Scaling Up NUTRITION

Civil Society Network
ENGAGE • INSPIRE • INVEST

ANNUAL SURVEY
JANUARY–DECEMBER 2021
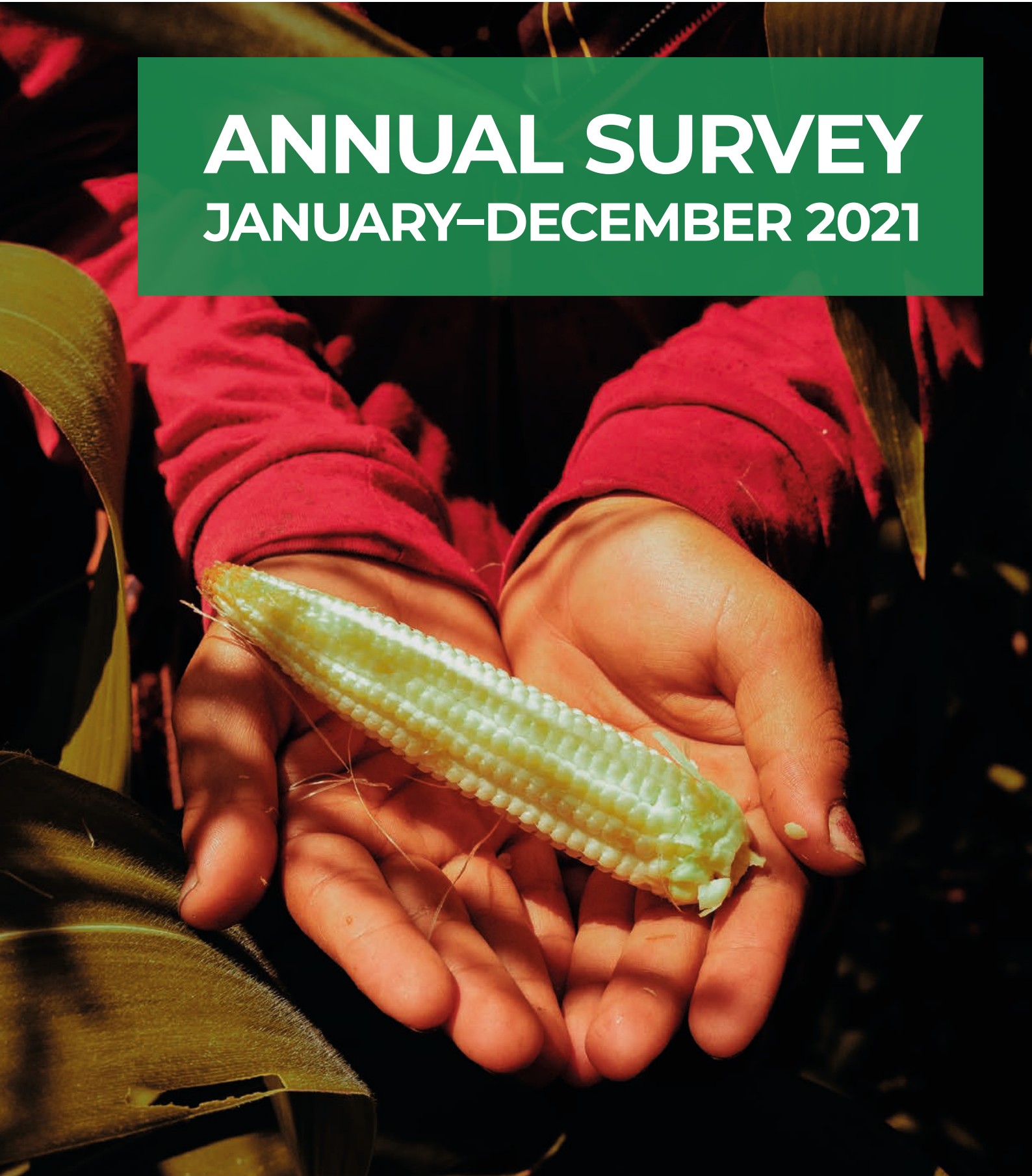
CONTENTS

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Cover photo: Ibsan, 12, holding corn from her family's cornfield in the Dry Corridor region, Guatemala
(Photo: Luisa Dörr/Save the Children)

INTRODUCTION

In line with the Civil Society Network (CSN) 3.0 Strategy, we restructured the 2021 Annual Survey to ensure the data captured accurately monitors the network's progress against our 3.0 Theory of Change and the commitments made at the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit.

To ensure accessibility, respondents were given the choice to submit their responses to the network-wide database, SunLabs, or via an online form. Despite this, we had a lower response rate than in previous years, with only 19 (32%) Civil Society Alliances and National Efforts completing the survey. These countries were: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Colombia,

Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Feedback from alliances indicates that the lower response rate was due to lack of capacity, worsened by the ending of the Pooled Fund and the range of hunger and nutrition crises around the world.

To improve the response rate for the 2022 Annual Survey we will refine the questions we ask to reduce the administrative burden on alliances as well as translating the survey into French and Spanish to ensure accessibility.

