and catalytic actions that will contribute to delivering results, including carefully monitored pilot projects and interventions to address bottlenecks with the lessons and results routinely shared with member countries (see section 3.2.2). The grants should supplement core funding for national nutrition programming, not replace it, and consideration could be given to a co-investment model with funding contributed by the Pooled Fund and recipient countries.

**(39.) Review the use of Pooled Fund grants to support SBNs.** These networks can and should be self-funded by private-sector partners, and by funding these SBNs this is one way business can demonstrate commitment to supporting an effective national and global nutrition response.

### 3.3.3 Country-level structures

#### *SUN Government Focal Points and MSPs*

##### Overview

The SUN approach is centred on the MSP, which aims to bring together all relevant stakeholders to support and align with a multisector, multi-stakeholder national nutrition response. MSPs are seen as vital forums for developing policies, plans and CRFs and for mutual accountability.

In each SUN member country, a SUN Government Focal Point is appointed by a decision-maker in the executive branch of the national government to lead the SUN initiative and coordinate the MSP. Focal Points may or may not have nutrition expertise or experience, and in some countries a Technical Focal Point has also been appointed to provide specific nutrition expertise. The combination of engaged and committed Government and Technical Focal Points can be very effective.

The effectiveness of Focal Points depends on the individual; his or her commitment, capacity and influence; and the time available to dedicate to the role. In most countries, serving as a Focal Point is not a full-time position, and people in these roles typically have other responsibilities.

MSPs can provide a forum to bring diverse stakeholders together, but the effectiveness of MSPs currently depends on the commitment of the government and of the Focal Point in particular. The extent to which these platforms are able to get things done depends also on how well they are managed and resourced and the seniority of participants. Informants report that many MSPs are pro forma and bureaucratic and meet infrequently.

Some informants raised concerns that SUN is supporting the establishment of parallel structures and promoting SUN branding—for example, SUN MSPs and SUN Focal Points—rather than building on existing country structures for nutrition. Given that the SUN Movement is time limited, and given the importance of country ownership and sustainability of nutrition action, merging SUN structures into country structures is essential.

##### Recommendations

**(40.) Shift to a ‘Country Coalition’ approach at the national level.** Whilst this would be similar to the MSP in that it could involve stakeholders from different sectors, including government, civil society, academia, business and the media, the focus would be on involvement based on commitment to action rather than on sector representation for its own sake. The Coalition would take the form of a high-performance team or task force and comprise skilled, dynamic individuals with a shared commitment to taking forward national nutrition priorities and achieving results—this should include individuals with frontline knowledge and experience to ensure a practical focus—and would take a responsive, flexible, action-oriented approach to its work. The Coalition’s functioning and effectiveness would not be dependent on government or Focal Point leadership but would benefit from their active engagement and support. In some countries, MSPs may already be functioning as task-focused coalitions, and little change would be required. In others, where MSPs are inactive or not functional, it may be feasible to build on or add to other existing structures for nutrition. The expectation is that donor and UN agencies would participate and provide support as appropriate but that the Coalition would be country driven.

**(41.) Tailor country structures to the country political and institutional context rather than promoting a ‘one size fits all’ approach.** As the SR country illustrations (Annex 2) show, in practice, country nutrition structures are diverse. For example, in Afghanistan, the Food Security and Nutrition Agenda has a Technical Secretariat, and there is a high-level MSP with a Steering Committee that includes ministers, development partners, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector. In Indonesia, the SUN Government Focal Point is the deputy of Human Development and Cultural Affairs within the Ministry of National Development Planning (*Bappenas*). In Guatemala, the case study highlighted the need for tailor-made approaches and structures that reflect the national drivers of malnutrition, dynamics and capacity. SUN—either the SMS or one of the Movement’s networks or partners—could play a useful role in documenting and sharing different models to support multisector action around nutrition. The relationship between the Country Coalition and other structures for nutrition will also be determined by the country and institutional contexts.

**(42.) Support networking between Country Coalitions, other country and regional initiatives and other networks.** The SMS and the SUN networks can play an important role in linking country structures to other cross-country networks—including the Nutrition Decade Action Networks,<sup>t</sup> which are intended to share experience, promote improved coordination and build political commitment—and other initiatives, such as WFP-supported observatories that have a regional role.

## 4. Conclusion

The first two phases of SUN, whilst not without their challenges and limitations, can be regarded as preparatory phases for the nutrition transformation that must occur if SUN is to be truly effective as a global movement.

A small number of individuals and institutions were behind SUN’s genesis, and there is nostalgia about the energy and solidarity characterising the earlier stages of the Movement. Now, ten years into SUN’s existence, the sheer size and diversity of the Movement are collective strengths to harness. However, different dynamics exist than did a decade ago. Maintaining the status quo is not an option.

Both globally and within countries, recognition of the importance of nutrition has grown. The appetite for change has also grown, as has an understanding of the many forms and drivers of malnutrition. The promotion of accessible and affordable healthy diets for all is an outcome that, if achieved, can disrupt the causal pathway for multiple forms of malnutrition. However, SUN’s agenda must be re-examined through the lenses of other global agendas that are either part of the causal pathway of malnutrition (e.g. climate change, conflict, displacement, food systems) or by-products of malnutrition (e.g. NCDs). The Movement also cannot afford to lose sight of key structural factors that perpetuate malnutrition (e.g. equity and social inclusion, accountability, corporate responsibility and financing/expenditure).

Although SUN is a collective body, the Movement is not a monolith. Critical analysis of what specifically is driving malnutrition in different countries, clusters of countries and regions, coupled with customised approaches that address priority drivers in those contexts, can support nutrition improvement. SUN’s GSS must model all of SUN’s Principles of Engagement and adopt governance

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<sup>t</sup>More on the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, 2016–2025, at <https://www.un.org/nutrition/>.

arrangements that are conducive to transparent, strategic decision-making and coherence across different constituencies. Otherwise, there is a major risk of the Movement being stunted by mistrust and competing institutional agendas.

The mandate of the SR team was to be thorough and to be bold. The recommendations presented in this report are clearly articulated prompts to do things differently. The SUN Movement's current and future identity must be rooted in the countries—*their* pathways to nutrition transformation, *their* capacities, *their* priorities. The goal of being country driven, country led and country centred will need to be reflected in how the Movement is structured and operates, not just in what it articulates as its strategic priorities or principles. Are all stakeholders up for the challenge?

# Annex 1: Relevant External Factors and Trends

## Introduction

The last ten years have been a particularly volatile time for individuals and institutions around the world, regardless of the sector. The level of rapid and unpredictable change—both positive and negative—has made it increasingly difficult for organisations of all types to develop and implement thoughtful and effective plans to solve problems and harness opportunities.

Even in volatile times, there are identifiable factors and trends that can and should be considered during planning processes. However, there are also hidden, emerging and evolving issues which can have unexpected effects on the best-laid plans. In today's reality, the volatility of factors and trends mirrors the volatility of the times. The challenge facing the SUN Movement as it plans for its next phase is to understand the broader landscape of trends whilst identifying a subset of them that are relevant to the wide range of options facing SUN as it plans for its next phase. Specific issues relative to the nutrition landscape have been integrated into the main report where they are directly applicable. This annex highlights the ten external factors and trends, which are not listed in order of importance, that could have a major influence on SUN's structure, operations and success in the short and medium terms. The challenge is to consider how to address these factors in ways that strengthen SUN as a vibrant movement in the nutrition sector.

## Making a difference

Issues around making a difference that should be considered are as follows:

- Interest in making a difference is generally analogous to the *results, outcomes* and/or *impact* that are traditionally expected from organisations with a stated mission and objective(s). However, there is an associated passion—a dynamic imperative—to *making a difference* that differentiates it from a traditional *result*. (See Greta Thunberg's book, *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*.)
- There is often an underlying social-cultural-environmental implication to making a difference, whether the issue is macro (e.g. climate change) or micro (e.g. community quality of life). And whilst there can be an economic component to making a difference, it is typically linked to issues of equity and social responsibility, not to private enterprise and/or market capitalism.
- The scale of the problem or challenge is irrelevant when there is a commitment to making a difference. Whilst high-profile actions to address large-scale problems tend to get more attention, there are millions of people working to make a difference on problems of all sizes and scopes.
- Making a difference is also parallel to the concept of *added value* (i.e. an improvement or addition to something) but with a focus on what effect—particularly over the longer term—did that improvement or addition have (e.g. how will the changes/improvements that have been made play out over time).

- The implication of longer-term value is also a distinguishing characteristic of making a difference as opposed to simply generating immediate or short-term results.

## Resistance to change

Issues around resistance to change that should be considered are as follows:

- Entrenched players with entrenched interests are reluctant—even resistant—to change. There is a heavy intellectual and financial investment in maintaining the status quo. But this determination to *stay the course* can be a misguided attempt to protect reputations, build legacies and prevent new players from taking the lead on important initiatives.
- Amongst entrenched players, there is often an associated nostalgia for the old ways of doing things. This nostalgia is seen as a way to ignore or resist calls for change. Invoking nostalgia is an effective way to mobilise constituents who are threatened or feel threatened by change. It is also a way to undermine the arguments of constituents who want to do things differently.
- The ‘OK Boomers’ meme is an instructive example of the frustration of new players with the resistance to change amongst the entrenched players. Every generation has conflicts with earlier generations (e.g. the Baby Boomers referenced in ‘OK Boomers’ were majorly at odds with their own parents’ and grandparents’ generations), but resistance to change has become more problematic with the long-term ramifications of issues such as climate change becoming increasingly clear.
- Sticking with existing approaches or returning to the old ways of doing things is becoming a less and less defensible position when existing approaches and old ways—or the promise of a return to the old ways—continue to overpromise and underdeliver (e.g. ‘I’m going to bring back manufacturing jobs’).

