

Summary Report
SUN Network Facilitators' Meeting
12 February 2014

Participants

Donor Network

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Business Network

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SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS)

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UN System Network

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Introduction and objectives

The SUN Coordinator briefed the group on the Secretariat's key priorities for 2014 as outlined in his January 2014 letter to the Movement. These are:

1. To help strengthen countries capacity to deliver scaled up nutrition in a sustainable way;
2. To find ways to help reinforce the power of the networks;
3. To undertake an evaluation of the SUN Movement and visioning for its future.

Setting out the objectives of the meeting, SMS said that the focus of the meeting was on how to accelerate responses to country requests for support to strengthen their capacity to deliver scaled up nutrition. Significant progress has been made, with support from SUN Networks, however, as the volume of activity within countries is scaled up, gaps and needs are becoming clearer. While finance remains a needs; as importantly, gaps in the capacity in terms of technical, programmatic and functional capacities were also becoming evident. Countries are requesting support in these areas. The Secretariat said it would present its latest thinking on how the Movement can respond, and was anxious to understand how best to harness the capacity of the networks to support countries. There would also be an opportunity to discuss the SUN Movement evaluation and visioning.

Secretariat Updates

Monitoring & Evaluation: The SMS said that the 2014 M&E process would begin soon. Countries would be requested to convene a multi-stakeholder workshop to allow all stakeholders to assess collectively their progress against the SUN M&E Framework. Global SUN Networks will also need to conduct a self-assessment against their sections of the framework. The Secretariat will be in contact with more details in the coming months.

Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF): The SMS briefed on the SUN MPTF. To date over \$7 million has been allocated from the MPTF to support 20 civil society alliances (a further 4 may be approved in March), the global civil society network, PROCASUR Learning Routes project and the development of the SUN M&E framework. The SMS will provide more detail on the MPTF for Network Facilitators.

Key Milestones 2014: The SMS briefed on major meetings in 2014, and underlined the importance of a number of country- and regional-level meetings planned for 2014. The SMS is keeping a calendar of events, which it will share with Network Facilitators. The SMS noted that the SUN Global Gathering in 2014 may take place around the ICN2 meeting in Rome in November. There was general support for such an initiative and the SMS will continue to explore this option. There is the possibility of integrating network sessions into this overall meeting.

Capacity to Deliver¹

Overview:

The SMS presented the capacity to deliver approach as a way of ensuring predictable response to countries' requests for technical and other support. Countries were initially asking for support to analyse costed plans in the run up to the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) event in June 2013, but requests have now expanded. Although there are support mechanisms on the ground, it can often be difficult for countries to get the breadth of support they need.

Following consultation with countries, requests were classified under 10 themes, which have been grouped into four areas under which '*communities of practice*' or networks of resources for response are emerging or needed. These are:

- Planning, costing, tracking and mobilising funds
- Advocacy and Communication
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Functional Capacities

There are three principles underlining the approach:

- (i) It is a country-led activity with national governments determining the support they need;
- (ii) Support is first requested from sources within each SUN country through dialogue within national multi-stakeholder nutrition platforms, which include country level SUN networks; and
- (iii) Support should be provided in a way that sustains in-country capacity.

A three-streamed approach is being followed: definition, convening, formalisation. The C2D approach is a work in progress with the four communities of practice at different stages of development.

Discussion

¹ More detailed information on each areas discussed is available in the accompanying background documents for each session. In the interests of brevity, only key points and discussion have been captured here.

Network Facilitators welcomed the approach being proposed and identified where existing or planned streams of work could support capacity to deliver. The discussion identified a number of areas for further thought:

- How to ensure requests correspond fully to the actual needs of the country. A system may need to be put in place to verify requests;
- In the first instance, countries need to be in charge of matching demand and supply themselves. Only when finding supply at country level is not possible, should the SMS play a role in matching needs with available supply at the global level. Too many external agents can overwhelm government facilities;
- The approach of different suppliers may not be in harmony, which implies that greater agreement on methods and indicators between suppliers may be needed;
- There is a need to ensure there is no duplication of the in-country work being done by the SUN Networks. The SMS should ensure close collaboration and information sharing with all Networks, particularly the UN Network;
- There may be a need for quality control of the supply, which raises the question of who defines quality control.
- There is an important need for support for implementation of nutrition interventions, as well as nutrition governance or coordination capacity which should not be overlooked.

Concluding the discussion, the SUN Coordinator underlined that capacity to deliver was a response to clear requests from countries. Countries will be at the centre of communities of practice, which do not aim to duplicate existing sources of support. The communities of practice are temporary mechanisms to respond to immediate needs and build capacity.