PHOTO: ALLISON JOYCE/SAVE THE CHILDREN

MEMBERSHIP

Network members are part of INGOs, NGOs, community-based organisations, consumer rights organisations, women's rights groups, academia, research institutions and social movements. Over recent years, the membership of the Civil Society Network has consistently grown, with more than 4200 member organisations across the globe. However, in 2021 this growth slowed, with alliances reporting that the impact of Covid-19 and lack of resources to conduct member engagement meant that bringing in new members was more challenging.

Decentralisation

Across the Network, there have been continued efforts to progressively decentralise Civil Society Alliances.

- 58.8% of respondents shared that they have sub-national/decentralised civil society coordination structures.

- 11.8% indicated that they are in the process of decentralising efforts.

- 66.7% of alliances shared that they undertake interventions at the sub-national level.

2022 workplans

Alliances told us that the following technical areas were part of their 2022 workplans:

- Conduct advocacy at the national level (94.1% of alliances) and sub-national level (82.4%), and to a lesser degree at the global level (23.5%).

- Generate data for advocacy (41.2%) and ensure that nutrition data is used in decision-making (35.5%).

- Input into policy and legislation (41.2%) and engage parliamentarians (64.7%).

- Conduct budget advocacy to better fund National Nutrition Plans (29.4%).

The following thematic areas were identified in alliances' 2022 workplans:

- Right to food and nutrition (72.2%)

- Stunting (66.7%)

- Support for exclusive breastfeeding (66.7%)

- Agriculture (66.7%)

- Youth empowerment (61.1%)

- Education (61.1%)

- Women's empowerment (61.1%)

Overall, the identified thematic and technical priorities align with and contribute to the implementation of the network-wide Theory of Change.

Technical areas featuring in alliances' 2022 workplans

TECHNICAL AREAS

National nutrition plans
- Budget advocacy 29.4%
- Inputting information into systems 17.6%

Data
- Research 35.3%
- Data for advocacy 41.2%
- Nutrition data in decision-making 35.3%

Advocacy
- National level 94.1%
- Sub-national level 82.4%
- Global level 23.5%
- Regional level 29.4%

Communications
- Behaviour change comms 64.7%
- Media engagement 76.5%

Mobilising funds for nutrition 47.1%

Influence
- Inputting into policy and legislation 41.2%
- Parliamentary engagement 64.7%

Community mobilisation 47.1%
- Nutrition champions 52.9%

Social accountability mechanisms 29.4%

Youth
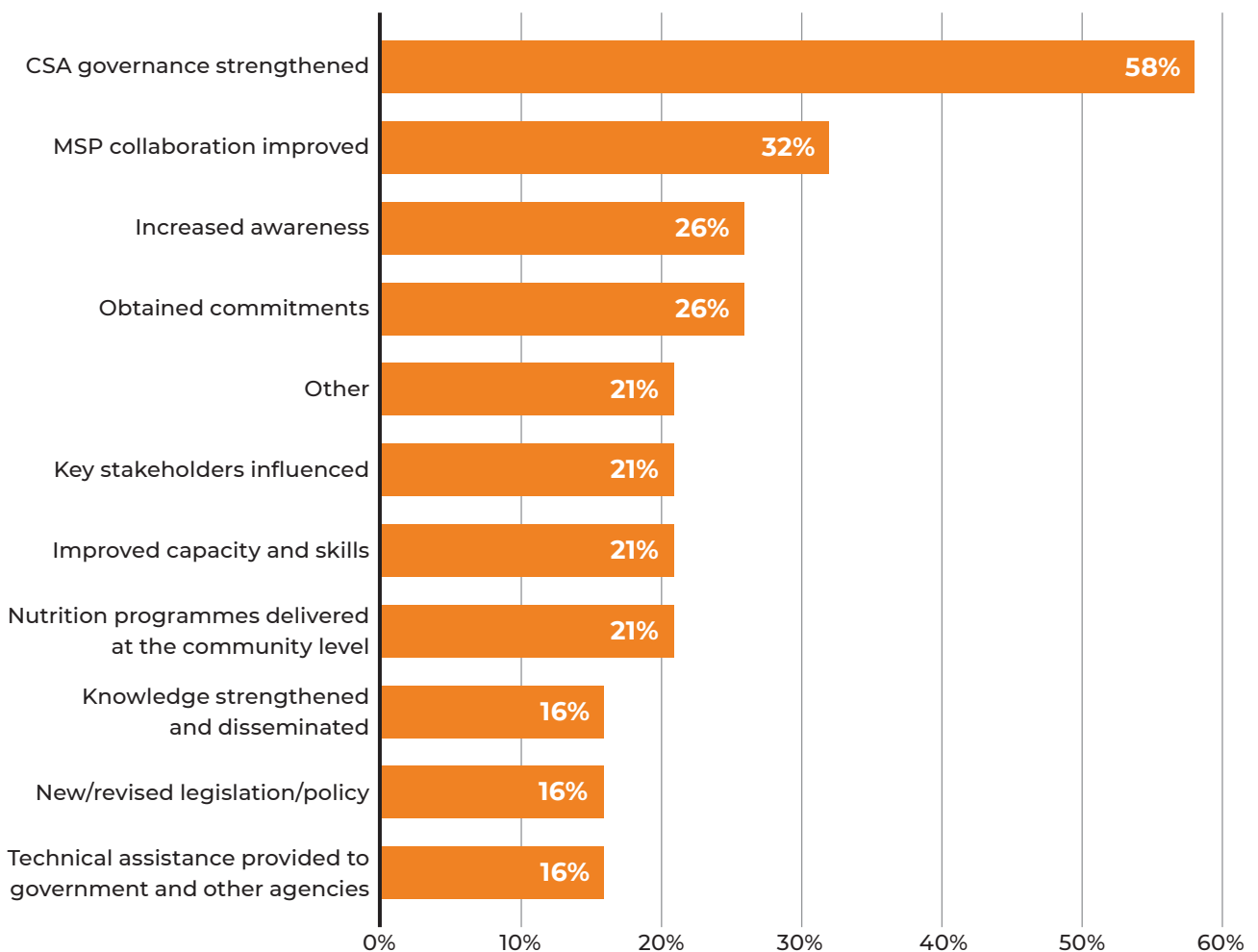- Youth engagement 58.8%
- Supporting YL4N 35.3%