## Urgency

Issues around urgency that should be considered are as follows:

- There is an implicit urgency in current calls to do things differently and to make a difference. With many issues (e.g. climate change, ocean degradation), there is a clear and growing sense that immediate action is needed to avoid disaster. And whilst other issues (e.g. economic inequalities, freedom of expression) may be unfolding more slowly, there is still a strong sense that the time to act is now.
- The sense of urgency is underscored by the fact that change—even much-needed change—is seen as happening too slowly, given the events in play (e.g. climate change, economic inequalities, freedom of expression). Delays are driven by long-standing practices, entrenched interests, shifting agendas and competing issues.
- In December 2019, in a joint statement issued at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (Conference of the Parties 25), 631 institutional investors managing more than US\$37 trillion in

assets urged governments to step up efforts to tackle the global climate crisis and achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

- Making a difference requires an ability to take swift and decisive action. But there is a competing desire in these contexts to ensure that priority setting and decision-making are inclusive, which requires balancing the time and effort needed to include people/organisations in the process with the need to act with urgency.
- Acting with urgency does not preclude reviewing and revising those actions once they are underway. Urgency does not imply hasty or unprepared.

## Values

Issues around values that should be considered are as follows:

- As concerns about social responsibility gain more and more traction across multiple sectors, there is a growing awareness amongst internal and external stakeholders that *values* (i.e. *principles, ethical standards*) need to be an integral part of an organisation's structure and operations, from overarching governance through to individual and organisational activities. Ideally, these values reflect the de facto social contract that organisations have with the general public to contribute to the common good.
- These values/principles become guideposts for both internal and external stakeholders to understand what organisations view as *what is good* and *what is right*. However, if organisations are going to *talk the talk* of principles, they must also *walk the walk* (i.e. what they *do* must mirror what they *say*).
- It is increasingly important that organisations set a high bar for their values/principles, even if they are achieving below that level currently. The aspirational quality of principles has merit on its own—as does the journey required to reach and sustain a principled commitment. However, it is vital to show meaningful progress to demonstrate that the commitment is more than rhetorical.
- In August 2019, the Business Roundtable—chaired by Jamie Dimon, chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase & Co.—released a new Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation, which has a strong focus on a higher standard of corporate responsibility. The premise of the statement is that focusing solely on making money is no longer a sufficient corporate purpose. According to the statement, businesses must 'share a fundamental commitment to all of their stakeholders', including customers, workers, suppliers and the broader communities within which they operate. To date, more than 180 of the world's largest companies have signed on to this statement. However, there are concerns that corporate actions will not match the rhetoric of change; for example, between January 2016 and June 2019, JPMorgan Chase loaned more money (\$75 billion) to fossil fuel companies than any other bank in the world.
- In January 2020 BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager with nearly \$7 trillion in investments, will fundamentally shift its investing policy to include environmental sustainability as a core goal.

- There are also emerging corporate structures and governance models (e.g. B corporations, benefit corporations, platform cooperatives and zebra companies) that place a strong emphasis on social responsibility which are gaining traction around the world.

## **Democratic vs. autocratic / participatory vs. authoritarian / empowered vs. subordinate / inclusive vs. exclusionary**

Issues around these dichotomies that should be considered are as follows:

- Historically, there have long been tensions between critical opposites in the theory and practice of governance, management and operations/implementation at all levels, ranging from national governments to discrete organisations to individual people. However, recent sociopolitical trends have, in many contexts, tilted towards the autocratic-authoritarian-subordinate-exclusionary side of the dichotomies. Unfortunately, this negative trend is aligned in many circles with a resistance to change or a nostalgia for old ways of doing things, with proponents ironically including constituents who would directly benefit from new initiatives and/or approaches.
- Whilst there are always defenders or champions of the autocratic-authoritarian-subordinate-exclusionary position, the arc of history shows that more people benefit when the democratic-participatory-empowered-inclusive side flourishes. However, for this side to flourish people must be actively engaged and well informed of the facts.
- Conflicts of interest (i.e. situations in which people or organisations are in a position to derive personal or institutional benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity) are more prevalent in autocratic-authoritarian-subordinate-exclusionary settings. A major factor is the lack of transparency and accountability in these settings. However, conflicts of interest can and do arise in democratic-participatory-empowered-inclusive settings, often due to a similar lack of transparency and accountability.
- In many settings, defenders/champions of the autocratic-authoritarian-subordinate-exclusionary position have linked their support for this approach to attacks on minority, migrant and/or displaced people, who they perceive as a threat. They see autocratic-authoritarian-subordinate-exclusionary tactics as a way to deal with this perceived threat; conversely, they do not see these tactics as ones they would want imposed on their own lives.
- For the majority of people—including the millions of people affected by all forms of malnutrition—participating, being empowered and being included (i.e. having a voice) is essential if they want to secure their fundamental human rights. But it requires organisations of all types to commit to the importance of that voice, both in principle and in practice.

## **Connections and networks**

Issues around connections and networks that should be considered are as follows:

- The ability to make, harness and sustain connections is greater now than at any point in history. A web of in-person and online connections can bring together individuals, organisations, data,

information, knowledge and experience at local, national, regional and global levels in an infinite number of combinations. The challenge is to identify and maintain connections that are meaningful and useful to the interests of participating and potential stakeholders/users.

- There is a growing ability and interest in *curating* connections specifically relevant to different audiences to maximise their value. If properly curated and properly managed, these connections become *distributed networks* of knowledge and practice; key stakeholders essentially become nodes in the network with the ability to feed content into it. A well-curated distributed network can become a valuable platform for the dissemination—and the development—of legitimate knowledge and practice (e.g. an integrated knowledge ecosystem / community of practice).
- Effective curation is mindful of the quality of the connections/content and the focus of the network. The value of the network can quickly and easily be compromised and/or diminished if the connections/content are irrelevant or biased. And whilst user-generated content has the potential to be a vital part of the network, it too must also be curated/moderated to ensure it fits with the overall quality and focus of the network.
- The commitment to quality and focus should not, however, undermine the importance of challenging stakeholders/users with new ideas and new perspectives. It is vital for the network to be dynamic and thought-provoking as well as practical and beneficial. This type of network is not solely a repository; it engages stakeholders and encourage them to act.
- One of the most powerful aspects of a dynamic distributed network is its ability to adapt to the changing needs, demands and circumstances of their stakeholders, including contributors and users. New/different partners, topics, knowledge, perspectives, etc. can easily be connected to the network, and their contributions to the overall value of the network can be tracked.

## Frontline actors and activities

Issues around frontline actors and activities that should be considered are as follows:

- There is a growing awareness of the importance of what happens on the frontlines, that space/place where ideas, strategies and plans are put into practice. People on the *frontlines* of any situation, whether it is positive or negative, have a unique and invaluable perspective. These people include the full range of stakeholders who are active or involved at the frontlines, including people who are directly affected by events/actions and people who are providing services to those directly affected. Tapping their knowledge and experience is vital to understanding the *who, what, when, where, why and how* of a situation and the effectiveness of any actions or response. In the context of making a difference, it is what happens at the frontlines where the difference—where any change—will be seen, felt and possibly measured.
- The New Oxford American Dictionary defines *frontline* as ‘the most important or influential position in a debate or movement’. However, in many sectors, the frontline perspective has historically been marginalised and/or ignored. For example, in many settings it can be difficult to collect and analyse input from the frontlines. There are also biases against the perceived limitations of the frontline perspective because it can be more narrowly focused and tends to be more tactical/operational. And frontline staff in multiple sectors tend to be poorly paid (e.g. fast-food workers) or not paid at all (community health workers).

- In the private sector, particularly in the area of product development and customer service, there is a long-standing commitment to understanding what happens at the frontlines, including B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer). And with ever-increasing amounts of data collected and used by companies, the private sector continues to increase its sophistication of their frontline activities.
- Despite growing interest in what happens on the frontlines and the people who are active at that level, it is less clear if this awareness translates—or will translate—to heightened engagement, more resources, better activities, improved performance and superior outcomes.

## Entrepreneurial approaches

Issues around entrepreneurial approaches that should be considered are as follows:

- Textbook entrepreneurs are people who are willing to take risks to start and build an enterprise. But they are also committed to innovation, either by creating something entirely new or improving on something that already exists. The best of them are agile and creative thinkers and doers. They are flexible and responsive managers and implementers. They are fearless and forward-thinking change agents.
- Entrepreneurial thinking and approaches are increasingly infused into the strategies and operations of all types of organisations, including those outside of the private sector. Even staid organisations are using entrepreneurial approaches to push traditional boundaries and try new things.
- Entrepreneurial thinking tends to be outward facing and experiential. It places a premium on understanding the realities on the ground, on listening to people's stories and on observing their practices. Understanding situations and circumstances from multiple perspectives is an essential part of solving problems and seizing opportunities.
- Related factors essential to solving problems and seizing opportunities are a willingness to experiment (i.e. trial and error; build and test) and a capacity to move quickly (e.g. the OODA [Observe-Orient-Decide-Act] loop; fast-cycle iteration). In many respects, the *dynamic imperative* that drives people to *make a difference* is inherent in entrepreneurial thinking and approaches.
- One of the biggest challenges for entrepreneurs is to avoid or limit bias in their approaches. For example, *deformation professionnelle* is a French term used to describe a tendency to see the world from a singular viewpoint as opposed to a more inclusive and balanced perspective. *Deformation professionnelle* tends to be linked to the singular viewpoint of people within a given profession (e.g. civil servant, doctor, lawyer, social worker, accountant) and the potential bias/distortion that comes from looking at a variety of situations from only one perspective.

## Interdisciplinary approaches

Issues around interdisciplinary approaches that should be considered are as follows:

- Approaches to work—and, particularly, to problem-solving—tend to be either *intradisciplinary* (i.e. working within a single discipline; siloed) or *multidisciplinary* (i.e. different disciplines working together, each drawing on their respective knowledge; multisectoral). However, as problems become increasingly complex, there is a growing interest in strong *interdisciplinary* approaches (i.e. integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines; a synthesis of approaches). The interest in interdisciplinary approaches has been encouraged by a growing belief that intradisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches are struggling to address critical problems.
- An interdisciplinary approach draws from multiple disciplines (or different fields of expertise) to redefine problems outside of normal boundaries and find solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations. Drawing from multiple disciplines requires identifying those that have something to contribute to the approach, whether they are perceived as directly relevant or not. Making these decisions requires a level of lateral thinking and a willingness to explore how different areas of expertise and different perspectives can work together in ways that push the envelope.
- Interdisciplinary approaches promote a deep integration of quantitative, qualitative and emotional insights. This integration can be done using an array of tools, techniques and methods, ranging from critical thinking to assessment of ambiguity to big data. The deep integration is another way to move beyond siloed thinking, to push the envelope and to find new solutions to difficult problems.
- Interdisciplinary approaches and systems/chaos theory are closely related and highly compatible. At a minimum, the holistic perspective of systems/chaos theory makes it inherently interdisciplinary in its approach to understanding and addressing problems. The common denominator is to start with a broader perspective (i.e. cast a wider net) as opposed to seeing—and analysing—only specific activities and/or events. And by casting a wider net, the possibility of identifying *leverage points*, *tipping points*, opportunities and/or solutions increases exponentially.

