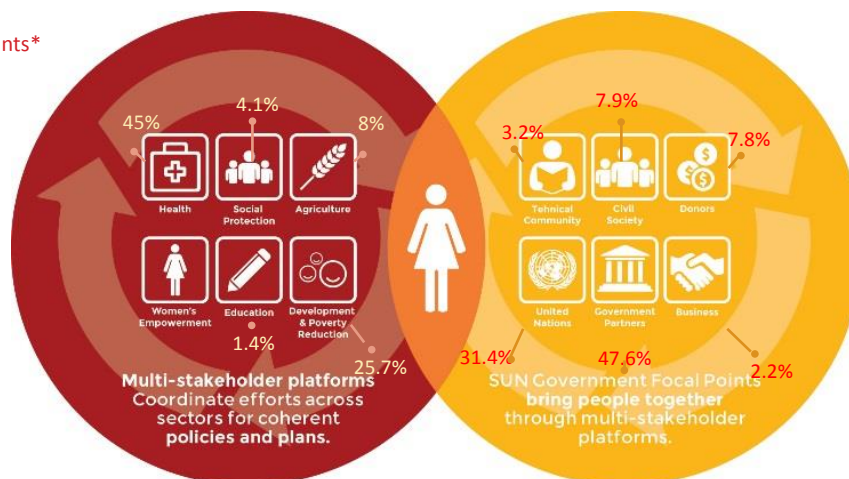


## Diversity of Participants\*



National information systems for nutrition are essential to assess the nutritional status of women, men and their families; to track progress of actions taken, and; to prioritise efforts toward improving nutrition for all. Having reliable data allows for a better understanding of nutrition needs and programme reach, which can be seen as key for improved collaboration and efficiency amongst various stakeholders.

The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the SUN Country Network held in January 2014,<sup>i</sup> which focused on information systems for nutrition, emphasised the importance of analysing information from multiple data sources in a meaningful way; harmonising assessment timings; and; decentralising the capacity to collect, collate and analyse data.

Since 2014, two key frameworks intended to inform country choice of indicators to include in their national information systems for nutrition, have been endorsed by the World Health Assembly, namely the Global Monitoring Framework on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Feeding (MIYCF)<sup>ii</sup> and the comprehensive Global Monitoring Framework and Targets for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).<sup>iii</sup>

In addition, the Global Nutrition Report Independent Experts Group (GNR IEG) has identified 56 indicators as the most nutrition-relevant<sup>iv</sup> from the list of 242 proposed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators in UNSTATS' Provisional Proposed Tiers for Global SDG Indicators 2016.<sup>v</sup>

In 2016, the SUN Donor Network supported a **mapping of global data and**

### Consensus in indicators is informed by:

- The World Health Assembly (WHA): 6 global targets
- The MIYCF Framework: 14 core indicators (approved at the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHA in 2015), and 16 extended indicators
- 9 non-communicable disease targets, and 25 indicators (approved during the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHA in 2013)
- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, and the Global Indicator Framework: 56 nutrition-relevant indicators out of the total 242 SDG indicators (as identified by the Independent Experts Group of the Global Nutrition Report)
- National Country Profiles of the Global Nutrition Report: 82 indicators
- Mapping of data and accountability initiatives were supported by the SUN Donor Network.

**accountability initiatives** providing an informative overview of existing support and guidance for countries (see: <http://docs.scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Mapping-Exercise-Global-Data-and-Accountability-Initiatives-for-Nutrition-June-2016.pdf>).<sup>vi</sup> In the meantime, an initiative aiming to strengthen the capacity for data analysis to track progress, inform policies, and improve programmes in eight countries, the **National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN)**, is ongoing, with the support of the European Union.<sup>vii</sup>

Building on these elements, in the first half of 2017, the SUN Movement will define a minimum set of key indicators to monitor and account for progress and results beyond the four SUN processes (1. Bringing people together into a shared space for action 2. Ensuring a coherent policy and legal framework 3. Aligning actions around a common results framework 4. Financing tracking and resource mobilisation) already tracked through the country joint-assessments. This will nurture continuous improvement through evaluation and learning.