CSA ACHIEVEMENTS

We asked Civil Society Alliances to share their three key achievements in 2021. The qualitative information shared has been categorised in the graphs below.

- The most common 2021 achievement (58%) was the strengthening of Civil Society Alliances' governance, including elements such as developing a resource mobilisation and sustainability strategy and efforts to decentralise.

- 32% of alliances shared that one of their top three achievements was improved collaboration within Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSP). This included improvements in the engagement of civil society organisations in national nutrition plans and improved inter-network collaboration.

- 2021 was marked by crucial, nutrition-related global advocacy moments such as the UN Food Systems Summit and the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Tokyo. 9% of CSAs who submitted the Annual Survey reported that they either made their commitments in these global fora or played a critical role in influencing the commitments made by their government.

- Achievements categorised as 'other' were within the realm of behavioural change, youth empowerment and involvement in decision-making, parliamentary engagement and law enforcement.

- The key achievements are in line with the 2020 Annual Survey results in which 55.6% of CSAs reported strengthened governance and 44.4% improved MSP collaboration.

CSAs' achievements in 2021

Achievement	Percentage
CSA governance strengthened	58%
MSP collaboration improved	32%
Increased awareness	26%
Obtained commitments	26%
Other	21%
Key stakeholders influenced	21%
Improved capacity and skills	21%
Nutrition programmes delivered at the community level	21%
Knowledge strengthened and disseminated	16%
New/revised legislation/policy	16%
Technical assistance provided to government and other agencies	16%

Examples of "CSA governance strengthened"

Afghanistan: Successfully restructured the Civil Society Alliance and decentralised Alliance-level activities.

Cambodia: Launched the first ever SUN CSA Cambodia Advocacy Strategy for 2021–2024 and oriented all members to the strategy.

Ethiopia: Established and launched the Ethiopian Civil Society Coalition for Scaling up Nutrition Regional support platform in two regions.

Pakistan: Developed a resource mobilisation and sustainability strategy.

Examples of "improved multi-stakeholder platform collaboration"

Afghanistan: Contributed to the inclusion of nutrition in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. Using storytelling methodology and communications, the Alliance highlighted to the authorities the importance of nutrition, dietary inequalities and nutrition needs throughout a person's life and how these needs can be met sustainably. The National Budget Committee showed strong commitment and invited the Alliance to review the mid-term budget and add lines for nutrition interventions.

Costa Rica: Successfully convened three nationally recognised organisations to form a multi-stakeholder coordinating committee on nutrition and established an active relationship with the national SUN focal points.

El Salvador: Provided facilitation and support for the dialogues on Sustainable Food Systems in coordination with the SUN focal point for El Salvador.

Namibia: Provided support to the Namibian Government to finalise the revision and launch of Namibia's Food and Nutrition Security Policy, including the Implementation Action Plan and Coordination Structures.

Nigeria: The Alliance contributed to the finalisation and sign-off of the costed National Multisectoral Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition and created new nutrition budget lines at the national level and in the Kaduna, Niger and Nasarawa states.

South Sudan: Creation of sub-national MSPs in three states that currently serve as the only coordination platforms for nutrition at the sub-national level.

Examples of "increased awareness"

Colombia: Fundación Éxito raised and invested approximately 21 billion Colombian pesos (approximately US$200,000) for nutritional care programmes, public policy, knowledge generation and dissemination.

Costa Rica: Implementation of a campaign to raise the profile of civil society actors in the nutrition space.

El Salvador: Implementation of education and awareness strategy in food safety.

Uganda: Contributed to creating the East and Horn of Africa nutrition champions forum, which aimed to strengthen champions' capacity to create awareness about nutrition. The champions also work to ensure that nutrition remains high on governments' agenda and that the right policies, governance structures and actions are put in place to advance responsibility across stakeholders.

Examples of "obtained commitments"

Pakistan: The Alliance led the mobilisation, orientation, and advocacy for nutrition commitments made by the Government of Pakistan. It also provided technical support to collect the commitments and submit them to the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) platform. Moreover, the Alliance also submitted its own N4G policy and governance commitments, including making food and nutrition security a fundamental constitutional right in Pakistan, and decentralising the Alliance's governance to the provincial and district level.