## Standardisation vs. customisation/personalisation

Issues around this dichotomy that should be considered are as follows:

- Institutional strategies have traditionally been built around standardisation, including standardised policies, procedures, programmes and products. Standardisation was/is seen as a useful way to ensure consistency across an organisation/network, to exploit economies of scale and to control costs. However, as globalisation (i.e. the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology and flows of investment, people and information) has continued to advance and evolve, there is a growing awareness that customisation or personalisation is vital for connecting with local (e.g. national and subnational) stakeholders, ranging from employees to partners to customers/beneficiaries.
- Standardisation tends to be more exclusionary because there are more constraints (e.g. things are done in specific ways within the approved approaches, which limits organisations' ability to experiment and to influence outcomes; the needs of local stakeholders are unaddressed). And whilst customisation or personalisation is significantly more inclusive because variation is both

allowed and encouraged, hyper-customisation/personalisation can be as constraining as standardisation (e.g. the hyper-personalisation of news and information, including online algorithms that reinforce people's existing perceptions at the expense of other points of view; overlocalised products and services that run the risk of being perceived as inauthentic because they stray too far from their source).

- The challenge is to find a balance between standardisation and customisation or personalisation that best serves the various needs and interests of the different stakeholders. Based on current trends (e.g. country-level differentiation; generational attitudes and preferences; the advantages of inclusive as opposed to exclusionary approaches), the balance will be weighted towards more customisation/personalisation and less towards standardisation.
- In the language of marketing, 'The best solutions make it easy to speak authentically to customers in every global market'.

## Implications for the SUN Movement

Since its inception, SUN has aspired to be a different type of organisation in the nutrition sector, its positioning as a 'movement' being a primary point of differentiation. Amongst key informants, it is unclear how this positioning has actually helped the organisation; for example, there is no consensus on what a 'movement' means and limited ability to identify its value in the context of SUN. But there are compelling reasons to retain and refine SUN's standing as a movement.

Articulate observers of movements say their strength lies in their ability to establish and leverage relationships—not simply loose ties but powerful connections that have the ability to drive change. Movements grow in size and influence by leveraging relationships to create more of them. Movements mobilise action by giving stakeholders an empowering and shared narrative.

Exploiting and/or addressing the different trends cited above would support a pivot by SUN to a country-driven, action- and results-oriented strategy. Countries would be better equipped—individually and collectively—to address fundamental barriers to change, including the systemic status quo, institutional inertia, resource limitations, static thinking and risk-averse approaches. These trends also support member countries—again, individually and collectively—in asking different questions, working with nontraditional partners, trying new approaches, pushing boundaries, accepting failures and taking responsibility.

SUN must continue to be part of the global community of organisations working on nutrition and nutrition-related issues, but a focus on action and results that improve outcomes on the ground would separate it from the organisations, initiatives and/or mechanisms interested primarily in intermediate effects (e.g. encouraging, promoting, coordinating, guiding or monitoring what others are doing). And as a movement, member countries and their participating national and subnational institutions—including government, civil society and the private sector—would hold themselves accountable for their decisions and actions, including both positive and negative contributions to the desired results.

The wide-ranging challenges, the stubborn problems and the immense opportunities facing nutrition between now and 2030 require dynamic thinking, an idealistic optimism and determined actions. In other sectors, organisations looking to making a meaningful and sustainable difference have learnt they can no longer cling to outdated and/or ineffective beliefs, structures or practices. The SUN

Movement can leverage changes in the zeitgeist to join the small but growing group of nutrition organisations that are truly doing things differently.

## Annex 2: Country Illustrations

Table 2. Highlighted strategic issues, by country.

C O U N T R Y	STRATEGIC ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED							
	Transformational Leadership	Added Value of SUN	Missed Opportunities by SUN	Subnational Implementation	Country-to-Country Cooperation	Fragile States	Structural Drivers of Nutrition	External Threats & Global Agendas
<a href="#">Afghanistan</a>	X	X			X	X	X	X
<a href="#">Bangladesh</a>			X				X	X
<a href="#">Burkina Faso</a>		X	X					X
<a href="#">Costa Rica</a>		X	X		X			X
<a href="#">Guatemala</a>		X	X				X	X
<a href="#">Indonesia</a>	X	X	X					
<a href="#">Kenya</a>				X				
<a href="#">Rwanda</a>	X		X	X			X	
<a href="#">Yemen</a>		X				X		
<a href="#">LAC Regional Case</a>			X					X
<a href="#">Africa Regional Case</a>			X			X		X

Abbreviations: LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; SUN, Scaling Up Nutrition.

## AFGHANISTAN

### SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration

Nutrition in fragile states requires intensified focus and adaptive strategies that are responsive to the humanitarian-development nexus. This is particularly important due to the existence of protracted crises and recurrent hazards that pose major threats to nutrition in several Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) member countries. *Afghanistan—one of the newest members of SUN (joining in September 2017)—is a compelling country illustration of how the SUN Movement has facilitated quick wins in scaling up nutrition in a challenging local context.*

#### PRACTICAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR NUTRITION ACTION

On World Food Day in 2017, the government launched the Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda (AFSeN-A). AFSeN-A has a Technical Secretariat (financed by the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF] and the Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO]); and the Director General of Afghanistan’s Council of Ministers’ Secretariat currently serves as the

SUN Political Focal Point. Prior to the creation of AFSeN-A, the Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock were primarily responsible for programmes related to food security and nutrition. **With the creation of AFSeN-A, there is broader multisectoral engagement and higher political visibility of nutrition.**

Similar to other SUN countries’ agendas, AFSeN-A has a high-level multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) for food security and nutrition; its Steering Committee is chaired by the chief executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Steering Committee has participation from ministers, deputy ministers, development partners, United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society and the private sector, with linkages to humanitarian platforms. Having the chief executive chair the Steering Committee is a valid strategic choice in light of the fact that crosscutting national issues, such as youth, gender and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also fall within the remit of the Chief Executive Office.

Although it serves as the highest decision-making and coordination platform, the Steering Committee only meets every six months. **To facilitate timely, coordinated action that addresses operational issues related to a multisectoral, multi-stakeholder nutrition response, Afghanistan also has its own Executive Committee (ExCom), which meets on a monthly basis and is more operational in focus than the MSP.** The ExCom also has three working groups focused on (1) food security, (2) nutrition and (3) public awareness and advocacy. Those three working groups, which also meet monthly, are chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock; the Ministry of Public Health; and the Ministry of Culture and Information, respectively. The country also has a Development Partners’ Forum and a Civil Society Alliance.

#### PROGRESS, BUT NOT WITHOUT CHALLENGES

Structuring nutrition action in a practical way has bode well for the country, but there have still been challenges in fostering accountability for actions and results. For example, some stakeholders on the ExCom do not always comply with meeting decisions or agreed deadlines. There is also room for improvement in terms of interagency information sharing.

Nonetheless, there are 28 food security and nutrition provincial committees chaired by governors, although there is variation in their functionality. Turnover in provincial governance (which requires continuous sensitisation on nutrition issues) and competing local priorities (e.g. dealing with local insecurity) remain challenges. Reports from Afghanistan’s Nutrition Cluster highlight the need for continued vigilance. Stunting remains an issue, and there are also extremely high rates of acute malnutrition, with various hazards (e.g. conflict/insecurity, severe drought) having a palpable effect

## AFGHANISTAN

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

on local efforts. Despite these challenges, there have been noteworthy strides in linking Afghanistan's people with effective nutrition interventions. Illustrative achievements include:

- Development and endorsement of a five-year, multisectoral strategic plan for food security and nutrition.
- Approval of the Afghanistan Food Safety and Control Authority by both the Council of Ministers and the Cabinet.
- Rollout of a Community-Based Nutrition Package in most provinces.
- Sensitisation and training of over 1,000 teachers, religious scholars, traders and government employees on food security and nutrition.
- Existence of nutrition counsellors and services in almost all public health facilities.
- Endorsement of regulations on wheat, oil and salt fortification.

There is political and social awareness across the country that gender and social equity must improve at all levels, and the country's *Food Security and Nutrition Public Awareness and Advocacy Framework and Plan 2018–2023* is sensitive to those issues. **However, insecurity, cultural barriers that limit women's participation in different realms (e.g. education, labour market) and the absence of robust and inclusive social protection schemes persist as impediments to addressing gender and social equity for nutrition.**

#### SUN-FACILITATED, CROSS-COUNTRY COOPERATION

Insights on how to tackle Afghanistan's nutrition challenges do not reside solely within Afghanistan's borders. **SUN has helped nutrition stakeholders in Afghanistan look beyond the country's borders to cull learning, practical approaches and technical resources from other countries.** For example, in July 2019 there was a SUN-facilitated learning exchange between Afghanistan and Bangladesh that enabled a delegation from Afghanistan to observe real-time, multisectoral nutrition action. This exchange was organised by AFSeN-A, facilitated by FAO and financed with European Union support.

The Afghanistan delegation included a diverse group of country stakeholders who participated in meetings and discussions with high-level Bangladeshi officials about the activities of their respective departments/organisations vis-à-vis Bangladesh's nutrition policy framework. The delegation also had direct consultations with family farmers, smallholder cooperatives, social assistance programmes and local government officials.

The Bangladesh experience elevated the Afghanistan delegation's understanding of conventional issues, such as costing of nutrition plans. However, Afghanistan stakeholders also observed that Bangladesh was quite advanced in crosscutting domains, such as research, as well as key nutrition technical issues, such as food safety and food fortification. This inspired Afghanistan to initiate its own research studies, as well as explore memoranda of understanding (pending) with counterparts in Bangladesh around capacity development, food safety and research.

