

## The SUN Civil Society Network

*Overview Brief—October 2019*

### What is SUN CSN?

The SUN Civil Society Network (CSN) is a nutrition-focused network made up of national and international civil society organizations working in various fields from agriculture to food security, infant and child feeding, women's empowerment, humanitarian aid and advocacy. These CSN members contribute to the elimination of malnutrition in all its forms - the mission of SUN - by adopting a variety of roles that are core to its voluntary nature, and the independence and the richness of the involvement of people who have a passion for an issue, which is the basis of civil society.

The CSN was set up in June 2011 by a small group of committed international NGOs and rapidly grew into a global network. At its core are vibrant SUN Civil Society Alliances (CSAs), which currently exist in 53 SUN Countries representing over 3,000 organizations locally, nationally and internationally, spanning multiple sectors and backgrounds. Four regional coordination groups were also set up to increase coordination. The national alliances (CSAs) and international NGOs form the global network (CSN) which is governed by a global CSN Steering Group. The CSN works through a shared framework to inform the development of national and regional strategies and support implementation.

The aim of the CSN is “By the end of 2020, SUN countries are on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and World Health Assembly (WHA) targets and significant progress has been made to reduce malnutrition, undernutrition and stunting”. Clearly, the CSN will focus next on the decade between 2020 and 2030.

### How does the CSN fit into the wider SUN Movement?

The CSN mobilises civil society actors but recognises the need to work with governments, donor agencies, the UN system and the private sector to get the right interventions to the right people at the right time. Tackling malnutrition has to be owned, led and delivered primarily by governments, and this is at the core of the SUN Movement's beliefs. Therefore, the CSN works alongside the Donor, Business and UN networks to support and work with governments to effectively tackle malnutrition in all its forms. We do this through working in multi-stakeholder platforms and using a multi-sectoral approach, coordinating efforts across the networks at global, regional and country levels.

### What are the key roles of the CSN?

The CSN exists to mobilise civil society actors and action to address malnutrition. The key roles of civil society actors include:

#### Public Awareness and Mobilisation:

1. awareness raising, mobilising and organising communities on the importance of nutrition and informing them of what they can do about it;



- empowering the poorest and most marginalised people to have a voice in the development, implementation and monitoring of nutrition plans and interventions;

#### Advocacy:

- advocating for nutrition leadership, ownership and accountability;
- acting as a watchdog on behalf of the poorest people to ensure that commitments are being delivered;

#### Capacity Building and Technical Support:

- providing technical support to government departments and staff, as appropriate and necessary;
- strengthening member civil society organisations; and

#### Implementation:

- implementing nutrition-specific (treating severe acute malnutrition; undertaking complementary feeding; promoting exclusive breastfeeding; infant and young child feeding) and nutrition-sensitive interventions (crop diversification; dietary diversification; women's empowerment; provision of clean water; improving hygiene and sanitation etc.).

The last of these roles, that of implementing services, is often required because civil society actors see gaps or exclusion in service provision by government, but in some developing countries, especially those in humanitarian crisis, NGOs are seen as the key implementers on the ground and take on this role as humanitarians. The implementation role and the closeness of civil society actors to marginalised people, as well as their non-partisan or politically neutral nature, are the foundations to civil society organisations being seen as neutral “eyes and ears” to what is happening in reality on the ground.

#### **What has the CSN achieved?**

The key achievements for the CSN are the key results of the SUN movement overall: reduction in stunting and wasting levels in many countries. We contribute to this impact. Throughout its rich ten-year history, the SUN CSN has accomplished a variety of achievements aligned with the SUN Movement goal to reduce stunting and wasting in member countries.

Here are some of the practical achievements of CSAs in the SUN Countries of operation:

**POLICY & LEGISLATION:** In **Kyrgyzstan**, engagement by the alliance at national level with producers and legislators through multi-stakeholder platforms led to a near threefold increase in fortified flour production and to a tightening of regulations on imports of non-fortified flour. In **Mali**, national and regional campaigning on the right to food by the SUN CSAs and their partners won a commitment from parliamentarians, resulting in the right to food security being added to the constitution in 2017. In **Sierre Leone**, nutrition sensitive indicators are now integrated into the national agriculture investment plan, with civil society and farmer organisations involved in the review process. In **Malawi**, advocacy by the alliance has led to the government removing national sales tax from milk products.