South Sudan: Mobilised the nutrition sector to participate at the government level at the Nutrition for Growth summit and make commitments.

Examples of "key stakeholders Influenced"

Ethiopia: Supported establishing and strengthening the Ethiopian Nutrition Leaders Network, training manual development, and strengthening the country's nutrition leadership capacity, resulting in the institutionalisation of nutrition leadership training by the Ministry of Health and other implementing sectors.

Ghana: Supported 24 districts to mainstream nutrition in their plans (2021–2024). As a result of this support, nutrition has become very relevant in annual plans in several high-burden districts.

Examples of "improved capacity and skills"

Cambodia: Established the Provincial Working Group for Coordinating Food Security and Nutrition in seven additional provinces. The platform is currently being scaled up nationwide in each province, which has the potential to be replicated elsewhere.

Myanmar: Knowledge sharing and learning exchanges were conducted for Alliance members at the national, regional, and global levels.

Namibia: Successfully implemented and concluded two grants, one focusing on capacity building, knowledge building and outreach, while the other focused on combining organic urban gardening in informal settlements with nutrition awareness for communities.

Examples of "nutrition programmes delivered at national level"

Colombia: Fundación Éxito reached out to more than 70,000 boys and girls under five years of age with nutritional care.

Kyrgyzstan: 1.6 million Kyrgyz Soms (approximately $20,000) was raised for the construction of greenhouses and toilets in the Issyk-Kul province, boosting the Alliance's impact in the fields of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and WASH.

Namibia: Using the Covid-19-related SUN Pooled Fund, the Alliance launched the urban gardening and nutrition project. Following the project's success, a gardening and maintenance guide based on the experiences of the implementation was developed. Two short videos were also created that can be easily shared via WhatsApp to maximise the audience locally. Furthermore, the Alliance has developed an interactive and participatory nutrition training approach that it is fine-tuning and professionalising through additional donor funding.

Sri Lanka: Conducted 19 programmes in 19 districts on nutrition as protection from Covid-19 and the prevention of non-communicable diseases for 619 Civil Society Organisation members. Furthermore, the Alliance launched a nutrition awareness and behaviour change campaign collaborating with the United Nations World Food Programme for 996 pregnant and nursing mothers through different communication channels.
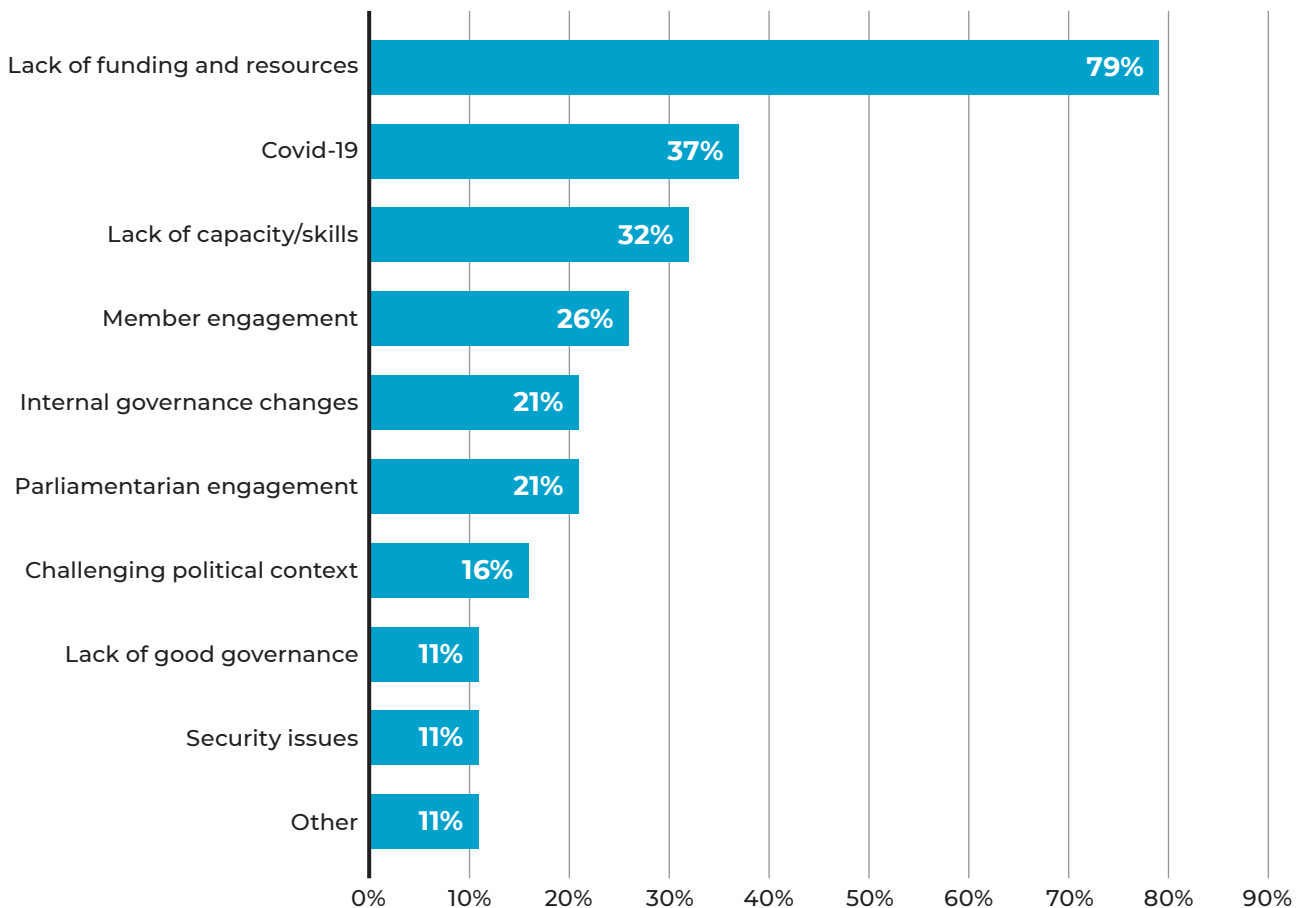
CSA CHALLENGES