#### FACILITATIVE UN SUPPORT

**Three UN agencies—the FAO, UNICEF and the World Food Programme—have been active contributors to Afghanistan's multisectoral nutrition response.** Each UN agency cochairs one of the three working groups established under

## AFGHANISTAN

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

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Afghanistan's nutrition ExCom. Those three UN agencies also committed to providing financial support to AFSeN-A's Technical Secretariat for a minimum of two years.

**As an organised global platform, members of the SUN United Nations Network (UNN) have also made tangible contributions to enhance process issues related to implementation of a multisectoral, multi-stakeholder nutrition response.** For example, they supported the activation of a platform for donors/development partners, provided various forms of TA to Afghanistan's Civil Society Alliance (CSA) and supported the government in mainstreaming nutrition into legislation and plans. Afghanistan does not have its own SUN UN network, but UN agencies contribute to nutrition improvement via the Development Partners' Forum.

#### **FUTURE SUPPORT NEEDS**

There is an acknowledgement within Afghanistan that specific UN agencies (FAO, UNICEF, World Food Programme) and the CSA have been key players in supporting the government to advance a multisectoral nutrition response. However, there is an **unmet need for global support in knowledge management and research, behaviour change, strategic advocacy to increase nutrition financing, risk-informed programming and nutrition capacity strengthening related to the humanitarian-development nexus.** Also, AFSeN-A has been advocating for food fortification (wheat, oil, salt iodisation), which requires strategic engagement of and commitment from the private sector. As a result, there is an expressed need to **leverage insights from the global SUN Business Network (SBN) and the experiences of other SUN member countries in relation to private-sector engagement for the greater good.**

Climate change is having an undeniable effect on food security and nutrition. Bangladesh, a SUN member country since 2012, has been a pioneer amongst SUN countries in its effort to mitigate the effects of climate change. The country has been implementing the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan since 2009.

Before joining the SUN Movement, Bangladesh had already achieved major stunting reduction—from 51 percent in 2004 to 43 percent in 2007. However, the average annual rate of reduction (AARR) in stunting has been far slower over the past ten years. UNICEF analyses show that the AARR needs to increase from 1.66 percent to at least 3.00 percent in order to achieve the country's second National Plan of Action for Nutrition targets by 2025. As one of the most densely populated countries in the world, Bangladesh has the requisite nutrition 'architecture' at the national level but still grapples with gaps in capacity and resources to implement at the *upazila* (subdistrict) level.

The country's **high-level political commitment to multisectoral nutrition action was reinforced during a three-day visit by the SUN Movement coordinator** in April 2017. However, **Bangladesh's SUN platform has generally been underutilised in addressing pathways between climate change and food and nutrition security**. As the country embarks on its second phase of the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, there is the potential for Bangladesh's SUN networks to advocate for and better reflect climate-sensitive/climate-resilient approaches within their nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities. In addition, there is potential to orient nutrition-sensitive climate efforts towards equity and social inclusion. For example, although there has been a push to mainstream gender into Bangladesh's policies, sensitivity to differences between males and females in their societal roles (e.g. in agriculture, nutrition practices), their resilience to shocks and their access to information and resources is not fully reflected in programmes.

With respect to the interface between nutrition efforts and climate change efforts in Bangladesh, there have also been **missed opportunities by the global SUN Movement in the area of knowledge management**—more specifically, special analyses and/or synthesis of evidence on the link between climate change and food and nutrition security. There is also a need for technical support in the following: (1) reviewing existing nutrition-related policies and plans (both sectoral and multisectoral) through the lens of climate change and (2) designing, implementing and monitoring climate-smart nutrition programmes in specific sectors (e.g. agriculture) that are focal players in both nutrition and climate change agendas.

## BURKINA FASO

### SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration

Burkina Faso is one of SUN's 'early risers', having joined the Movement in June 2011. Since joining SUN, the country has established several SUN-promoted networks (e.g. UNN, CSA, SBN, parliamentary network, academic network). There have also been strides in improving some nutrition outcomes. A European Commission analysis of stunting trends in Burkina Faso indicates that the AARR accelerated between 2012 and 2018. Trend data from national nutrition surveys / SMART [Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions] surveys have shown a doubling of the exclusive breastfeeding rate, with the current rate hovering around 50 percent. Based on this progress, the country is on track to meet the two World Health Assembly (WHA) targets related to stunting and exclusive breastfeeding. *What contributions, if any, has SUN made to the above successes, and what are missed opportunities by SUN to help nutrition stakeholders optimise other nutrition outcomes for the people of Burkina Faso?*

#### PLURARITY OF STAKEHOLDERS BUT A SMALL COALITION OF DOERS

There is high-level political commitment for nutrition, with Burkina Faso's president including nutrition-related issues within the country's economic development agenda. The SUN Movement coordinator visited Burkina Faso in 2019 and reinforced key commitments to process issues, such as the nomination of a SUN Political Focal Point, as well as increased financing for nutrition.

There are 12 government line ministries working on nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific activities in Burkina Faso. However, **as observed in some SUN countries, the health sector still bears the bulk of responsibility in terms of nutrition programme implementation, even within a multisectoral response.** The country's MSP, the National Council for Nutrition Coordination, is housed within Burkina Faso's Ministry of Health, and **there is a need for greater advocacy targeting other key sectors (e.g. agriculture) to redouble efforts and engage in cross-sectoral work** related to nutrition.

In Burkina Faso, **UNN's REACH and Undernutrition has proven to be an important platform for engaging multisectoral stakeholders in efforts that advance the country's progress related to nutrition and, more broadly, the SDGs.** The 'One UN' model is functioning in Burkina Faso, with UNICEF providing leadership in maintaining a common vision and joint approach across UN agencies.

SUN supported the establishment of a civil society platform in Burkina Faso, and the country has reaped benefits from that coordination platform within civil society. **Both the CSA and the UNN are recognised for their contributions in advocating for increased financing for nutrition.** For example, the CSA supported the country in tapping into the Global Financing Facility (GFF) for nutrition.

Unfortunately, **the SBN, a body of stakeholders in Burkina Faso that should have the capacity to be more self-sustaining compared to other networks (due to the private-sector resources at their disposal), is not as evolved or active as Burkina Faso's UNN and CSA.** This observation is not unique to Burkina Faso, however.

#### OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Despite some successes, Burkina Faso continues to face serious challenges in moving beyond processes, platforms and plans to actual nutrition impact. Operational constraints related to finance/spending, human resources and systems resilience to hazards such as conflict and insecurity are impediments to nutrition progress.

Since 2014 there has been a modest increase in funding. However, maintaining ‘funding security’ for nutrition programmes has been as challenging as achieving food security for the country. **Ensuring that budget allocations dedicated to nutrition in Burkina Faso do not get diverted to address other, albeit equally important, national issues remains a major implementation challenge.** More specifically, government financial commitments to nutrition have been compromised by the security issues in the northern part of the country that borders Mali. Subnational spending has also suffered, accounting for only 4 percent of total government expenditure in Burkina Faso.

**Another operational challenge relates to frontline workers for nutrition-related programming. Human resources challenges—both quantity and quality (training)—abound.** This is a palpable gap within the health sector. On average, there is only one government-sector nutritionist per region, with no nutrition officers at the provincial, district or community levels. As a mitigation measure, there is a cadre of nutrition trainers who have been training health personnel employed by civil society organisations (CSOs) working at the community level.

#### WHERE DOES SUN FIT IN THE FUTURE?

Burkina Faso illustrates the implementation realities of some SUN member countries, even when there are tangible contributions by SUN-promoted structures (e.g. CSA, UNN) to advance the nutrition agenda in a country. The leadership of the health sector within Burkina Faso’s multisectoral nutrition response, something that is also observed in several other countries, highlights the **need to fully leverage current and future opportunities to strengthen health systems.** For example, SUN can advocate for and facilitate the integration of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive financing, demand generation, service delivery, capacity building and information systems under the auspices of high-profile global initiatives such as universal health care.

The dynamic context in Burkina Faso, with the emergence (or recurrence) of hazards and risks that are threats to sustained nutrition programming, reconfirms that the **issue of nutrition must feature prominently in dialogue and actions related to the humanitarian-development nexus.** Consultations with key nutrition stakeholders in Burkina Faso underscore country expectations for SUN to facilitate access to various funding streams and mechanisms to support full implementation of national nutrition action plans. Observations in Burkina Faso underscore that, whilst resource mobilisation is essential, countries are also grappling with ‘protecting’ mobilised funds and/or budget allocations for nutrition. This suggests that **the advocacy agenda in countries must be more nuanced, extending beyond simply ‘raising the visibility of nutrition’** to include budget release, fund utilisation and management of resources (human, financial, material) for nutrition improvement.

As in other countries, nutrition dynamics in Burkina Faso also require an expanded view for multisectoral nutrition action. More specifically, anaemia and stunting are the predominant forms of malnutrition in the country. However, **an overnutrition problem is coming to the fore. This creates an opportunity for meaningful private-sector engagement and action around healthy diets to reduce malnutrition in all its forms, rather than creation of business networks that are nutrition ‘allies’ in theory but not in practice.**

There is the potential for both SUN’s Global Support System (GSS) and Burkina Faso’s SUN networks to facilitate all of the above.

## COSTA RICA

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

Costa Rica joined the SUN Movement in 2014 and has garnered increasing attention within the Movement (e.g. multiple visits conducted by the SUN Movement coordinator and/or UNN coordinator). There are several lessons to learn based on the country's nutrition achievements and the distinct nutrition-related dynamics, capacities and needs of Latin American countries. *This case study highlights Costa Rica's nutrition narrative as an illustration of a SUN member country's pursuit of a path that is different from the standard model being promoted by SUN. It also provides insights on areas and issues for which SUN could provide added value in the future.*

#### **ENHANCEMENT OF VS. COMPETITION WITH WHAT ALREADY WORKS**

As an upper-middle-income country, Costa Rica is not a target country for donor assistance. When the country joined SUN, it already had a strong set of nutrition-related policies. Recently, it developed a bill on the Right to Food that is awaiting approval. In addition, Costa Rica's model and approach to macroeconomic growth and development has yielded positive nutrition results.

