The SUN Movement aims to catalyse efforts in countries by ensuring that all actors are working together in a coherent and coordinated fashion to find solutions to fight malnutrition. To achieve this, a number of mechanisms to help country level actors align their objectives and develop national nutrition plans and platforms have been created. When a country joins the SUN Movement, the Government appoints a SUN Focal Point to coordinate the nutrition community, and various SUN networks are established, brought together in a multi-stakeholder platform (MSP). Four main SUN networks of stakeholders are recommended, including: civil society; business; UN; and donor. However, the SUN Movement does not dictate networks and countries have established other networks, such as academic and parliamentarian groups, depending on country interest and context. In order to ensure that all actors are aligned, countries are encouraged to create a coherent policy and legal framework, aligning programmes around a Common Results Framework (CRF). CRFs encourage the joint engagement of all actors in a costed nutrition plan. Once a year, the MSP comes together to conduct a Joint Annual Assessment (JAA), which offers the opportunity to discuss and measure country progress against SUN objectives.

Since 2015, ENN has published 51 articles, podcasts and videos that describe SUN country mechanisms and how they have enabled and catalysed nutrition scale-up. This synthesis aims to distil the emerging themes from these articles, as well as from associated podcasts and videos.
ENSURE OPTIMAL CAPACITY AND POSITIONING OF SUN FOCAL POINTS

The role of the SUN Government Focal Point (FP) is a key position in terms of the Movement’s governance within a country. They act to motivate in-country stakeholders to come together, align contributions and implement multi-sector plans for improving nutrition. Technical knowledge is important as SUN FPs have to understand nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming. Some countries have created a high-profile or political FP and a technical FP who acts in an advisory position to the high-level FP. Soft skills are also important for FPs, such as being conveners, facilitators, and problem-solvers in order to really drive forward collaborative efforts. They act as the bridge between the global SUN architecture or support system, their country’s Government and the SUN country networks in the MSP.

In some cases, nutrition leaders and existing coordination structures have been co-opted to become SUN Movement FPs (for example in Senegal). In other countries, specific roles and nutrition coordination cells have been set up from which the SUN FP can operate (such as in Mali and Indonesia). SUN FPs are located in different positions within Government ministries, including planning and development departments (in Indonesia and Pakistan) and agriculture (in Gabon), as well as in the more traditional health department (as seen in Kenya, Mali and Zambia). However, a number of FPs are located within the Prime Minister’s or President’s office or another high-level position (for example in Senegal and Somalia). This is to ensure the FP has the authority to convene other ministers or ministries, which is critical to be able to successfully undertake multi-sector planning and programming.

Elevating nutrition to a more central position, such as the Office of the Prime Minister, may also help to generate additional funds for nutrition from the national budget due to closer proximity to the Ministry of Finance (as seen in Senegal). Mali’s new nutrition cell headed by the SUN FP is hosted within the MoH but under the Prime Minister’s authority, making it easier to strengthen the multi-sector nutrition agenda in the country.

CREATE DISTINCTIVE PLATFORMS BASED ON COUNTRY CONTEXT

All SUN Countries have established or are in the process of setting up Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) at the national level, using a range of models. Consequently, the structure, hosting arrangements, breadth of participation and working procedures vary greatly from country to country, although there are some common patterns. As with SUN FPs, MSPs may be housed within different government ministries, usually the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Agriculture (for example in Bangladesh, Gabon, Kenya), or institutions. Sometimes they are independent with a multi-stakeholder mandate or function (as seen in Mali). Existing bodies such as Food Security and Nutrition Councils may also be suitable for renovating or restructuring, or for incorporating within the new SUN platform (in Senegal and Tajikistan). They are also comprised of different SUN networks, depending on the country need and influence of different nutrition ‘voices’ (see more on SUN Networks below).

