# Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Strategy

With civil society presence in 61 SUN countries, a growing membership of 4212 global members and an increasing number of partners and donors – there is a real need for a robust, coordinated approach to measuring the impact and contribution of the SUN Civil Society Network's (CSN) to achieving change in the nutrition space.

In the 2020 Annual Survey, CSAs cited mobilising funds for nutrition as a key priority and the lack of funds as a considerable barrier facing CSAs. This emphasises the importance of having a solid MEAL system across the network, especially as the environment for donors grows more competitive, and the need to demonstrate the value of investing in the SUN approach and showing how the network is delivering on its strategic objectives. As of 2020, 30% of CSAs reported having a MEAL framework and sustainability plan.[1]

MEAL Cycle:

The SUN CSN MEAL cycle builds on 5 key phases
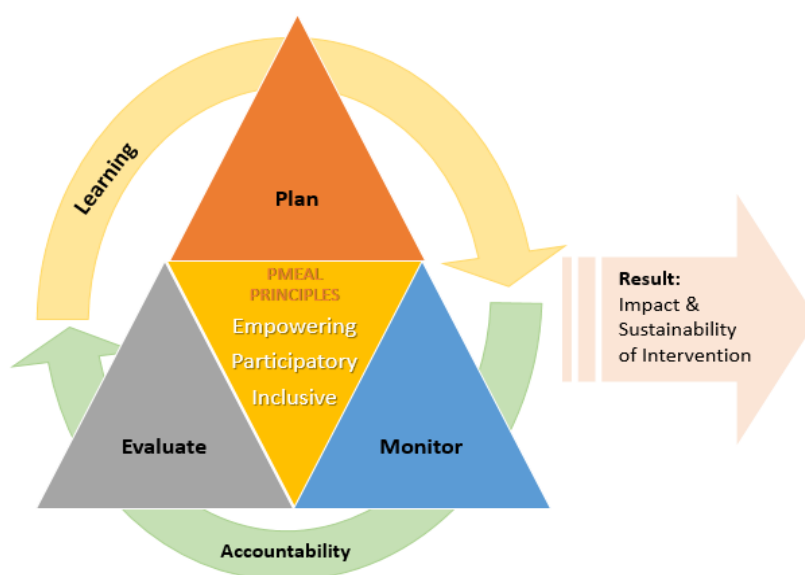
- **Planning**: During this phase we reflect on lessons learnt, the current context and the desired outcomes of our interventions and efforts. We adjust our plans based on what we learned from previous evaluations and the data gathered

- **Monitor**: We set up robust processes that capture our progress and evidence that demonstrates our contributes to the change

- **Evaluate**: we test the framework and our approaches and reflect on the progress and impact of the alliances and Network. We create space for discussion and involve members and external stakeholders

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[1] The survey had a total of 30 respondents, 60% of the totality of CSAs. Out of the totality of the respondents, only 30% report having and applying well established MEAL strategies.

- **Learning throughout the cycle:** We create communities of practice where members are encouraged to exchange knowledge on best practices to increase impact, build collaboration between different actors and increase capacity; and

- **Accountability at all stages, internal and external**: the CSN Secretariat and CSAs are accountable to members and beneficiaries and working towards achieving our shared objectives, as set out in the network-wide Theory of Change. Additionally, both are accountable to donors and the SUN Movement as a whole.

    Our participatory and inclusive approach to MEAL seeks to ensure that our beneficiaries are part of the implementation and evaluation processes and are empowered and able to influence Alliances and Network decisions and priorities. We champion accountability by establishing a transparent and effective <u>communication</u> system through which we share and discuss our impact, data, and learnings.

MEAL Principles & Approach

Our MEAL principles are Inspired by the SUN Movement's principles of engagement, the CSN MEAL system builds on the following principles throughout all its phases:

- **Participatory**: involves diverse stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process. This involvement can occur at any stage of the evaluation process, from the monitoring and evaluation design to data collection and analysis to reporting

- **Inclusive**: it creates space and channels for vulnerable and excluded groups (such as women, youth and other vulnerable populations) to input into the MEAL processes, influencing analysis and strategic decisions; and

- **Empowering**: through participating in MEAL processes, all stakeholders involved are learning and building their capacity.

By applying these three principles, those involved in the MEAL process will become more aware, engaged, and responsible for shaping strategic decisions. This will ensure that the MEAL work contributes to the long-term sustainability of the Alliance and CSN.

MEAL Checklist:

Does your Alliance have the following in place?

- ➢ Updated Theory of Change in place, socialized with CSA members
- ➢ A Theory of Change aligned with the SUN Civil Society Network Theory of Change?
- ➢ Logical framework and indicators to measure the progress of the Alliance
- ➢ Does the CSA capture members' specific contributions on nutrition interventions/achievements/challenges? (e.g. survey, logsheet, other M&E input etc)
- ➢ CSA MEAL strategy and tools in place
- ➢ Detailed workplan/activity plan; and
- ➢ Are you monitoring and evaluating the CSA workplan and have progress available for members and inspection?