There have, however, been **tangible SUN contributions, particularly in relation to (1) budget and expenditure analysis and (2) multisectoral nutrition governance. SUN has amplified nutrition collaboration and cooperation across some government sectors via Costa Rica's MSP, as well as between the Ministry of Health and various UN agencies. This was a novel approach for the country.**

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Health is the governing and coordinating body on health and nutrition issues in the country. A small set of UN entities—FAO, Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization and the UN Coordination Office—comprise the main in-country UN partners. Those agencies have formed a UNN as a platform for technical and financial assistance in the planning and execution of Costa Rica's food security and nutrition programmes. Beyond the UN, **it is difficult at this juncture to describe Costa Rica's MSP as inclusive of all key constituencies that have (or should have) a stake in nutrition.**

In addition to the above players, Costa Rica's MSP includes a network of institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Health, but the MSP has not yet reached its full multisectoral, multi-stakeholder potential. As observed in some Latin American countries (e.g. Guatemala), one area for improvement is in the regulation of business-sector practices to ensure that they promote nutrition in general and consumption of healthy foods in particular. Also, the role of civil society in social accountability, not just as a constituency that is occasionally consulted, can be expanded.

Costa Rica is in the process of establishing a SUN CSA that will be rooted firmly in behaviour change communication strategies that support a broader sustainable food systems approach for the country. At present, there is no SBN in the country. However, **a stage is being set for some cooperation between civil society and the business sector based on contacts made between the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and some CSOs operating in the country, creating a potential link with impact investment funds for nutrition through GAIN. However, vigilance is required in monitoring dynamics that exist between constituencies.** For example, there is history of the local business sector impeding the development and implementation of policy frameworks related to the right to food, as well as limiting the scope/influence of civil society in programme proposals. Hence, **whilst there is tremendous untapped potential in 'bringing people together', attention must be paid to ensure that there is complementarity of effort amongst the different constituencies and an enabling environment to hold the different constituencies accountable** for their contributions to a coherent, contextually appropriate systems approach to improving nutrition.

## COSTA RICA

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

There are areas of conflict between the SUN approach and Costa Rica's own approach to multi-stakeholder nutrition action prior to joining SUN. These tensions can be partially attributed to the perceived rigidity of SUN's approach and focus. First, both the FAO and UNICEF are prominent actors in supporting the government of Costa Rica on nutrition. **'Goodness of fit' issues come to the fore when one compares the fairly rigid SUN model with the mechanisms, plans and institutional arrangements that were already deemed to be effective and appropriate for the context.** For example, Costa Rica has used the United Nations Development Assistance Framework to set 'national agreement and alliances' and plan the next UN Joint Action Plan (2020–2021) as a means of galvanising coordinated action in support of nutrition transformation in the country.

Lastly, the SUN Movement's emphasis thus far on stunting, a form of malnutrition that is not as prominent in Costa Rica (national prevalence of 5.6 percent) as it is in other SUN member countries, prompts further **questions around thematic or strategic focus of the country under the umbrella of SUN.** Stunting and wasting do not appear to be predominant forms of malnutrition in Costa Rica, but available evidence shows that the country is not on track to meet WHA targets for *any* of the nutrition-related indicators.

#### UNMET SUPPORT NEEDS

In several ways, Costa Rica is a positive outlier in terms of nutrition, but there is an unfinished agenda related to improving **inclusion and participation in a multisectoral, multi-stakeholder nutrition response.**

**Although the concept of 'bringing people together' has merit, a balance must be struck between process and action.** Costa Rica has an aging population and high burdens of overnutrition in both children and adults. Also, the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases related to diet is just beginning to receive a space in the public health agenda and within the food systems approach. **The country can benefit from an infusion of support in contextual analysis and in the formulation and implementation of joint actions to address context-specific drivers** of malnutrition in the country. There is a need to **increase awareness of the various SUN-affiliated TA options amongst key nutrition stakeholders, as well as facilitate access to different types of support.**

#### UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR SUN

Experiences of countries such as Costa Rica prompt such questions as, **Is SUN just a branded set of processes, tools and structures that must be applied in their totality to each member country? -AND- How can SUN principles be applied through a tailored, adaptive approach that**

**(1) responds to direct, underlying and structural drivers of malnutrition in a particular country and (2) builds on strengths (e.g. leveraging how and why countries such as Costa Rica have already made significant advances in nutrition)?** This Costa Rican case illustrates the diversity that exists within the Movement. A movement that is truly 'country driven and country led' cannot have a single, prescribed set of processes nor a single Theory of Change (TOC).

This case also sheds light on opportunities for cross-fertilisation and/or country-to-country cooperation. Costa Rica is at the forefront of adopting a food systems approach in light of emerging global evidence, such as the 2019 EAT-Lancet report. It is also implementing environmental policies that have a bearing on nutrition. Thus, as a movement that should be dynamic and country focused, there are several opportunities to (1) reorient SUN's focus towards the nutrition dynamics, strengths and needs of member countries and (2) identify and leverage strengths and experiences within SUN's membership for the betterment of individual countries and the Movement as a whole. The latter will be particularly important as the Movement attempts to find its footing with regards to relevant global agendas, such as climate change, food systems and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The SUN Movement’s TOC is predicated on establishing multi-stakeholder, multisectoral nutrition planning and coordination ‘architecture’ (i.e. structures, platforms, plans) to achieve nutrition results. However, experiences in the Republic of Guatemala, a SUN member country since 2010, serve as an important reminder that the creation of multisectoral architecture—a major focus of the SUN Movement’s first two phases—is a means, not an end, to achieving transformational improvements in nutrition.

**ALIGNMENT OF NUTRITION FOCUS WITH NUTRITION DYNAMICS IN THE COUNTRY**

Guatemala has the highest rates of malnutrition in Latin America. According to the 2018 Global Nutrition Report, the country is on track to meet only two of the nine nutrition-related WHA targets by 2025.<sup>u</sup> Almost one out of every two children under five years old (47 percent) are stunted in Guatemala, despite emphasising chronic malnutrition as a national nutrition focus. There is also a palpable double burden of malnutrition that has been growing in severity since the 1990s. For

example, according to best-available national estimates, at least three out of every ten women of reproductive age are overweight. The burden of NCDs is also growing; however, the strong link between diet and NCDs is not adequately reflected in Guatemala’s national plans. Thus, **Guatemala’s focus under the umbrella of SUN has not evolved beyond stunting, despite the need for greater focus on promotion of healthy diets to prevent various forms of malnutrition and adverse outcomes such as NCDs.**

**A ‘SYSTEM’ WITHOUT A SYSTEMS APPROACH**

SUN in Guatemala has, however, played a role in initially expanding participation in and buy-in for a national multisectoral nutrition response. The country has the requisite multisectoral coordination components promoted by SUN, and there is a National System for Food and Nutrition Security, along with Municipal Food and Nutrition Security Directorates at a subnational level. At the national level, **nutrition stakeholders are**

**organised into various networks, and Guatemala is one of only a few SUN countries with a SUN national parliamentary network. However, there is a lack of coherence across the different constituencies.** There are also signs of the need to strengthen local understanding of how the efforts of different constituencies should complement each other in pursuit of common nutrition goals. **The roles of two particular constituencies within the national response—private sector and civil society—need to be optimised.** To date, Guatemala’s civil society platform has been limited to simply playing a consultative role within the national multisectoral nutrition response. As a result, the tremendous value of civil society in public advocacy, community mobilisation, behaviour change and social accountability has not been fully realised.

The SBN in Guatemala emphasises philanthropy and corporate social responsibility. However, there is limited recognition that corporate social responsibility should not be limited to pronouncements or spending but should also cover the fulfilment of social contracts, ensuring that business practices do not contravene best practices in food and nutrition. In Guatemala, there have been critical lapses related to commercial/marketing practices that (1) contravene the promotion of healthy diets and (2) expand the private sector’s control over means of agricultural production (to the detriment of families that are dependent on agriculture-based livelihoods).

<sup>u</sup> Related to child overweight, child wasting, child stunting, exclusive breastfeeding, diabetes amongst women, diabetes amongst men, anaemia in women of reproductive age, obesity amongst women and obesity amongst men.

**NUTRITION  
ARCHITECTURE BUT  
LIMITED  
ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability is a major lever for nutrition transformation. **In Guatemala, gaps in accountability have manifested in several ways: (1) public expenditure and use of funds, (2) cross-sectoral involvement in nutrition and (3) private-sector practices requiring regulation and enforcement.** Guatemala has adopted decentralised governance, but the transfer of financial resources from the central to the municipal levels is suboptimal. In addition, fiscal guidelines do not exist to ensure that public funds are disbursed through a social equity lens, a highly salient issue in Guatemala, as described in the next section. There is also scope to improve the transparency and efficiency of public spending, with effective mechanisms to thwart corruption.

With respect to cross-sectoral involvement, there are several multisectoral stakeholders, but SUN’s influence on nutrition action in Guatemala is still largely confined to the health sector, despite the many platforms to engage non-health stakeholders. There is a need to revisit both the nature and scope of advocacy with non-health sectors to expand and enhance nutrition-related action in several sectors.

Also, although the country has extensive legislation, there are suboptimal regulatory instruments (as well as administrative and judicial mechanisms) to govern private-sector entities in relation to (1) marketing of unhealthy foods and (2) compliance with tax contributions commensurate with the scale and scope of their activities.

Guatemala is a target country for initiatives such as the National Information Platforms for Nutrition, an effort funded by the European Commission, the UK Department of International Development (DFID) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. However, the use of information for policy, programme and financing decision-making can be improved, with deliberate leveraging of complementary efforts to use information as a tool to strengthen accountability around socially responsible actions.

**SOCIAL DETERMINANTS  
OF NUTRITION**

In Guatemala, as in several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), nutritional status is affected by several structural factors. There have been positive developments—for example, gender considerations are reflected in Guatemala’s national programmes to support family farming (Family Farming Programme to Strengthen the Rural Economy) and to fight malnutrition (National Strategy for the Prevention of Chronic Malnutrition). However, weak public policies to mitigate discrimination, build resilience in the face of climate change and improve responsiveness of Guatemala’s nutrition efforts to phenomena such as high population mobility (within and across Guatemala’s borders) are impediments to nutrition progress.