12-16 December 2016  
229 participants

10 teleconferences  
7 x English, 2 x French  
and 1 x Spanish

35 SUN Countries and  
the Indian states of  
Jharkhand and  
Maharashtra  
participated.

SUN Countries:  
Bangladesh; Botswana;  
Burkina Faso;  
Cameroon;  
Comoros; Congo  
Brazzaville; Congo DRC;  
Costa Rica; Ethiopia;  
Ghana; Guatemala;  
Guinea-Conakry;  
Lao PDR; Lesotho;  
Liberia; Madagascar;  
Malawi; Mali;  
Mozambique; Myanmar  
Namibia; Nepal  
Pakistan; Papua New  
Guinea; Peru;  
Philippines; Somalia;  
South Sudan; Sudan  
Tajikistan; Togo;  
Uganda; Vietnam;  
Yemen; Zambia

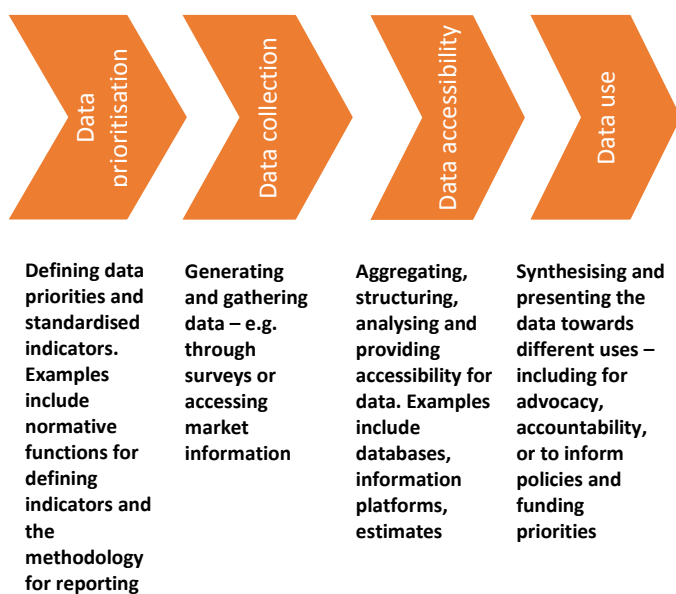
## 1. Overview of the teleconference

The 25<sup>th</sup> SUN Country Network Meeting was held 12-16 December 2016, with the participation of 229 people from 37 countries.

Each teleconference offered an opportunity for a country to share its experiences with others, around the following guiding questions:

- Is there a recognised **lead actor who coordinates** the work on data and accountability for nutrition?
- If so, how did the lead actor ensure the **initial alignment of actors along the data value chain?**
- Looking at the data value chain (see figure 1), can you identify what **were the three largest gaps** in terms of data collection, accessibility and use, **and how you were able to overcome** each gap, in your experience?
- What **recommendations** do you have for other countries going through the same process? In particular, how are you able to maintain an alignment across actors and ensure their continued interest?
- What are the main **priorities** for this work in 2017?

Figure 1: Data value chain



© Kim, 2016

## 2. Key points from the discussion

23 SUN Countries – out of the participating 37 – have a recognised **lead actor** who coordinates the work on data and accountability for nutrition. Where this lead actor is based varies from country to country, but in most cases it closely reflects the governance mechanism that has been put in place to align different parts of the government and different stakeholders (i.e. UN agencies, donors, civil society organisations, academia and business). In the **Philippines**, data coordination, ownership and monitoring is anchored in the National Nutrition Action Plan. The National Nutrition Council is the lead agency in the alignment of stakeholder and

partner efforts and analyses data from different sectors. Scorecards have been introduced for national and local systems to measure programme efficiency and effectiveness. **In Ethiopia**, the Institute of Public Health, hosted by the Federal Ministry of Health, has launched the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN). The NIPN supports the reduction of stunted children under-5 nationwide. This initiative is led by the European Commission, supported by USAID and DFID. **In Peru**, the MESA (*Mesa de Concertación para la Lucha contra la Pobreza* or the National Roundtable for the Fight Against Poverty) brings together the Government and civil society, and is now being expanded to include the private sector – on issues of anaemia and extreme poverty. The National Office of Nutrition (ONN) of **Madagascar** coordinates, monitors and evaluates nutrition, nutritional surveillance and data management. At the sub-regional level, data collection is carried out by monitoring and evaluation groups who collect and analyse data and then send it to the national level, for secondary analysis.