**GETTING COMMITMENTS:** In **Peru**, the advocacy of the Child Malnutrition Initiative (IDI – *Iniciativa Contra la Desnutricion Infantil*) has ensured that three consecutive governments consider to stunting as a national priority. IDI actions made it possible for presidential candidates in the 2006, 2011 and 2016 elections to include targets to reduce stunting and anemia. During the 2018 subnational elections, IDI mobilized, trained and supported young people from 8 regions. Young people advocated nutritional commitments and are currently involved in multi-stakeholder regional platforms to follow up on commitments made by local authorities



**BUDGETING:** Budgeting for nutrition is not easy and at the mercy of political processes. Nevertheless, in **Malawi**, budget analysis by Malawi's CSONA (Civil Society Organisation Nutrition Alliance) over the last three years has led to a slight increase in budget allocation for nutrition. In **Nigeria**, the alliance engaged with legislators and policy makers resulting in the creation of nutrition budget lines in three states and increased budgetary allocation to health and nutrition. In **Burkina Faso**, the alliance successfully advocated for integration of nutrition targets into the national development strategy 2016-2020 and for a specific budget line for infant nutrition in the 2017 Ministry of Health budget. In **Kenya** during 2018-2019, the Alliance, through the leadership of the SUN focal point and head of nutrition services, convened stakeholders from key sectors (education, social services, treasury, agriculture and fisheries, WASH, trade, health and implementing partners). The actors have been sensitized on the need for a costed multi-sectorial nutrition action plan. Finally 19 key areas have been identified and costed and validated by 47 sub-national governments.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** In terms of policy enforcement and increasing accountability, in **Cambodia**, in 2017-18, Alliance members participated in a government pilot to monitor and enforce the national BMS Code, reporting 32 violations of the code to government regulators. In **Tanzania**, the alliance went on a learning visit to Rwanda, supported by the Rwandan CSA and this led to a project piloting nutrition performance contracts in one district. This, in turn, led the Tanzanian government to develop its own national performance contracts, linked to a binding Terms of Reference, and to develop scorecards for tracking nutrition commitments. In **Zimbabwe** in 2019, ZCSOSUNA (Zimbabwe Civil Society Organisations Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance) in collaboration with the SUN Research and Academia Platform, tracked the progress of the government in honouring the 2013 N4G commitments. Numerous face to face interviews with key decision makers (Ministries of Health, Social Welfare, Primary and Secondary Education, and Agriculture) were held, and a detailed report was compiled and disseminated through the media. The government reacted, producing a response report, and now ZCSOSUNA is working with the government to formulate SMART commitments for the upcoming Tokyo 2020 summit.