**Critical structural factors related to equity, social inclusion and social protection (particularly for women, certain ethnic groups and poor rural residents) that drive nutrition dynamics and outcomes in the country are not prominently reflected in nutrition-related policies, plans and programmes.** Approximately half of Guatemala’s population live in poverty, and there are striking differentials in malnutrition across the country. For example, parts of the country where the population is primarily indigenous and impoverished have stunting rates as high as 70 percent, far higher than the national average. In addition, the **effects of climate change are exacerbating long-standing vulnerabilities**, reducing the availability of arable land and, therefore, agriculture-based livelihoods. These two factors spur a host of other adverse outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalised segments of

Guatemalan society. However, **the potential to challenge and promote structural changes in the country has not been fully realised.**

**IMPLICATIONS FOR SUN**

Across the SUN Movement, there is evidence of the merits of promoting a multisectoral approach to nutrition. Although standardisation across SUN member countries (e.g. with respect to prioritisation of particular issues such as stunting and the approach to multisectoral nutrition governance) bodes well for consistency of process across the Movement, **the lack of customisation in countries such as Guatemala does not bode well for nutrition impact.** Tailor-made system approaches that are sensitive to structural causes of malnutrition, local dynamics, gaps and capacities can be the tipping point in effecting transformational and sustainable improvements.

The Guatemala country experience underscores **the need for a country-specific TOC that galvanises attention and action to address issues that are the most salient and impactful drivers of malnutrition in a given country.** For example, in Guatemala, social protection and regulation of business-sector practices likely need to feature more prominently in plans and programmes based on a tailored nutrition TOC for the country. SUN-promoted processes (e.g. Joint Annual Assessments) and platforms (e.g. networks, MSPs) can then be optimised to support cross-sectoral action and foster accountability in addressing the most salient forms and drivers of malnutrition within the country. **The SUN Movement’s advocacy efforts also need to evolve from basic sensitisation and awareness raising on the value of nutrition to the challenging of governments and donors to tackle the lack of equity (e.g. gender, ethnic, racial, economic) and social inclusion as root causes underlying malnutrition and other adverse outcomes that compromise national development.**

Experiences in countries such as Guatemala also underscore **the need for risk-informed nutrition programming.** The delineation between ‘fragile states’ and other countries can be somewhat artificial. Several SUN member countries, such as Guatemala, are contending with hazards and risks (e.g. climate-induced events that result in seasonal hunger or compromised food systems) that need to inform the types of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific programmes that are implemented. **Joint Annual Assessments and other SUN processes and tools should be sensitive enough to assess progress related to drivers of poor nutrition outcomes, not just achievement of milestones related to SUN-branded structures, processes and tools.**

## INDONESIA

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

Since joining the SUN Movement in December 2011, there has been a transformational shift in how nutrition is being addressed in Indonesia. The highest-level political figures in the country, starting first with President Joko Widodo, have elevated the issue of stunting reduction to a national priority that is central to Indonesia's human capital development.<sup>v</sup> The country developed a common framework of Integrated Nutrition Interventions (INI) for Stunting Reduction, which was an investment case for reducing stunting in the country, and the Vice President launched the National Strategy for Stunting in August 2017. In 2018, under the leadership of the President, the INI package was initiated in priority locations (100 districts and 1,000 villages with the highest stunting prevalence rates in the country). In addition to the above, targets for reducing child stunting, child underweight and adult obesity have been included in the 2015–2019 National Medium-Term Development Plan to set nutrition improvement as a priority for all sectors.

*What specific roles has the SUN Movement played in Indonesia's emerging nutrition narrative, and what have we learnt on how the Movement should support a country like Indonesia? As illustrated below, SUN's made several contributions that have advanced multisectoral nutrition action in the country.*

#### SUN'S CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING NUTRITION VISIBILITY

The SUN Movement Coordinator visited Indonesia in February 2017. This high-level visit by an official at the Assistant Secretary General (ASG) level underscored the significance of nutrition and helped to reaffirm already-increasing multisectoral commitments to nutrition in Indonesia. Later in 2017, the government launched the National Strategy to Accelerate Stunting Reduction.

#### CROSS-COUNTRY LEARNING

**Learning from other SUN member countries that were more advanced in their multisectoral, multi-stakeholder approach was a critical success factor in Indonesia's nutrition response.** In April 2017, after the SUN Movement coordinator's visit to the country, an Indonesian delegation went to Peru to learn about critical success factors in reducing stunting. The World Bank funded that learning exchange. The Indonesian delegation included individuals from a small set of government ministries (the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, Ministry of the National Development Planning, known as *Bappenas*, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Finance). Notably, other constituencies with key roles to play in stunting reduction (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, civil society, private-sector entities) were not part of that learning exchange. However, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination through SUN networks helped to share lessons learnt from Peru with a broader range of stakeholders with focal roles in nutrition-specific and/or nutrition-sensitive programme implementation

#### SUN NETWORKS: BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER, FACILITATING NUTRITION ACTION

Although Indonesia's membership in SUN was largely precipitated by the Ministry of Health, Indonesia's national SUN Secretariat is embedded within *Bappenas*. The SUN Government Focal Point is the Deputy Minister for Human and Societal Development and Cultural Affairs within the Ministry of National Development Planning/National Development Planning Agency (*Bappenas*). At the national level, the

<sup>v</sup> Plenary Meeting with House of Representatives on 16 August 2016.

number of line ministries contributing to nutrition improvement has expanded from 11 to 23 line ministries.

The DFID-funded Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) mechanism has been an important means of strengthening national governance. For example, the country's SUN Secretariat has received various forms of technical support (e.g. managerial, information technology, operational). The primary TAN provider in Indonesia, Nutrition International, also currently chairs the SUN CSA.

The SUN Movement 'model' usually entails creation of UNNs, SUN Donor Networks, CSAs, and SBNs across its member countries. In Indonesia, UN stakeholders and donor stakeholders have merged under a single network known as DUNCNN (Donor and UN Country Network for Nutrition), led by UNICEF and co-led by the World Bank. This merged network has facilitated coordination between two constituencies with explicit mandates to support the government. To date, DUNCNN has also proven to be a viable mechanism for knowledge sharing on programmes/activities and best practices.

SUN Indonesia also has a joint Academia and Professional Network. That network has been instrumental in expanding nutrition participation and advocacy action from 11 line ministries to 24 line ministries. It also encouraged the use of social media to broaden information dissemination to the population of Indonesia. Additionally, it advised the government to develop digitised learning platforms (e-modules, video tutorials) and to use social media as a platform for identified nutrition champions to act as agents of change to influence others.

Indonesia is one of a few SUN countries with an active SBN. To date, the SBN, which is led by Indofood, has made tangible nutrition contributions via four defined agendas: (1) nutrition for the workplace (employee wellness programmes, nutrition education); (2) the First 1,000 Days (breastfeeding rooms in places of employment, breastfeeding counselling and education, infrastructure and logistics support for village health posts); (3) 'Balance Nutrition' (health office canteen, nutrition education); and (4) sanitation and hygiene (handwashing campaigns, latrine infrastructure development, clean water provision).

## FINANCING

In addition to supporting nutrition coordination and governance, SUN has made contributions both in terms of financial resources and financial tools. *Bappenas* and the Ministry of Finance developed a budget tagging and tracking system that is aligned with annual budget tracking evidence collected by SUN at a global level. **Twenty-nine trillion Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) were allocated for stunting-reduction interventions in 2019,<sup>w</sup> with the majority of that budget dedicated to nutrition-sensitive interventions (nutrition-specific allocation at 3.7 trillion IDR; nutrition-sensitive allocation at 24.3 trillion IDR; and coordination and TA allocation at 1 trillion IDR). This is an important milestone in expanding the sense of ownership and accountability for nutrition improvement beyond the health sector.**

Indonesia has also benefitted from the SUN GFF. This funding is managed under a World Bank grant known as the 'Investment in Nutrition and Early Years Project.' The grant serves as catalytic funding to strengthen the capacity of both national and subnational governments and to help improve the effectiveness of INI service delivery.

<sup>w</sup> Budget tagging and tracking report 2019, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of the National Development Planning/Bappenas

**MISSED OPPORTUNITIES TO BE RESPONSIVE TO COUNTRY NEEDS AND NUTRITION DYNAMICS**

The missed opportunities are as follows:

- **Nutrition dynamics have changed within the country.** Now, with transformational political leadership, the country is galvanised around the issue of stunting. However, the country is also confronting a growing double burden of malnutrition. Malnutrition in all its forms is not being addressed explicitly by SUN stakeholders.
- **SUN is not always perceived as being fully aligned with efforts related to the SDGs.** Both Indonesia's SUN Secretariat and SDG Secretariat need to develop mutual or shared work plans towards SDGs targets.
- **'Translating' national nutrition architecture and activities into nutrition results at the lowest implementation level is the next big challenge for Indonesia.** To date, budget tagging and tracking are still focused at the level of the national government. Budget tagging and tracking for subnational-level governments are still under development.
- **There is a need for greater coherence across constituencies to optimise nutrition coordination and results.** Whilst there have been strides in facilitating coordination between certain key constituencies (e.g. via DUNCNN), some networks still operate in siloes—a phenomenon that has also been observed within SUN at a global level. Indonesia's SBN and CSA have been involved in the launch of the national stunting campaign. Notably, however, the public-private-sector interface can be improved. Although its four agendas are aligned with government priorities, in practical terms the SBN largely works independently of the government, working primarily with local nongovernmental agencies to improve the health and nutritional status of communities.
- Although the media is now involved in the national stunting campaign engagement (*Bappenas* invited the Alliance of Independent Journalism to use media outlets to disseminate messages on the impact of stunting on human development), it is a stakeholder group that was engaged fairly late in the multisectoral, multi-stakeholder effort. **As other malnutrition issues come to the fore in Indonesia, it will be important to identify strategic points of intervention/engagement of constituencies, such as the media, which have roles to play in translating plans and strategies into population-level impact.**

Kenya, a SUN member since 2012, adopted a devolved system of governance in 2010 that shifted power from the national government to 47 elected county governments. Nutrition stakeholders are in the process of translating national-level SUN 'architecture', such as the Kenya Nutrition Action Plan (KNAP) 2018–2023 and the Nutrition Interagency Coordinating Committee (Kenya's national MSP), into meaningful nutrition results at a subnational level.