Planning, costing, tracking and mobilising funds: A consortium of technical agencies with a range of expertise has been providing support to the analysis of national plans has been in place since early 2013. This consortium forms the basis of a community of practice for planning, costing, tracking and mobilising funds. The SMS has provided a space to discuss challenges and facilitated access by countries to this expertise. Countries are leading the development of a networked response (precursor to a community of practice) for this area. Eighteen African countries participated in a workshop in Nairobi organised by the UN Network late last year. The networked response consists of a core working-group to ensure timely coordination, communication and information sharing. Technical expertise is pooled from within countries, regional hubs and global entities. In 2014, the plan is to accelerate start-up of the networked response so that it is fully functioning and co-ordinated from June 2014 onwards.

Discussion

- Definition of effective nutrition interventions is relatively clear in the health sector but not in other sectors. Greater clarity on the costs of effective interventions will enable countries to make strategic choices. The UN has a vital role to play in helping national groups to be appraised of the latest knowledge on different interventions.
- Civil society is interested in social auditing - looking at state budgets and allocations to nutrition - and comparing this with what is actually spent. There was discussion in the Nairobi workshop about how to link costing with tracking. It is a critical link but not easy to make and one of the gaps that is now being addressed.

- It is important to monitor network responses. This implies developing indicators to assess how in-country capacity is being built.
- It would be useful to bring in a partner with experience in budget advocacy to be able to advocate based on outcomes. Civil society keen on open data sources.
- Tracking budget allocation and investments is an on-going problem. Tracking requires a common language.

Advocacy & Communication: Different groups within the SUN Movement have differing understandings of advocacy and communication. SUN countries are requesting a multi-stakeholder approach to advocacy and communication for nutrition. With all actors playing a role within an overarching national plan. SUN multi-stakeholder platforms and SUN civil society alliances (CSAs) are requesting support across a broad range of areas from the development of communications strategies to behaviour change communications.

The SMS is working with a number of agencies that could potentially form a community of practice for this area. In 2014, the SMS plans to facilitate one or more ‘convenings’ to bring together different ‘suppliers’ and countries to share experience in advocacy and communications and identify critical gaps. At the same time, the SMS will take on a ‘matching’ role to respond to demands for materials.

Discussion

- It would help to divide requests into two clear categories: political commitments (end goal and tactics) and behaviour change communication (multiple players with outreach potential);
- There is a need to draw on country level examples of innovation in (a) political mobilisation and (b) social media in communications;
- It would be useful to learn from HIV AIDS and non-communicable diseases and to study the countries that have developed and implemented advocacy and communication strategies; and
- The UN network has examples of advocacy strategies available for Ethiopia, Niger (Communications strategy), Uganda and Tanzania (referring exclusively to the UN) available on REACH website.

Monitoring & Evaluation: Measuring the prevalence and trends of different types of malnutrition and the scale, quality and intensity of implementation of responses are essential, not merely as sources of data, but to ensure that the most vulnerable people access the services and entitlements that matters to their lives. Multiple burdens of nutrition need to be measured as well as coverage of, and equitable access to, specific nutrition interventions and nutrition-sensitive programmes. Furthermore, M&E systems have to be linked to financial tracking in order to link investment to results and impact. This will be a key focus for 2014.

The community of practice is broadly concerned with information systems. The primary unit of analysis needs to be as close to people as possible. And people should be empowered to move from being ‘the unit of measure’ to being the ‘measurer’. The Secretariat is engaging with a range of partners who are planning work to strengthen country information systems for nutrition. SUN Focal Points are working with in-country partners to identify gaps and needs and a pool of experts will be made available to support countries to review their M&E framework, assess and improve data quality, perform cross-sector analysis at national and sub-national level, present data to drive decision-makers

to act, build long term capacity at national and sub-national level, and convene country teams to share lessons.

Discussion

- The WHO Executive Board is about to complete its 2014 global monitoring framework for nutrition. The plan is to set up a multi-stakeholder task force and WHO would like to involve SUN stakeholders.
- The UN Network is supporting a number of national governments to set up Nutrition Information Systems (NIS), which include (sector) surveillance systems, routine data as well as stakeholder mapping (who does what where in nutrition). From available data, the REACH Dash board captures key information which can be used for decision making at national or subnational level regarding nutrition scale-up.
- The Global Nutrition Report planned by the N4G organisers will act as a platform for various sources of data.
- Focusing on the primary unit of analysis can be very difficult. Some countries are very advanced, e.g. Indonesia, however, it is important to be realistic, and to ensure that expectations are in tune with capacity.
- Civil society highlighted the importance of ‘open data’.
- The importance of identifying key priorities to track and avoiding complicated systems was raised.
- Sustainability of systems is crucial. For information systems to be sustainable, people need to relate nutrition indicators with their own lives, and to become the measurers.