Civil Society Alliances were asked to share the three key challenges they experienced in 2021.

- 79% reported that they continue to experience a lack of funding and resources.

- 37% reported that Covid-19 prevented them from implementing planned activities and engaging with communities and members.

- 32% reported a lack of capacity/skills which prevented them from delivering on planned activities.

- 26% reported that they had issues with member engagement due to a lack of resources and capacity.

- 21% reported that parliamentarian engagement continues to be a significant challenge for them. This includes a lack of government transparency and changes in governmental structures.

- 26% identified other challenges such as developing nutrition plans, no access to the SUN focal point, media engagement, lack of knowledge and awareness of nutrition issues and challenges in reaching more districts in the sub-national nutrition governance capacity building programme.

The key challenges are intrinsically linked and have a knock-on impact on each other. A lack of funding results in short staffing and an inability to engage members more effectively, and not being able to implement projects. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the availability of funds for nutrition-sensitive programming, and, more generally, capacities have been affected across the sector.

CSAs' challenges in 2021

Challenge	%
Lack of funding and resources	79%
Covid-19	37%
Lack of capacity/skills	32%
Member engagement	26%
Internal governance changes	21%
Parliamentarian engagement	21%
Challenging political context	16%
Lack of good governance	11%
Security issues	11%
Other	11%

Examples of "lack of funding and resources"

Colombia: No organisation within the Alliance has the capacity to lead the coordination efforts without funding.

Kenya: Limited financial resources have made the Alliance unable to scale up and sustain positive gains over the years.

Liberia: Lack of funding meant they could not continue with the Alliance's planned advocacy initiatives.

Namibia: Insufficient funds have meant that the alliance was unable to retain salaried staff. Instead of having a full or part-time staff, the Alliance is being run by volunteers, which has limited its ability to engage and deliver on its mandate.

Nigeria: Inadequate funding has meant that the Alliance has been unable to sustain the gains made after its Pooled Fund grant ended.

Examples of "Covid-19"

Cambodia: Member engagement has been challenging as the impacts of the pandemic have overburdened the Alliance.

El Salvador: The pandemic led to a reduction in the number of community interventions delivered.

Nigeria: National and state lockdowns because of Covid-19 slowed down the Alliance's work.

Pakistan: As a consequence of Covid-19, the Alliance could not engage as actively with stakeholders.

PHOTO: FREDRIK LERNERYD/SAVE THE CHILDREN

SUN CSN INDICES

In 2021, we launched the Governance, Sustainability and Gender and Inclusion indices which were developed to help assess the performance level of alliances. These indices were validated by four Civil Society Alliances representing the four regions of the CSN.
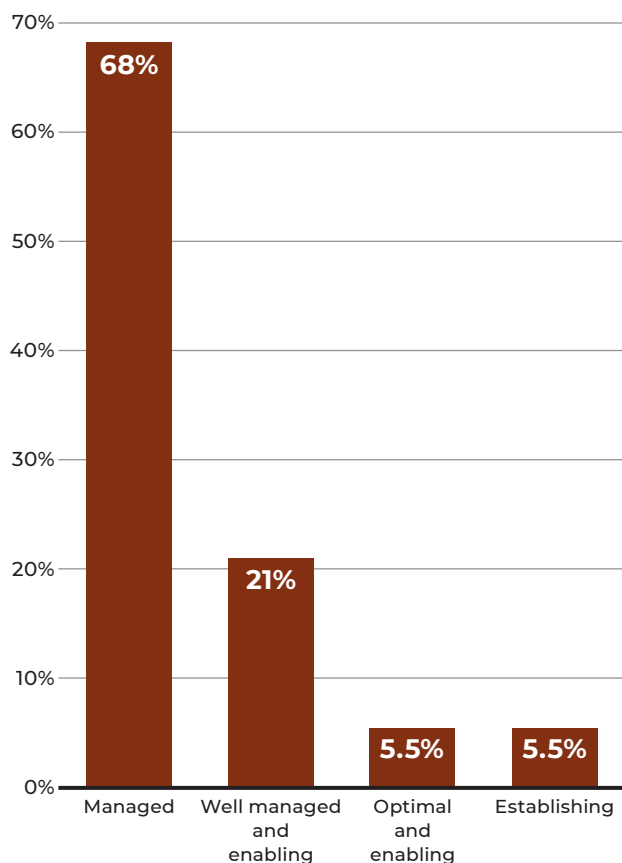
Governance Index