While countries have had differing experiences in ensuring an initial alignment across actors along the data value chain, two triggers were reported as key. Firstly, an agreed **monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for the plan** helps define data priorities and standardised indicators, and, secondly, the **mapping of stakeholders** involved in promoting nutrition across the country also helps to ensure better coordination of information. Nine SUN Countries mentioned the existence of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework during the call, and 11 Countries shared their experiences with mapping exercises of stakeholders. Several others mentioned **the websites of the coordination structures and geotagging** as being tools that further facilitate alignment across actors. **Peru** mentioned that the inclusion of the Ministry of Finance has also been helpful, to this end. **Nepal** has a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Action Plan with an agreed M&E framework, including a total of 74 sectoral indicators (looking at key sectoral areas such as health, education, WASH, local governance, women’s empowerment and children). **Somalia** has recently conducted geotagging of nutrition programme sites to check the functionality of centres, many of which were established post-famine, and, to this end, knowledge about centres’ functionality and types of services they provide is essential for lasting human impact. Based on the information collected, a bottleneck analysis is being carried out. A stakeholder mapping – which involved the UN, NGOs and technical partners in **Burkina Faso** – has been instrumental, as it has provided information on the coverage of interventions which, in turn, enables the monitoring of implementation and identifies gaps in order to inform the interventions in the multi-sectoral plan. In the **Lao People’s Democratic Republic**, a mapping of nutrition stakeholders, actions and financing has supported data collection with the aim of informing strategic and annual planning and budgeting for nutrition. A database has been made available in the National Nutrition Committee Secretariat Office, and an

annual review of this mapping is foreseen in order to take stock of progress.

All countries in the SUN Movement mentioned the availability of **nationally representative survey data on nutrition indicators** from Demographic Health Surveys (DHSs), Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICSs) and other surveys, during the meetings. Countries in Western and Central Africa mentioned the implementation of nationally representative SMART surveys. All of these surveys cover the WHA targets as well as key indicators for maternal, infant and young child nutrition, in addition to access to health, drinking water, sanitation, etc. Several countries mentioned other types of surveys that collect information on food consumption, food security and vulnerability. The **largest gaps** mentioned by countries were around issues of data prioritisation, collection, accessibility and use. **15 countries out of the 37 have highlighted an issue with data prioritisation** (to establish, finalise or revise M&E frameworks, to harmonise with global indicators and the alignment with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda or to reduce the number of indicators). **15 countries mentioned an issue with data use** (to use data in a timely manner, for preparing reports, to use data across sectors, to make data efficient for advocacy and resource mobilisation, and make data publicly available and link with decision-making) and **17 countries had an issue with data accessibility** (from other sectors or because lack of published data or central repository database). Finally, **almost all countries have raised concerns with data collection** and the need to improve quality of data, to establish systems to better collect data, or to improve the coordination and alignment of methodology. This information is consistent with the 2016 Joint-Assessment where 16 countries mentioned the development or revision of their M&E frameworks as being a priority for the coming year, and, where 19 countries highlighted better management of data as being another priority.

**Certain countries have, however, been able to overcome their challenges**, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, and Malawi: **Somalia**, for instance, has established a Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNU), hosted by the FAO with the technical and financial support from UNICEF and WFP, which conducts biannual food security and nutrition assessments in urban and rural areas, as well as and internally displaced people (IDP) camps. These assessments look at the market and other key food security and nutrition indicators. The FSNU provides the data for the entire food security and nutrition themes and the data is used by all the stakeholders. Some challenges faced includes decentralised and scattered data due to multiple working clusters and more than 100 implementing partners. In addition, ensuring that monthly reporting of data is undertaken in a timely manner, can be seen as a major challenge. In order to rectify these issues, the use of innovative technology has been initiated such as the 'M Nutrition (mobile data) system', which has been installed and is being put into practice. In **Pakistan**, the Ministry of National Health Services (Nutri-dash) provides country-level

programmatic data on nutrition coverage, targets and implementation, severe acute malnutrition (SAM), infant and young child feeding (IYCF), multi-nutrient Powder (MNPs), salt iodisation and Vitamin A supplementation programmes. Data is also available on enabling environment factors that have policy and service delivery implications, such as the number of health facilities providing nutrition services and the capacity of the health care providers. The Nutri-dash is managed by the Ministry with technical support from UNICEF. In **Malawi**, tools to monitor activities in districts have been harmonised for all implementers through a common template which is entered online, verified, validated and sent back to the respective Ministries. To better inform planning and decision-making at all levels, the number of indicators collected by partners has been reduced and aligned with national and international instruments, following an assessment to check their relevance, taking into account the Government and partners' needs, in light of the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Countries' main recommendations are as follows:**