FOCUS COORDINATION AT THE SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL

Many countries are now moving towards decentralised systems for scaling up nutrition. MSPs are increasingly convened at district and community levels, rolling out national nutrition plans while adapting them so that they reflect the interests of local communities (Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal). The involvement of different government departments (local government and municipal levels) is important for mobilising communities so that they engage in advocacy, planning and actions to improve nutrition, seen for example in Indonesia’s Rembuk Stunting initiative, which acted as a type of stunting ‘bootcamp’ at district level.

Local ownership is also crucial if large-scale programmes are to be advanced at community level as is happening in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia and Nepal. Civil society plays a key role in linking communities to national government, and helping...
different stakeholder groups come together at local level with a focus on nutrition (as noted in Pakistan and Zambia).  

Harness the Energy of Civil Society Networks and Alliances

Among SUN Networks, civil society organisations have formed some of the most vibrant and active alliances in the SUN Movement. Bringing together large numbers of national and sub-national NGOs has created a number of strong and influential country-based civil society alliances or CSAs (as observed in Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia). CSA members in Myanmar describe the power of speaking with one voice as a stakeholder group, which is greater than any individual agency. Advocating to raise awareness of the impact of malnutrition and encouraging governments to prioritise the fight against it lies at the heart of most civil society activities. To achieve this goal, CSAs have adopted targeted and innovative activities through social mobilisation, advocacy and campaigning.

SUN CSA networks have played a crucial role in encouraging stakeholders from nutrition-related sectors to coalesce around key nutrition messages. They have set up workshops in countries to ‘sensitise’ political leaders, government actors, and journalists on their role in SUN (Chad, Haiti, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, Zambia). Actors from the Senegal’s SUN CSA called on politicians to address malnutrition during the country’s presidential campaign. A common regional advocacy workplan for West Africa’s CSA networks and a network of nutrition champions were outcomes of capacity building work among actors in West Africa.

Use SUN Mechanisms to Redefine Role of UN and Donor Networks

SUN’s multi-stakeholder approach has called for a rethink in development programming, with significant implications across the UN system and donor partners.

Advocating for nutrition in West Africa: The role of SUN Civil Society Alliances

A three-year programme to build the advocacy capacity of CSAs within the West African region involved local civil society actors from 12 countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone) to create a Nutrition Champions Network. Their role was to mobilise other stakeholders to act together against malnutrition, create and implement local advocacy plans, influence policies for nutrition, share experiences and participate in country learning exchange visits. Advocacy training sessions included subjects such as the advocacy cycle, advocacy targets and tactics and how to advocate within the media and parliament. Other workshops involved budget advocacy and the analysis, influence and monitoring of public policies, including power mapping, analysis and setting targets and developing materials for reaching all audiences.

A central theme of all workshops was the value of multi-sector advocacy and how to best integrate nutrition objectives into other relevant sectors, such as health, agriculture and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). These regional-level workshops enabled CSAs to gain useful expertise and knowledge of tools which they can then apply at national level, depending on specific contexts and priorities. The latest meeting in 2017 between these 12 West Africa SUN CSAs provided them with the opportunity to agree common priorities and concrete actions on advocacy for nutrition. Participants developed a common regional advocacy workplan for the SUN CSAs in West Africa.

The main role of the SUN’s UN networks is to ensure increased coherence, coordination and convergence within the UN system in relation to nutrition. At country level, the UN network is an important source of on-the-ground technical support to SUN FPs and other groups. Countries have reported increased coordination between the UN agencies (Indonesia, Pakistan). For example, in the DRC, eight UN agencies came together to create a Road Map to increase the coherence of actions and support joint
planning around nutrition. The UN Network group examined opportunities for improved collaboration and optimisation of delivery mechanisms among the UN agencies. Government efforts in Mali have sought to bring the cluster networks set up by UN agencies under the same coordination structure as SUN networks to avoid duplication and ensure multi-sectorality.