Functional capacity: Governments of SUN countries coordinate multiple efforts for scaling up nutrition through multi-stakeholder mechanisms across multiple sectors and stakeholders, and levels of government. These mechanisms are most effective when they are seen to have legitimacy by those for whom they are designed. Their contribution will be greatest if they encourage broad participation, the pursuit of a shared vision, agreed ways of working, and the sharing of know-how between members, as well as open communication with external actors. Effective multi-stakeholder mechanisms invest systematically in the building of trust and accountability among members, including through anticipating, preventing and resolving any conflicts of interests. These functional capacities help to create an enabling environment within which stakeholder organizations (and individuals within them) can perform to their fullest potential.

This community of practice is the least developed; however, the proposed approach will assist governments to strengthen the functional capacities of their multi-stakeholder mechanisms so that they are better able to coordinate different actors for development of strategies and implementation of programmes in ways that make the best use of available resources.

In 2014, this area of work will concentrate on:

- (i) Self-assessment (through the M&E process) of multi-stakeholder performance in relation to the implementation of effective action for nutrition.
- (ii) Anticipating, preventing and tackling conflict of interests among members of multi-stakeholder mechanisms.

- (iii) Strengthening the functional capacities of multi-stakeholder mechanisms so that they function well whatever the context within which they operate.

Discussion

- It is important to consider two levels of coordination in countries: working level and high-level. Clarity on authority and mandate to coordinate is critical. The UN Network through is developing a capacity gap assessment tool and guidelines to assess capacity around these areas;
- Conflict of interest issues need to be addressed at country level. World Health Assembly experience has shown the importance of understanding how to make multi-stakeholder mechanisms work while respecting the independence of the policy-making space of government. It will be useful to share the results of the consultation on conflict of interest being undertaken by GSO on behalf of the SUN Movement.

Conclusions on Capacity to Deliver

- SMS will continue to develop the concept of four ‘communities of practice’ to support work under the capacity to deliver framework. The SMS will work closely with all SUN Networks to ensure no duplication of existing support, and to help stimulate additional capacity from within each network’s organisations.
- SMS, with support from the SUN Civil Society Network (CSN) to develop a one-page information note to communicate what ‘Capacity to Deliver Scaled Up Nutrition’ will achieve and how the process will function.
- SMS will examine options to establish an open, transparent site to track country requests and responses at national and global level. The Donor Network will examine how it can capture its members ‘capacity to support’.
- The Donor Network will also convene a call with members of the network to highlight the primary importance of strengthening internal capacity to deliver scaled up nutrition.
- CSN to explore with SMS how its plans to support country level capacity of national CSAs can fit within the broader capacity to deliver, and respond to country needs in the areas of planning and costing and M&E.
- CSN to work closely with the SMS on development of the A&C CoP through facilitation of a convening workshop involving multiple stakeholders, and development of a toolkit.
- The UN Network has adopted its workplan for 2014-15, that focuses on a UN joint strategy on nutrition to respond to country needs.
- The UN System Network has significant in-country expertise and will commit to strengthening the UN networks at country level to strengthening joint UN capacity to respond in-country to requests. A face-to-face meeting will take place in April, providing an opportunity to share the concept of communities of practice and clarify how particular agencies might be able to provide support.
- The business network will examine how it can mobilise business to support the CoPs and will continue to work to build the capacity of business in multi-stakeholder mechanisms through development of a toolkit.
- The SMS will examine how it can better communicate to, and across networks, in particular regarding the outcome of country network calls.

SUN Evaluation and Visioning

SMS briefed on the upcoming evaluation of the SUN Movement. A sub-group of the Lead Group will oversee the independent evaluation. A group of independent consultants will draft the Terms of Reference and an independent evaluation team will be recruited. The evaluation will include a forward-looking element, which will feed into the visioning exercise. The visioning will be a separate process from the evaluation. It is probable that the Lead Group will want consultation with the networks as part of the visioning exercise.

A SUN Lead Group visioning sub-group has been established to agree the scope and process for the evaluation and visioning. This group will clarify the mechanisms for the evaluation. It is likely that a core group will be identified to provide technical support to the evaluation team. The SMS will provide more information to Networks as it becomes available.

Discussion

- It was suggested that the networks and countries be invited to contribute to the evaluation team TORs as part of a consultation.
- The UN Network noted that REACH would also undergo an independent evaluation in 2015.