Two crucial steps in that process are (1) developing County Nutrition Action Plans that are aligned with the KNAP and (2) activating county-level nutrition coordination mechanisms that leverage county-level nutrition technical leadership, local governance arrangements and CSOs operating on the ground. How the process is unfolding in Kenya, with three counties (Busia, Nandi, Vihiga) launching their County Nutrition Action Plans in 2019, sheds light on how **SUN actors and resources can be leveraged to support accountability and action for subnational impact**. The following are key lessons and insights:

- Time, resources and expertise must be dedicated to **extensive advocacy at a subnational level** (e.g. targeting/engaging county governors, in the case of Kenya) to ensure that the relevance of nutrition to local priorities is clear and that nutrition implementation is aligned with local budgetary resources.
- The existence of a **functioning CSA, with well-placed member organisations that can provide financial and/or technical support at a subnational level, is a critical success factor**. In Kenya, civil society is not just playing a role in the implementation of nutrition programme activities; it is facilitating subnational prioritisation and planning related to multisectoral nutrition programming.
- There are **serious financial and technical considerations in shifting the paradigm from simply 'bringing people together' around nutrition at a national level to addressing implementation at a subnational level**. The *process* alone of transitioning from a national plan (KNAP) and MSP to localised structures, plans and programmes has required the leveraging of SUN Pooled Fund resources, DFID-funded support through the TAN mechanism and financial contributions from SUN country networks, namely Kenya's SUN UNN and member organisations of the SUN CSA.
- Subnational implementation of nutrition programmes should **leverage existing accountability mechanisms for results/population impact**. In Kenya, that ultimate accountability at the subnational level rests with county governors.
- To **maintain coherence within a country's nutrition system**, the national nutrition monitoring and evaluation framework/plan should be revisited to (a) reflect subnational plans and priorities, (b) ensure that key aspects of the country's TOC for nutrition improvement are not overlooked and (c) facilitate knowledge management and learning at all administrative levels.

Across the SUN Movement, countries are grappling with issues related to subnational implementation. Several national nutrition structures promoted by the SUN Movement (e.g. the UNN, SDN and CSA) exist in Rwanda, which has been a SUN member country since 2011. Rwanda has an institutionalised multisectoral action, with a particular focus on its social ministries—Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Livestock Resources, Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of Public Service and Labour. The SUN Focal Point sits within the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, and there is a multi-stakeholder, multisectoral nutrition coordination mechanism, the National Food and Nutrition Technical Working Group. That platform is led by the minister of Health, with the minister of Finance and the UN resident coordinator serving as cochairs.

**Rwanda is a unique country context given its relatively small population size, as well as governance structures and accountability mechanisms that cover but are not limited to nutrition. However, the country yields insights on issues that are salient to all SUN member countries, such as mainstreaming nutrition at several levels and strengthening the link between nutrition coordination structures and processes and meaningful improvements in nutrition outcomes.**

**SUBNATIONAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
FOR NUTRITION,  
INDEPENDENT OF  
SUN**

Rwanda has several layers of accountability: national, district, cell and village levels. All the development programmes at the subnational level are guided by the Rwanda National Transformation Strategy. Rwanda is divided into 30 districts, and each district has its own multi-stakeholder nutrition committee. **There is rigorous oversight of the implementation of nutrition interventions, including annual district reporting using performance score cards.**

However, there is also the *nyumba kumi*—**a cluster system in which there are groupings of 10 to 15 households, with each grouping headed by a leader.** Nutrition is reflected within this localised governance arrangement. For example, *nyumba kumi* leaders facilitate their own forums for parents to discuss community welfare issues, such as nutrition. Trained community health workers **provide integrated nutrition, health and hygiene services** at the community level and are equipped with mobile phones to document and report the services they provide. Their performance is incentivised through a performance-based compensation scheme that centres on a set of performance indicators. In addition, all community health workers are organised into cooperatives with oversight provided by health centres. There is also administrative oversight by the in-charge of social affairs at the cell, sector or district level. Notably, however, **whilst there is some coordination between sectors, there is limited accountability for cross-sectoral, integrated service delivery at the lowest implementation level.**

**SOCIAL PROTECTION  
AS A STRUCTURAL  
DRIVER OF  
NUTRITION  
IMPROVEMENTS**

Tackling nutrition must entail addressing root causes of malnutrition. In Rwanda, reducing poverty and vulnerability is a national priority, and the government of Rwanda has categorised households based on national poverty criteria. Category 1 signifies the poorest, most vulnerable circumstances, with families in that category not owning a house and having difficulties meeting basic needs. The government has a conditional cash transfer scheme,

whereby mothers in Category 1 households receive cash transfers on the condition that their children undergo growth monitoring and receive immunisations and that the mothers adopt other optimal care-seeking behaviours (e.g. attending at least four antenatal care visits during pregnancy). Each Category 1 family also receives one cow or small livestock from the government, with priority given to households with pregnant women and malnourished children.

This initiative is monitored through the district plan, which includes active oversight by the military.

**SUN'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO NUTRITION EFFORTS  
IN RWANDA**

Nutrition programmes in Rwanda are funded through a mix of government resources and financing from development partners. Rwanda's president launched a Multi-Sectoral Programme for Stunting Reduction, with financing from a mix of funding mechanisms and implementers that are also linked to the SUN Movement (e.g. the GFF, DFID, World Bank, UNICEF). The government also established specific budget lines to address nutrition challenges through key line ministries, and the total budgetary allocation for nutrition programmes was US\$28 million in 2018/2019. For the 2019/2020 financial year, the budget emphasis for nutrition is to support nutrition-specific interventions, with a particular focus on stunting.

**As observed in several other countries, two SUN structures, the UNN and CSA, feature prominently in supporting the multisectoral nutrition response in Rwanda.** The UNN has provided TA in a number of domains (e.g. technical support to Rwanda's Academia and Research Network and support with multisectoral coordination). Rwanda's CSA (SUN Alliance Rwanda) has advocated for increased investment in nutrition and has been instrumental in coordinating Rwanda's hosting of a SUN Africa Learning Route in 2017.

*One question remains, however: How has all of the above impacted nutrition outcomes?*

**AN UNFINISHED AGENDA  
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
SUN SUPPORT**

**Despite being quite advanced relative to other sub-Saharan African countries in the 'trickle down' of a national multisectoral approach to the lowest implementation level, Rwanda still has one of the highest child stunting rates in the world (37 percent nationally, 41 percent in rural areas and 24 percent in urban areas, based on the most recent Demographic and Health Survey in 2014/2015).**

**An important lesson emerging out of Rwanda relates to coherence within a multisectoral nutrition response, and there may be a role for SUN to play in testing models of truly integrated models (e.g. between the health and agriculture sectors) to maximise synergistic effects and minimise unintended negative consequences of siloed, sector-specific efforts.** A 2019 journal article published in *BMC Public Health* provides further insight on one area that might need to be optimised.<sup>x</sup> With a major emphasis on livelihoods and poverty reduction in Rwanda, there are missed opportunities to improve dietary diversity and promote healthy diets. For example, when rural farming households in Rwanda are able to increase agricultural production and get value-chain support, some of them are selling the high-quality, nutritious foods that they produce to maximise their incomes rather than to improve their own nutrition. They are not consuming quality foods but rather are increasing their consumption of cheaper, nutritionally substandard food items, which does not bode well for dietary diversity.

Thus, there is an apparent intersection of agricultural livelihoods and rural food systems (e.g. retaining a portion of healthy food production for household consumption or ensuring that households have access to affordable, diverse and nutritious food items in rural food markets) that might be the missing link in tackling malnutrition in Rwanda.

<sup>x</sup> Weatherspoon DD, Miller S, Ngabitsinze JC, Weatherspoon LJ, Oehmke JF. Stunting, food security, markets and food policy in Rwanda. *BMC Public Health*. 2019;19(1):882. doi:10.1186/s12889-019-7208-0.

## RWANDA

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

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This reality creates opportunities for the SUN Movement to redouble efforts around knowledge management, learning and/or TA to countries such as Rwanda to (1) leverage global evidence, experiences and resources; (2) identify and/or test local best practices; and (3) optimise in-country multi-stakeholder mechanisms and forums as platforms for contextually appropriate integrated service delivery, learning and replication of local best practices across partners.

The Republic of Yemen has a total population size of almost 30 million. According to Yemen’s 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan, 79 percent of the population (24.1 million people) is in need of humanitarian assistance. The unprecedented scale of Yemen’s humanitarian crisis has impacted how nutrition is addressed, as well as how nutrition stakeholders organise and coordinate their work.

*Yemen’s experiences since joining the SUN Movement in 2012 shine a light on issues related to the fidelity of the SUN MSP in times of crisis. It also provides insights on SUN’s niche in fragile and conflict-affected states.*

**CAN SUN RISE IN A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS?**

Even before joining SUN in 2012, Yemen was amongst the poorest, least developed nations in the world. When Yemen joined SUN, the country’s nutrition stakeholders established a National Steering Committee with diverse representation from several line ministries that are directly involved in nutrition-related service delivery. The Steering Committee also includes other line ministries that play a facilitative role in implementation (e.g. finance, media), selected donors, UN agencies, Sana’a University and the Federation of Yemen Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Thus, several constituencies have been represented in Yemen’s MSP. The SUN network concept has not gained traction in Yemen to the extent that it has in other SUN countries, however.

When conflict and political instability hit their peak in 2014/2015, those events produced one of the world’s worst man-made humanitarian crises. The crisis has displaced millions of people, disrupted services and programmes and destabilised the country’s overall governance.

