



## Abstract/Summary information for the Technical Meeting on Nutrition (TMN)

Subject Title	Strengthening the Role of Civil Society in Ensuring Improved Governance for Nutrition
Level of Relevance <i>Global /Regional/National</i>	Global and National
Subject focus area <i>Research/programming/combination</i>	Advocacy
Sphere of interest <i>Humanitarian/Development/Cross-cutting</i>	Cross-cutting
Main nutritional focus <i>Wasting/Stunting/Micronutrient malnutrition/overweight and obesity</i>	Stunting
Identify which of the ten thematic areas it relates to	Governance
<p>Abstract/Summary information (<i>no more than 300 words</i>)  <i>Suggest to include information such as;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Context            Malnutrition is caused by many varied factors, across development sectors. Addressing under-nutrition requires coordinated, multi-sectoral effort. Stunting affects 47% of children in Malawi, and the government has prioritised nutrition. Challenges remain in coordination, access to services, and programme quality.</li> <li>▪ Description            The Malawi Civil Society Organization Nutrition Alliance (CSONA), formed in 2013, aims to strengthen civil society's role in advocacy, communication, and coordination for improved nutrition at national and district level. CSONA has 26 members from multiple sectors, such as HIV/AIDS, agriculture, and health. Activities are managed by a team of staff who make up the Secretariat, with support from two co-chair organisations. Activities are planned and implemented with input and support from member organisations; and include reviewing and contributing to national policies, lobbying influential leaders, and holding advocacy and media events.</li> <li>▪ Lessons Learned            CSONA is housed within INGO Concern Worldwide, until it is registered as an independent organisation. This can cause stakeholders to perceive CSONA as</li> </ul>	

advancing a hidden agenda of the host organisation. Another challenge is balancing working with government actors on shared goals, while also trying to hold government accountable. Government counterparts may seek to influence the messages of the nutrition alliance, requiring diplomacy to maintain independence and good relations.

International organisations have better resources to participate in advocacy activities; effort must be made to involve local organisations. A clear mission, objectives, and identity are essential for attracting members, and must be communicated clearly through different channels.

- **Conclusions**

While governments have a duty to address malnutrition, civil society has responsibility to stimulate demand for action and to hold governments accountable. A CSO alliance provides a united voice which can strengthen CSO efforts. This requires a strong secretariat, robust membership of committed partners, and a clear identity which is perceived to be independent of any specific external actor.