The Governance Index is made up of 25 indicators that capture various elements of good governance principles. Each indicator carries a weighting which aggregates into a total score and subsequently determines the alliance's good governance level, as per the below:

- Level 1: Critical or initial (depending on establishment date or context)
- Level 2: Establishing
- Level 3: Managed
- Level 4: Well managed and enabling
- Level 5: Optimal and enabling

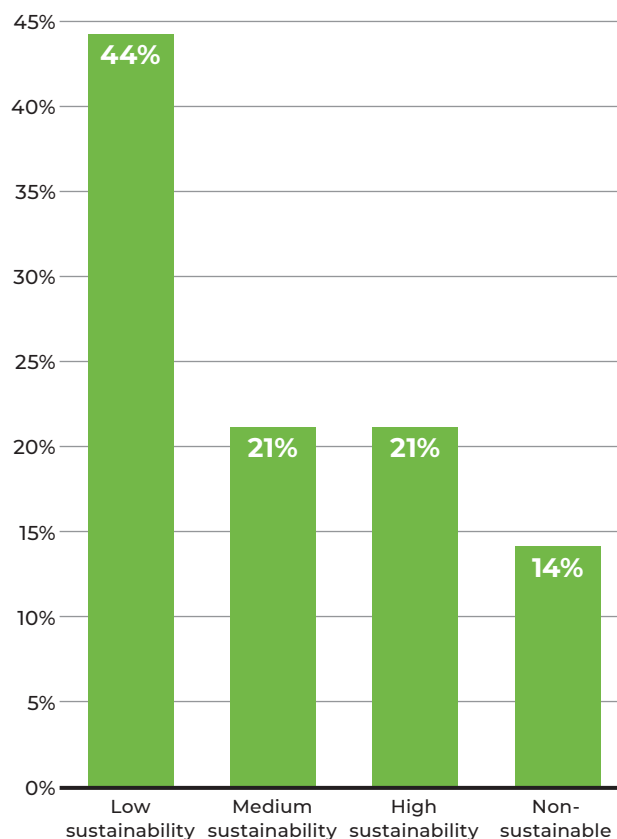The 18 alliances who responded ranked as shown in the figure below.

Sustainability Index

The Sustainability Index consists of 23 indicators that build on the governance score and integrates "operations" and "funding availability". These three spheres are all key to the sustainability of CSAs. This index does not measure the "level of impact/reach" of the CSA. Each indicator carries a weighting, which aggregates into a total score and subsequently a sustainability level, as per the below:

- Level 1: Non-sustainable
- Level 2: Low sustainability
- Level 3: Medium sustainability
- Level 4: High sustainability

The 14 alliances who responded ranked as shown in the figure below.

Governance Index levels ranked

Level	%
Managed	68%
Well managed and enabling	21%
Optimal and enabling	5.5%
Establishing	5.5%

Sustainability Index levels ranked

| Level	%
Low sustainability	44%
Medium sustainability	21%
High sustainability	21%
Non-sustainable	14%

Gender and Inclusion Index

One of the enablers of the 3.0 Civil Society Network Strategy is gender, with an emphasis on ensuring that:

- Women and girls play a prominent role in network structures.

- Gender transformative approaches are piloted and shared across the network.

- Gender-sensitive leadership models are promoted within and beyond the SUN Movement.

As such, we created a Gender and Inclusion Index consisting of 11 indicators including gender balance within alliance leadership structures, inclusive alliance interventions and involvement of women, youth and other vulnerable stakeholders in the development of strategy.

The 18 alliances who responded ranked as shown in the figure opposite.

Gender and Inclusion Index levels ranked

	Transformative	Mainstreaming	Sufficient
	72%	22%	6%
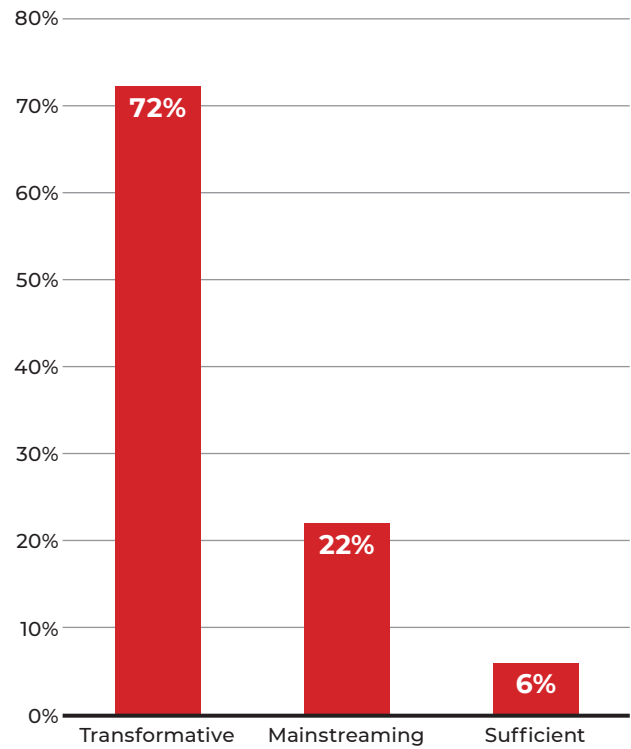
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM ENGAGEMENT

The SUN Movement is built on the premise that to realise a world without hunger and malnutrition, actors need to work together in a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder space to end malnutrition in all its forms. This principle ensures that the Movement is flexible while maintaining a common purpose and mutual accountability.