- **Data prioritisation:**
  - Include the WHA targets and the nutrition-relevant NCD targets in the planning stage and agree on one common M&E framework
  - Implement a mapping of stakeholders to get a better idea as to whom can help with data and information management.
- **Data collection:**
  - Build human resource capacity at the grassroots
  - Use automated systems to improve the quality of data and information
  - Coordinate the implementation of surveys.
- **Data access:**
  - Identify a lead agency to coordinate the work on data and information
  - Establish central repository that are, at a minimum, accessible to all involved stakeholders
  - Engage non-governmental stakeholders including civil society organisations, academia, media, businesses and development partners.
- **Data use:**
  - Tailor the use of data and information for different purposes such as advocacy, policy-making and programming, targeting audiences such as the media, policy makers, programme managers, parliamentarians, etc.

## **Box 1: Summary of key findings from the mapping of information systems**

*(Siekmans et al. 2016)*

### **Government commitments and enabling environment**

The majority of SUN countries (42 out of 57) have demonstrated a strong commitment to putting in place national nutrition policies and strategies – an important first step in providing guidance to national information systems for nutrition. However, only half of these policies (22 out of 42 Countries) currently include a monitoring & evaluation framework, which, more specifically, guides the priority indicators to track and assign responsibilities for data collection. Only one-third of SUN Country national nutrition policies explicitly refer to measuring the six WHA target indicators, and only 13 of 57 countries have committed to tracking overweight and obesity in children and adults. Tracking of the prevalence of diabetes and sodium intake is even less common, with only two countries having these indicators in their nutrition documents, to date.

Only about one-third of countries (21 out of 57) have clearly designated a ministry and/or department to coordinate nutrition information gathering, reporting and sharing. Stakeholder mapping is gaining momentum with support from the SUN Networks (including the UN Network, the Civil Society Network and Business Network), which is expected to further strengthen coordination. At least 35 SUN Countries have conducted some form of stakeholder mapping.

### **National assessment data**

Nearly all SUN countries (55 out of 57) have, within the past five years, produced nationally representative survey data on nutrition indicators from the DHS and/or MICS and/or nationally representative SMART surveys.

Nearly half of SUN Countries (22 out of 57) have data from surveillance conducted within the past 10 years on the prevalence of micronutrient deficiency, and, there appears to be a growing interest in and capacity for food fortification coverage assessments, supported by GAIN.

In terms of information on food systems in SUN Countries, food consumption data are universally available and the vast majority of SUN Countries also have recent data on population food security indicators.

Systematic processes for the detection of acute malnutrition were found in only a few SUN Countries, which were difficult to classify due to the wide range of methods and situations.

### **National performance monitoring data**

Routine performance monitoring of nutrition-specific interventions, including micronutrient interventions, is predominantly carried out through existing Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) or parallel programme-based monitoring systems. Even if a country has a publicly accessible central repository system (16 out of 57 countries), there are only few countries, including Peru and Guatemala, where data on nutrition-specific interventions are centrally consolidated and accessed.

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Findings show that many sectoral information systems relevant to nutrition policy and programme design in SUN countries exist. However, how the data and information is accessed and used, remain an issue to be further explored on a country-by-country basis.

### **Conclusions**

This mapping exercise provides a useful overview of the current status of information systems for nutrition in SUN Countries. However, there are significant gaps that hinder their optimal use. These are in the domains of data prioritisation (e.g. the availability of nutrition targets and agreed M&E Frameworks), data coordination (e.g. a recognised coordinating agency) and data access (e.g. a centralised repository that collates information from multiple sources).

### 3. Conclusions from the teleconference

The discussions highlight how **different types of nutrition-relevant data and information is available in SUN Countries. However, what is available is not used to its full potential, mainly due to existing gaps in terms of data prioritisation, data coordination, data access and data use for advocacy, programming and resource mobilisation purposes.**

Based on the results from the teleconference (corroborated by the findings from the mapping of information systems, see box 1), countries can be classified in three broad groups:

- Countries with access to multiple sources of data but with **no system in place to coordinate data prioritisation, collection, access and use:** One recommendation for countries that encounter this challenge is to agree on nutrition targets and/or the standardised indicators to be included in the M&E framework for all stakeholders.
- Countries with one or more established systems to coordinate data and information across sectors and stakeholders but with **significant gaps around data access and/or use:** One recommendation for countries that encounter this challenge is to prioritise data and indicators to be included in a repository database that can be used as the foundation for improved coordination across all stakeholders.
- Countries with **advanced system(s) to coordinate data and information across sectors and stakeholders.** These countries are addressing quite specific challenges and their experiences can provide valuable lessons.