Similar successes have been seen within donor networks. For example, setting up a SUN donor network in Kenya and mapping donor activity has led to a better understanding of duplication and gaps between donors and government. However, stronger donor coordination and strategic thinking is needed to provide joint programming at the county level following Kenya’s devolution. In Malawi, greater alignment of the donor network has led to support for more coordinated resource mobilisation. The donor platform in Senegal has been used to avoid duplication, rationalise the use of resources and identify opportunities for donors and partners to work together.

**ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Private sector engagement is viewed by the SUN Movement as an essential component of scaling up successful nutrition interventions. SUN business networks have been launched in a number of countries and regions, to generate interest within the business community to join the fight against malnutrition (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, West Africa). In Pakistan, for example, a joint venture between the SUN Business Network and the Academia and Research Network resulted in the production of fortified noodles. Governments still need to develop clear strategies for engagement with the private sector, amid concerns about potential conflicts of interest within the nutrition sector, including the marketing of infant formula and the fortification of staple foods (Niger and Nigeria).

In Ethiopia, the SUN Business Network’s priorities are to provide technical assistance to private companies to add value to their products, and to support food fortification in the country. Furthermore, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are working to support local companies in three West African countries (Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso) to produce high-quality, locally produced and fortified blended food products (although this work is not in conjunction with SUN business networks).

**CREATE ADDITIONAL, INNOVATIVE NETWORKS**

Countries have identified a need for other networks including academic, parliamentarian and media/journalist networks. In order to increase the potential for innovation and evidence-based interventions, some countries have established SUN Academia and Research Networks (Burkina Faso, Mali, Pakistan). In Pakistan, 40 academic institutions and research organisations have signed up to the academic network and developed an operational plan to prioritise research and secure funding.

Parliamentarians have the potential to be powerful advocates for nutrition. Networks of MPs have been established in a number of SUN countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia). Setting up a parliamentary network is particularly challenging, given that parliamentarians do not have extensive knowledge of nutrition, have a high turnover rate and lack funding to organise themselves or conduct advocacy activities. Development partners and SUN civil society networks carried out capacity building training for MPs in West Africa, inspiring 12 countries to set up networks. Collaboration between the SUN CSA, Partnership for Nutrition in Tanzania (PANITA), and a parliamentarian network has raised awareness among MPs about nutrition in order to influence budgets and policies. In Burkina Faso and
CASE STUDY


Burkina Faso’s JA meeting in June 2017 was attended by 33 people, with the majority of participants from government sectors. Networks represented by just one or two people joined with other networks to form a single working group (for example, civil society combined with the private sector network). Guidelines of the JA process were shared with Burkina Faso participants by the SUN Government Focal Point a few days in advance of the meeting, but no specific preparations were undertaken by the participants.

For Kenya, the JA held in May 2017 was primarily an all-SUN networks meeting. The event was an opportunity for each network individually to take stock of its progress at the self-assessment stage (Kenyan SUN networks had conducted a self-assessment, either via e-mail or face-to-face discussions, prior to the JA meeting), as well as build awareness of each other’s progress collectively.

Overall reflections:
• The JA exercise is seen by both countries as an important process in the SUN Movement approach.
• In some cases, the annual JA may be the only time in the year that nutrition stakeholders and SUN Government Focal Points are able to take stock and look ahead to the coming year.
• One of the challenges shared by stakeholders in both countries was the need for a more straightforward tool.
• Although the SUN Movement Secretariat provides feedback on all JAs and includes the analysed information from the JAs in the SUN Movement Annual Progress Reports, the feedback process was not widely understood by in-country participants. It was recommended that the documentation be shared and disseminated broadly.

www.ennonline.net/nex/9/sunjointassessburkinafasokenya

BRING SECTORS ON BOARD TO DEVELOP A COMMON RESULTS FRAMEWORK (CRF)