In CSN 3.0, the Civil Society Network strives to ensure that civil society is meaningfully included and engaged in MSPs, understanding that civil society members are essential to this effort as they bring lived experience of malnutrition to MSPs and offer solutions rooted in community realities.

As such, we asked alliances whether they feel their alliance is a valued and respected member of the MSP (e.g. invited to meetings, opinions listened to, etc):

82.4% of respondents indicated that their alliance was a valued and respected member of the MSP, with specific individual responses adding that:

- There is strong civil society engagement at the MSP.

- The alliance is involved with the MSP and actively engages with other SUN networks in its activities.

84% of respondents shared that they are contributing towards national nutrition plans in one or more of the following ways:

- 81.3% are contributing to the development of national nutrition plans.

- 75% to the implementation of national nutrition plans.

- 62.5% to the monitoring and evaluation of national nutrition plans.

- 25% to the budgeting of national nutrition plans.

'Do you feel that your Alliance is a valued and respected member of the MSP (e.g. invited to meetings, opinions listened to, etc)?'

Other (please specify) 11.8%
Not aware 5.9%
No 0.0%
Yes 82.4%
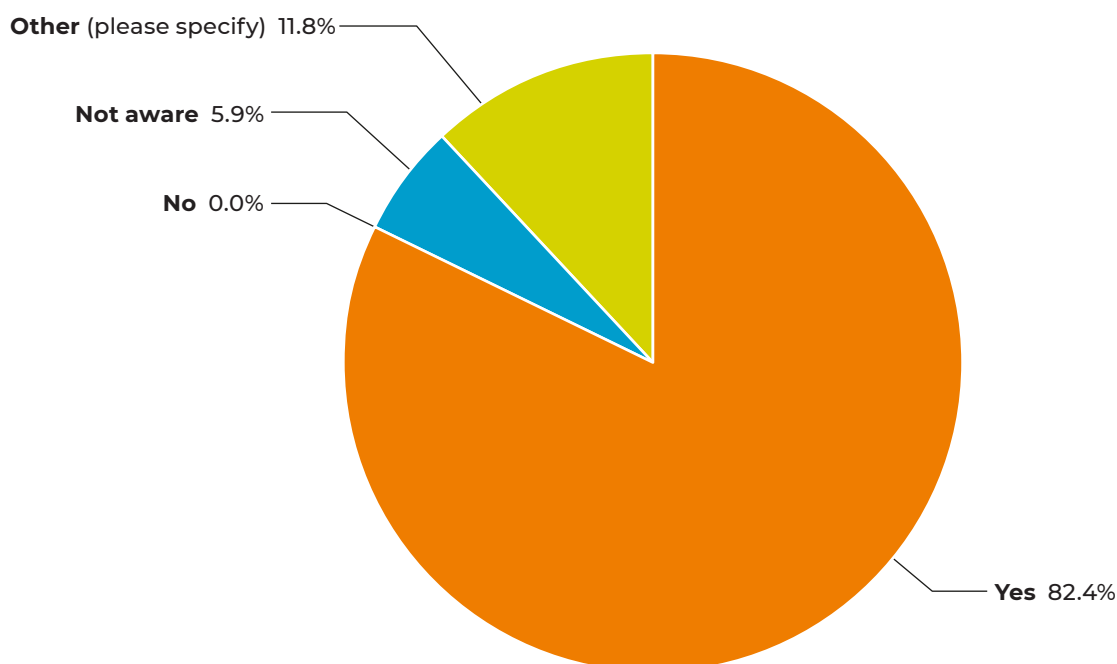
How often the CSA is able to participate in MSP activity
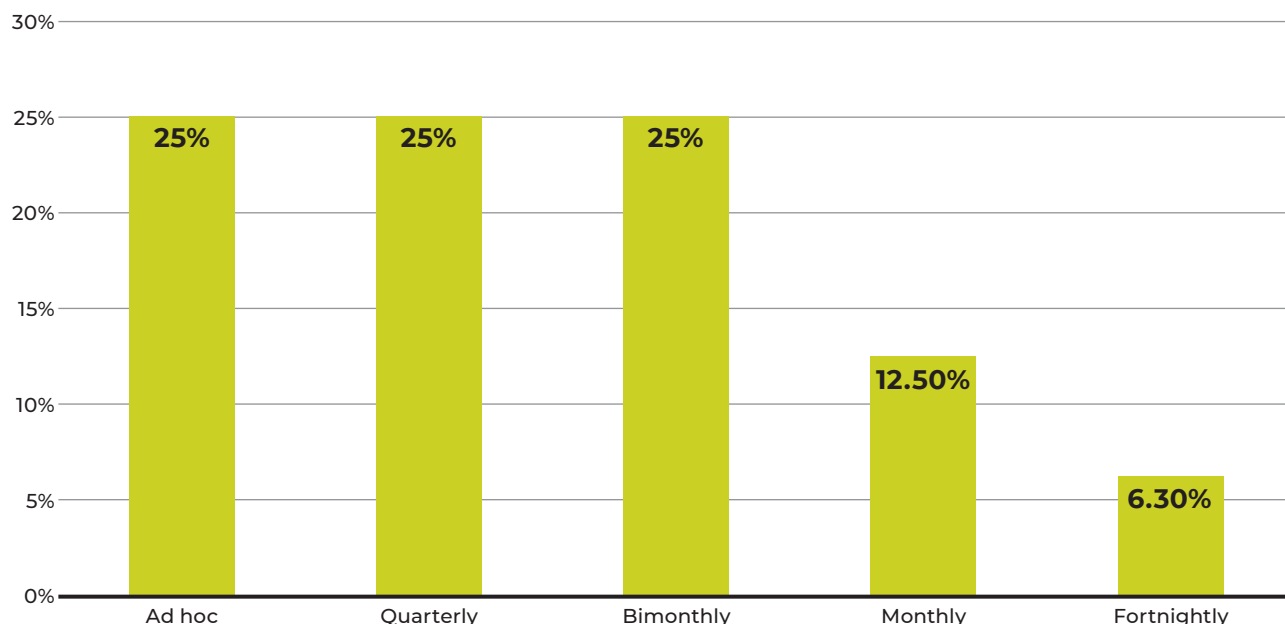
We asked alliances how often they could participate in MSP activity, with 25% reporting that they participate on an ad hoc basis, 25% saying quarterly and 25% reporting bimonthly.