*Can the nutrition governance and coordination arrangements promoted by SUN withstand the pressures of a humanitarian crisis?*

**Experiences in Yemen suggest that, in humanitarian settings, the rules of engagement change.** The institutional arrangements that exist on paper before a crisis shift during a crisis. Over the past few years, the primary mechanism for interagency alignment and coordination has been through the humanitarian cluster system. **The cluster platform has taken precedence over SUN-promoted platforms.** In Yemen, as in several other fragile and conflict-affected states, there is a special Nutrition Cluster. The SUN Yemen Secretariat, which is housed within the country’s cross-sectoral Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, has participated in the Nutrition Cluster. However, several other clusters (Food Security and Agriculture; Health; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) also exist and are addressing issues that contribute to nutrition.

As the country engages in a humanitarian response whilst also shifting focus to address recovery and long-term development issues, **there is the potential to leverage capacities and platforms established under the humanitarian response.**

**RESUSCITATION OF NUTRITION GOVERNANCE BEYOND THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

In 2019/2020, the country has focused on realignment of nutrition actors for the next three years under the auspices of SUN Yemen. **In Yemen, one priority is for the government to resume its nutrition leadership and stewardship for the country as a whole.** There are very serious operational constraints, however, such as the absence of an operating budget for most central-line ministries in Sana’a. During the crisis, funding from donors and development partners have bypassed the central level and have flowed directly to implementers in Yemen’s governorates.

With support from Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus, the SUN Yemen Secretariat has been working with key nutrition stakeholders to produce SUN-promoted architecture, such as a costed Common Results Framework, a three-year Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (MSNAP) and associated tools, such as a Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and a Nutrition Advocacy Plan. **Out of the many different constituencies participating in Yemen's MSP, a nucleus of five line ministries**—the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Ministry of Public Health and Population, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Fish Wealth and the Ministry of Water and the Environment—will be leading the charge in the delivery of nutrition services and interventions under the forthcoming MSNAP. Notably, several of those ministries have been co-leads of some of the humanitarian clusters. **This will be a strength on which to build in the coming years.**

Breathing life into SUN networks (e.g. civil society, business) is also on the agenda for SUN Yemen. However, given that **SUN's networks are predicated on a development model, it has not been feasible to operationalise the various SUN networks under humanitarian conditions. This is an important observation that should prompt the global SUN Movement to examine how SUN networks are structured at the country level.** More specifically, they should be agile enough to assume different functions if/when conditions and dynamics in the local context change (e.g. in the event of a humanitarian crisis).

**WHAT IS SUN'S  
ROLE IN FRAGILE  
STATES?**

In the midst of a crisis—even when other coordination, planning and/or implementation mechanisms, such as clusters, are activated—it is important to **maintain the pipeline of communication to/from a country's MSP (or its country-level SUN Secretariat) and the SUN Movement Secretariat.**

**As a matter of priority, SUN should not disrupt or overcomplicate institutional arrangements and processes in the midst of a humanitarian crisis.** The aim should be to enhance or complement, not introduce unnecessary complexity into an already tenuous set of circumstances. However, **there is a role for the Movement to play in ensuring that local/national leadership in and ownership of multisectoral nutrition action does not erode in times of crisis.**

Given the structure and history of the cluster approach in several countries, **the SUN UNN can play specific roles in ensuring that government and civil society nutrition stakeholders in a country are actively involved in humanitarian clusters.** This is consistent with SUN's mantra of being country driven and country led. The UNN can also help to position nutrition as a sentinel outcome of success for the overall humanitarian response (e.g. as a reflection of being able to access people of greatest need, linking them with services that address their basic human rights and moving from response to recovery and resilience building).

SUN Yemen has set a three-year time horizon to implement its MSNAP. **When engaged in nutrition planning in fragile and conflict-affected states, it is important that the SUN Movement advocate for periodic review of the country's TOC for nutrition transformation.** It is particularly important to have reality checks in relation to issues such as social protection, physical access to target populations (particularly salient when large segments of the population are displaced and or inaccessible due to insecurity or conflict), the availability of functional infrastructure (e.g. roads, health facilities, schools, safe water and irrigations systems), supply-chain management and frontline human resource capacity.

## YEMEN

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

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In all countries, SUN can support stakeholders in resisting the urge to include ‘all things nutrition-related’ in their national nutrition action plans and frameworks. Prioritisation is critical. It is particularly important to do so in fragile and conflict-affected states. SUN can make substantive contributions to positioning nutrition within the humanitarian-development nexus. It can also facilitate access to high-quality, contextually appropriate TA that puts the country first and capacitates local/national entities in leading coordinated nutrition responses.

## REGIONAL CASES

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

#### **LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:**

##### **A Strong Case for SUN Doing Things Differently**

Based on extensive stakeholder consultations and contextual knowledge of SUN and nutrition in LAC, the questions raised about the relevance and added value of SUN in the region are justified. In fact, the region yields several *counterfactual* examples of how nutrition progress has occurred either in the absence of or with limited influence by SUN.

Notably, some LAC countries with huge commitments to SUN have the highest malnutrition rates in the region. Also, if stunting reduction remains the primary thematic focus for the Movement, this has serious implications in terms of SUN ownership and goodness-of-fit in LAC. The LAC region is characterised by double and triple burdens of malnutrition. A movement that continues to centre largely on stunting, as well as one that does not promote and/or leverage efforts related to structural drivers of malnutrition (e.g. equality, transparency, public expenditure), will appear 'tone deaf' to the dynamics of nutrition transformation within the LAC region.

Some of the issues driving nutrition are contextual factors, such as violence, the climate and political unrest. These factors spur human mobility, a growing humanitarian concern in the region. Whilst these factors have nutrition implications, they are not solely the concern of nutrition stakeholders.

For SUN to shine in LAC, there must be an acknowledgment of where the region stands with respect to regional and subregional governance. There is a belief across several LAC nutrition constituencies that SUN's management is oriented towards the problems (thematic focus) and ways of working in Africa (governance). Although there is a need for the Movement to be more country driven, country led and country centred, SUN stakeholders should be mindful of missing opportunities to leverage LAC technical, advocacy and/or political alliances and platforms that extend beyond the borders of a single country. Ten years into its existence, SUN has been slow to leverage regional integration platforms with agendas that could impact nutrition outcomes in the region (e.g. Central American Integration System).

In spite of the above shortcomings, regional nutrition stakeholders have a genuine interest in being formally connected to the broader global network of nutrition actors. There is scope for LAC to benefit from the broader movement (e.g. learning about new models of evidence-informed nutrition advocacy that can be adapted by LAC stakeholders). However, there is a need to reconsider how SUN experiences within the region are highlighted globally. For example, as described in the Costa Rica case study for the Strategic Review, that country has received increased attention within the global SUN Movement. Several LAC nutrition stakeholders acknowledge the pioneering work that Costa Rica is doing with respect to food systems but perceive that SUN's interest in the country is driven largely by interests on the part of some SUN global power brokers to enter the food systems arena.

Conversely, there are other SUN LAC countries that have made major strides in nutrition (e.g. Peru, El Salvador) that do not receive as much attention within SUN as Costa Rica. Within the region, there are examples of critical success factors in nutrition improvement. For example, experiences in Bolivia (non-SUN country) and Peru (SUN country) highlight that women's empowerment, social protection and cultural sensitivity in community outreach are key. However, SUN has not been visible or vocal on these issues, nor are those important issues given prominence in discussions about a TOC for nutrition.

## REGIONAL CASES

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

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With growing interests amongst SUN global stakeholders to engage in food systems, as well as a clear need within the region to address structural drivers of malnutrition, it is not yet clear that SUN is prepared to adopt a way of working that is not limited to bilateral action focused on a single country. Addressing an issue such as food systems or food markets requires adopting a purview of territories or corridors (spanning several countries), as well as linking more formally to agroecological and trade platforms.

#### **SUN SHINES DIFFERENTLY ACROSS AFRICA:**

##### A Case for Rationalising SUN's Approach Through a Regional and Subregional Lens

In Africa, the SUN Movement has seen a mixture of successes and missed opportunities. SUN has contributed to raising the nutrition profile within and across countries on the continent, but the potential for nutrition transformation through coordinated, evidence-informed approaches has not been fully realised.

The Africa region is far from a monolith. The inherent diversity (e.g. linguistic, cultural, geopolitical, demographic, ecological) within the region should inform what the prioritisation of SUN's issues and actions on the continent is, as well as how support to African SUN countries is provided. Also, there are several fragile and conflict-affected states within the region. Those countries have unpredictable sociopolitical and/or economic local contexts, limited funding for nutrition and challenges around transparency and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Although SUN engages with those fragile states bilaterally, more can be done to link and support them as cohorts and facilitate their voices being heard within the Movement and beyond.

There are natural linguistic clusters of SUN countries (e.g. Francophone countries) that account for a sizable proportion of SUN's membership. However, the manner in which SUN's GSS is structured is not fully aligned with their needs. There is a common perception that SUN's approach and GSS is skewed towards Anglophone African countries and that resources (technical, political, economic) within regions and subregions are not galvanised and fully leveraged.

As in other regions, SUN has not actively pursued formal linkages with regional and subregional political and economic/trade blocs. The African Union and African Development Bank are active in driving the nutrition agenda, including the use of nutrition accountability scorecards across the region. However, there is a need to enhance SUN's strategic engagement of those two entities and key subregional blocs (e.g. Economic Community of West African States, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Southern Africa Development Community).

At a minimum, SUN should have formal representation on thematic or working groups affiliated with the above entities. For example, there is no designated SUN representative to participate in the region's nutrition accountability scorecard technical working group.

Through the aforementioned platforms, SUN can have tremendous influence, above and beyond conventional nutrition stakeholders. Regional and subregional blocs have convening power with heads of state, finance ministers and sectoral ministers to help them better understand what they are already mandated to do, and how (e.g. ministers of Education ensuring that girls attend school and progress through the educational system in their countries), a power which has nutrition-sensitive impacts if done with quality and at scale. This type of engagement requires a much more

## REGIONAL CASES

### *SUN Strategic Review Country Illustration*

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sophisticated view of multisectoral action, extending beyond producing plans and frameworks in individual countries.

SUN's future involvement in the food systems arena could be a boon for the continent, if that involvement is done with the intent to promote healthy diets, as well as include production and marketing of adequate and affordable healthy foods for domestic consumption within the countries, rather than the current focus of many countries on food production for export.

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