A CRF is a single and agreed set of expected (or common) results generated through the effective engagement of different sectors of government and the multiple (non-government) actors who have the capacity to influence nutrition. According to the SUN Movement, this set of results should be based on the national goals and targets for nutrition and reflect the ways in which different stakeholders can best contribute to the achievement of these targets through their individual and collective actions. An ENN review of CRFs, including podcasts and videos, and subsequent articles found that common ground for multiple stakeholders to engage in and invest in creating CRFs can be problematic in the beginning since each sector has its own operational plan and faces competing priorities (Bangladesh, Burundi, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Peru)\(^1\),\(^9\),\(^13\),\(^37-43\). The addition of nutrition indicators may be viewed as a burden and a distraction from their core business. A substantial amount of high-level advocacy may be required to raise awareness and understanding of nutrition as an issue that cuts across a range of sectors (Bangladesh, Burundi, Gabon, Myanmar, Somalia)\(^5\),\(^9\),\(^13\).

EMPLOYING DIFFERENT MECHANISMS – AND TIME – TO CREATE CRFS

Developing a CRF may take years rather than months as it requires the commitment of a variety of different sectors and stakeholders to establish a relevant, feasible and workable CRF\(^1\),\(^9\),\(^13\). Various methods have been employed to create a demand for multi-sector collaboration, including: identifying national goals for reducing malnutrition underpinned by evidence; nutrition policy review and strategy alignment; stocktaking and stakeholder mapping to find out who’s doing what and where; and nutrition gap analysis (Burundi, Myanmar, Philippines, Tajikistan)\(^10\),\(^13\).
Key findings from these processes have been used to feed into national nutrition plans and CRFs that contain priority actions that contribute to national goals, with responsibilities aligned to each contributing sectoral partner (Burundi, Myanmar, Philippines, Tajikistan) 10, 13, 44, 45.

A number of SUN countries have received technical assistance to help bring stakeholders together to agree on a CRF (Philippines, Somalia, Tajikistan) 10, 46. Efforts to establish CRFs for nutrition in Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) have focused on ‘shifting the dial’ away from emergency interventions towards more sustainable development approaches (Mauritania, Somalia, Niger) 10, 41, 47.

ENSURE A STRONG AND VALUABLE JOINT ANNUAL ASSESSMENT (JAA) PROCESS

Observations of the JAA exercise in Burkina Faso and Kenya were viewed as an important process in bringing together multiple nutrition-focused stakeholders at country level, enabling them to reflect on their progress towards collective nutrition goals 48, 49. Participants found value in the network-to-network engagement offered by the JAAs and the unique opportunity to gain a comprehensive picture of nutrition scale-up at the national level. However, a number of challenges were raised around specific elements within the JAA. These include: the complexity of the questionnaire, involving duplication with other SUN reporting tools; continuing uncertainty of the interpretation of indicators, despite SUN guidance; and lack of further in-country consultations on the results of the JAAs once they had been completed.

Stakeholders called for clearer feedback from the SUN Movement Secretariat and wider dissemination of the JAA final report to enable greater utilisation of findings by country networks. This is in line with recommendations from the Mid-Term Review of the SUN Movement to enhance the role of JAA’s in mutual accountability at country level 50. Thus, it is important that countries establish techniques to move beyond such challenges to ensure that the JAA process is truly a useful exercise to highlight nutrition progress and offer reflections of key gaps. This has been achieved in the Philippines where the JAA review is a three-day discussion with all key actors to reflect on progress and obstacles to scale up 51.

School feeding programme in Tajikistan: the country has received technical assistance in developing its Common Results Framework (CRF)
REFERENCE LIST


8 Listening to SUN country actors: A face-to-face interview with Dr Mohamed Abdi Farrah, Somalia SUN Focal Point. Nutrition Exchange 6, May 2016. p.31. www.ennonline.net/nex/6/sunsomali


district level


34 Video with SUN Business Network - West Africa (6 November, 2017) https://www.ennonline.net/mediahub/sbnafricadouest