Main barriers preventing Civil Society Alliances from participating in MSPs

- Lack of information sharing and effective communication at the national level, especially from the SUN Focal Point.

- Inadequate funding, resources, and capacity to engage and participate in multi-stakeholder processes.

- Change in political leadership, limits on civil society engagement being placed by those who set the agenda and unequal power dynamics have significantly affected the engagement of civil society.

- Delays and infrequent MSP meetings as well as lack of inter-network coordination.

Recommendations made by alliances on how to improve Civil Society engagement in MSPs

- Communication across the MSPs needs to be improved.

- Better collaboration at the national and sub-national levels.

- In-person meetings as opposed to virtual meetings.

- Have a funded CSA coordinator who has capacity to engage at these platforms.

- Political will at a high level to support the participation of civil society.

- Capacity strengthening of civil society members in participatory methods, communication, leadership skills, knowledge on issues at hand and sharing good practices of MSP engagement.

- Awareness of what alliances can achieve and contribute.

- Establish a more participatory role for civil society.

PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

86% of alliances reported that they are communicating with other alliances. We asked alliances to share anything they have learned from those peer-to-peer experiences, and they reported:

- The Sierra Leone Alliance exchanged experiences with the Rwanda Alliance which led to the development of the concept of the Right to Food.

- The Alliance in Afghanistan sought support from the Pakistan Alliance on media engagement and how to secure free airtime. As a result, the Alliance appeared on several media platforms.

- The Latin America & Caribbean Regional network held an inter-learning meeting with all its Civil Society Alliances, in which the focus was on building successful advocacy strategies. During the last year, actions are also being carried out in four countries to increase the membership of their respective alliances.

PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE VISEUX/SAVE THE CHILDREN

RECOMMENDATIONS, NEXT STEPS

Through the Annual Survey, alliances shared a series of recommendations for the Civil Society Network Secretariat. We have categorised these by thematic area and will be addressing these recommendations.

The top four recommendations were:

- Improve resource mobilisation by identifying potential sources and better communicate existing funding opportunities across the network.

- Improve network-wide member engagement.

- Increase capacity building on various thematic and technical areas and create more peer-to-peer learning opportunities. These include but are not limited to training in nutrition advocacy, MEAL and fundraising.

- Deliver an induction on the SUN Movement and the different networks and provide support to identify in-person counterparts.

We will address these recommendations through the following actions.

Recommendation 1: Improve resource mobilisation

- Restart the Fundraising Opportunities monthly email, which will showcase the latest grants available to Civil Society Alliances.

- Conduct a donor mapping exercise to disseminate across the global network and collaborate closely with the SUN Donor Network to create a 'communication to donors' guide.

- Develop and roll out a programme with the accredited Fundraising Radicals Training Programme to scale up access for more Civil Society Network members.

Recommendation 2: Improve network-wide member engagement

- Send fortnightly updates and a longer newsletter every two months.

- Regularly update the CSN website and include updates on social media.

- Develop a network-wide member engagement strategy to ensure that CSN members feel more included and informed.

Recommendation 3: Improve capacity building

- Organise and host a series of accessible learning webinars on different thematic areas, including food systems, communications, budget analysis of national nutrition action plans etc.

- Identify external trainers and partners who can share resources and training workshops on building capacity around gender-sensitive nutrition interventions and advocacy activities where possible.

Recommendation 4: Improve understanding of SUN Movement

- Create an improved and updated onboarding pack for newly established alliances.

- Work closely with sister Networks to ensure better communication across multi-stakeholder platforms.