### 4. Takeaway messages

1. **Start with what you have:** All SUN Countries should be able to access nutrition-relevant data from nationally representative surveys and routine systems in key sectors. No countries reported a total lack of data and information for nutrition.
2. **Prioritise data and information for nutrition:** The range of data and information sources may suggest a fragmented landscape at the country level. Analysing all available data can be a daunting task if there is no agreed M&E framework.
3. **Make coordination of data and information a core task of multi-stakeholder platforms:** SUN Countries able to develop functioning systems along the data value chain are those that have a recognised lead agency that can tap into the expertise and capacity of different actors along the data value chain from prioritisation to use.

4. **Optimise the potential of technology by using it effectively:** Different types of technologies and tools are available to facilitate data management from collection to data visualisation. Nevertheless, the effective use of these technologies very much depends on the scope and purpose of the data and information being collected.
5. **Engage in communities of practice that address specific data gaps:** There are several data and accountability initiatives that aim to advance the knowledge and know-how around data gaps. These forums provide an excellent space for sharing of information and for addressing questions.

Finally, we would like to remind everybody that the SUN Movement Secretariat is in the process of establishing a **monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning system (MEAL)** to account for progress and results across countries. If country multi-stakeholder platforms are interested in participating in the working group established, please let your focal point know and get in touch with the SUN Movement Secretariat.

### **Box 2: Development of the SUN MEAL system - timeline**

#### **February-March 2017: SUN Country Engagement**

- Follow-up with all SUN Countries to review, update and complement the results of the Micronutrient Initiative-supported preliminary mapping exercise of information systems for nutrition
- Engage SUN Country teams who have expressed an interest in participating in the consultation process.

**February-June 2017:** Establishment of the Advisory Technical Working Group and organisation of a series of calls and email exchanges around five building blocks:

- **Block 1:** Overall results framework based on the SUN Movement's Theory of Change
- **Block 2:** Selection of monitoring indicators to measure results and progress
- **Block 3:** Accountability across partners in the SUN Movement. Note: One sub-group will be dedicated to country joint assessments.

**By the end of February 2017:** One agreed results framework with a set of indicators and sources of information.

**By the end of March 2017:** One guidance package ready for engagement with SUN Countries and partners.

**April-June 2017:** Engagement with SUN Countries to conduct the annual joint assessments

- **Block 4:** Evaluation – Clarify questions and methodology (starting February)
- **Block 5:** Learning – Identify and develop learning products for 2017.

**By end of June 2017:** One document finalised for the entire MEAL system, dissemination and the creation of an

Movement's Theory of Change

- **Block 2:** Selection of monitoring indicators to measure results and progress

- **Block 3:** Accountability across partners in the SUN Movement. Note: One sub-group will be dedicated to country joint assessments

<sup>i</sup> Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. 12<sup>th</sup> Country Network Meeting Summary on "Information Systems for Nutrition". January 2014.

See: <http://docs.scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/SUMMARY-JANUARY-ENGLISH.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organization. "Indicators for the Global Monitoring Framework on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition", November 2014. See:

[http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/indicators\\_monitoringframework\\_miygn\\_background.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/indicators_monitoringframework_miygn_background.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>iii</sup> World Health Organization. "Noncommunicable Diseases Global Monitoring Framework: Indicator Definitions and Specifications", November 2014. See: [http://www.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/indicators/GMF\\_Indicator\\_Definitions\\_Version\\_NOV2014.pdf](http://www.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/indicators/GMF_Indicator_Definitions_Version_NOV2014.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Global Nutrition Report. Appendix No. 8 "Nutrition and the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Table A". See:

<http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/130387/filename/130598.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> United Nations Statistic Division. "Provisional Proposed Tiers for Global SDG Indicators as of March 24, 2016". See:

<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-03/Provisional-Proposed-Tiers-for-SDG-Indicators-24-03-16.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Kim, D. Mapping Exercise Global Data and Accountability Initiatives for Nutrition. June, 2016.

<sup>vii</sup> The National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) initiative is part of a programme launched by the European Commission.

See: <http://www.nipn-nutrition-platforms.org/>.