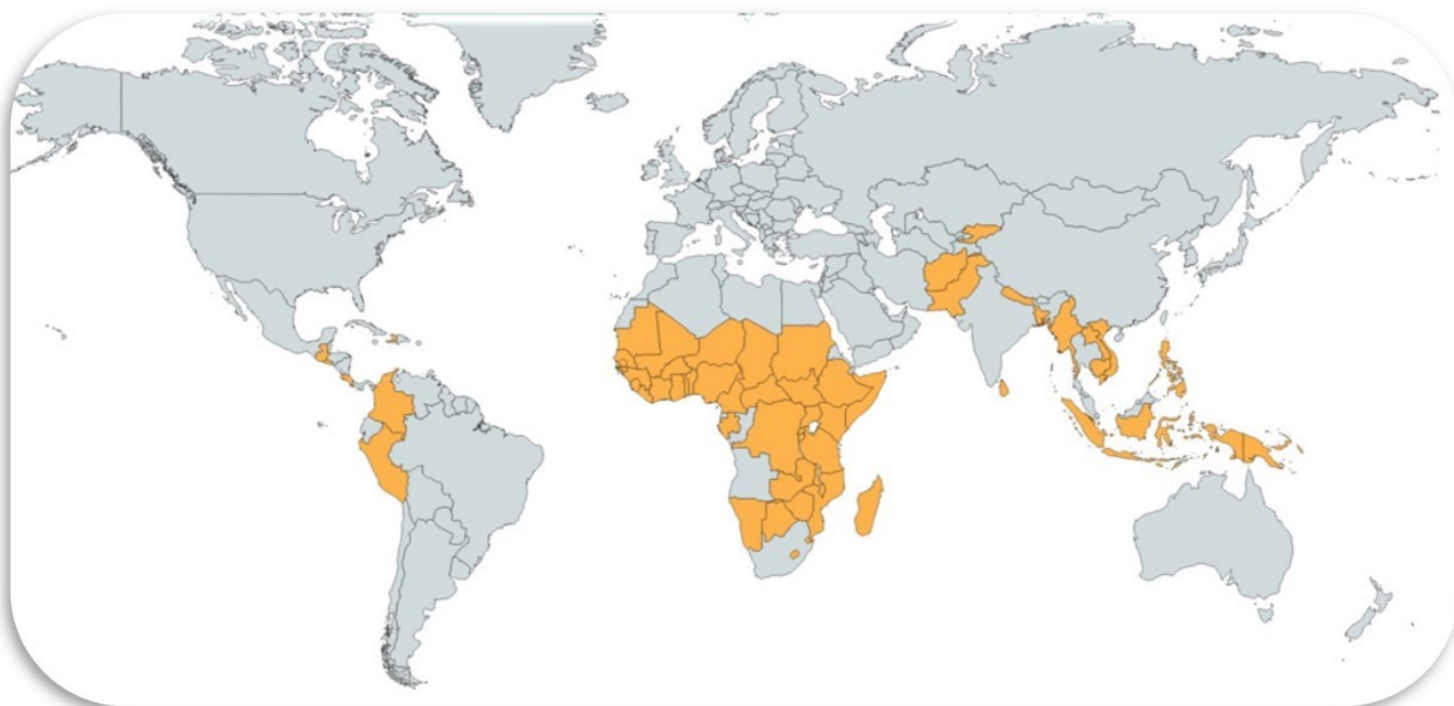
**COORDINATION & IMPLEMENTATION:** In **Senegal** in 2019 the Alliance established local civil society platforms for the coordination and monitoring of the multisectoral strategic nutrition plan in the 3 departments of Matam, Sédhiou and Bambey; In **Nigeria**, CS-SUNN (Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition Nigeria) is leading the quest to make Nigeria attain the 50% target for Exclusive Breast Feeding (EBF) by 2025 through the engagement of National Youth Service Corps to educate and promote EBF in places of primary assignment. Training modules and an educative video on EBF have been developed to that effect. In **Sri Lanka**, in 2018-2019 the Alliance contributed to the development of district level nutrition action plans (MASPN), which were a notable gap for a few years. In collaboration with district governors and multi-sectorial actors from 8 districts, draft plans have been developed and are now waiting for the validation from the national level.



## Going forward

The SUN Movement has many strengths, but it has much more to do if it is to seriously move the needle on reducing childhood stunting and wasting. As dietary patterns evolve, it must also position itself to support its members to address the root causes of obesity, overweight and non-communicable diseases. Steps must be taken toward a global transformation of the food system as nutritious food is a crucial lever to optimise human health and environmental sustainability. Recognising the fact that health and nutrition are human rights, and are preconditions, outcomes and drivers for sustainable development, work is needed to ensure health for all.

Entering into a third phase presents an opportunity for the Movement to set new ambitions and commitments that will accelerate the transformation of people, societies and economies, as we move towards a decade of delivery for the SDGs. SUN CSA members commit to working in their countries, institutions and networks ready to re-double efforts in addressing malnutrition.



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