

Global Gathering Round-up: Workshop themes and discussions



The 2019 Global Gathering enabled rich discussions through 25 multiple and dynamic workshops on topics identified as important by countries. Two key cross-cutting messages emerged: first, the importance of sustaining and getting better at replicating the gains already made in addressing malnutrition; and second, a

more urgent and concerted focus on what countries still need to do in order to scale up nutrition interventions to reduce all forms of malnutrition. There was broad agreement that, while reducing malnutrition is a complex endeavour, country and global actors have never been in a better place in terms of commitments, evidence and know-how.

Prominent theme

1 Political will at all levels is critical to drive forward the scaling-up nutrition agenda

Participants reflected on the understanding that political will is essential to drive nutrition improvement and reduce malnutrition. High-level political leadership is also vital to ensure that all sectors understand the necessity of good nutrition. Such commitment now needs to be built upon, particularly moving to all levels of devolved government. It takes sub-national champions to build political will at the local level and this must be given greater focus in phase three of the SUN Movement.

2 Contextual approaches are required, with a focus on the sub-national level

The push for country ownership and tailored country solutions was a critical focus throughout the workshops. Countries need to adapt and contextualise global-level tools and solutions to best suit their unique situations and country-driven processes are essential. A broad understanding of the political, economic, environmental and social dynamics that underpin nutrition in each country is needed to tailor approaches and interventions. Furthermore, the push for contextualisation must take into account that there are considerable disparities in nutrition status within countries; therefore, sub-national-level analysis and focus are essential. Decentralised, multi-stakeholder platforms are developing in many countries and multi-sector programmes are emerging as a mechanism to drive national approaches and implement local solutions.

3 More and better data on nutrition are needed to inform decision-making

Generating more and better prevalence, burden, programmatic (such as coverage and quality) and financial data are critical to inform policy at all levels, as well as to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions and provide a mechanism for accountability. Data on the inequities of the burden of malnutrition can help target resources more effectively and help to better understand how improvements in nutrition status come about at the sub-national level. The need to invest in more and better data was deemed a top priority.

4 Financing for nutrition is both a challenge and an opportunity

Some progress on nutrition financing has been made, with countries having increased their domestic budgets for nutrition and, in some cases, developing specific budget lines for nutrition. However, much more needs to be done to encourage increased domestic resourcing for nutrition and budgetary follow-up. Country finance ministries and treasuries need to recognise the critical importance of nutrition: malnutrition reduction should be seen as an investment, not an expense.

5 Significant strides have been made in planning coordinated, multi-sector responses

There is a broad recognition that a comprehensive, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approach is central to scaling up efforts to reduce malnutrition and many countries have set up multi-sector, multi-stakeholder platforms. These vary at the sub-national level in terms of the extent of devolution, range of stakeholders, degree of collaboration and autonomy of decision-making. Sub-national structures are effective where they have the capacity, resources and evidence of impact of their implementation efforts. Furthermore, supporting nutrition integration into health-system structures remains an essential part of a multi-sector scale-up approach.

6 Building capacity at all levels is vital

The recognition that we need increased human resources to drive the nutrition agenda, particularly at the sub-national level, is seen as pivotal. Building functional capacities in nutrition requires a long-term perspective to ensure the sustainability of nutrition action. Critically, human resourcing needs to consider the coordination roles in a multi-sector approach, as convening multi-stakeholder platforms requires a strong convener to ensure platforms remain functional and effective.

7 Civil society and the media have been and should continue to be a catalyst for nutrition

Historically, civil society has played a vital role in scaling up nutrition efforts and has facilitated greater political will,

increased engagement with parliamentarians, heightened financial accountability and driven forward multi-sector, multi-stakeholder nutrition programming in many countries. Furthermore, the media is a potentially important ally in building a powerful narrative around nutrition. Media engagement is increasing in this era of social media, particularly as a mechanism for engaging youth.

8 Women and adolescents must be given a voice and a 'seat at the table'

We must ensure that women and adolescents are voices in discussions and decision-making for nutrition. The involvement of youth advocates in so many of the workshops highlighted the critical role they play in driving and supporting the nutrition agenda. Mechanisms for truly empowering women to increase gender equality in nutrition are seen as essential.

9 Engaging with the private sector is critical

There is a recognition that the private sector is a powerful actor in influencing nutrition, and there is a need to ensure that it has a positive rather than negative impact on nutrition outcomes and is held accountable for its actions. The debate is no longer whether the nutrition sector should talk to the private sector, but rather how it should engage with the vital actors in it. The reality is that the private sector plays a pivotal role in food systems – even rural households purchase a large portion of their food from markets and the importance of engagement with business is thus critical.

10 A focus on fragile contexts is essential

States that are fragile either because of conflict, climatic, political or economic shocks have unique needs when considering how to address malnutrition and scale up

nutrition-relevant actions. Nutrition data originating from fragile contexts reflects the challenges in those countries experiencing fragility in terms of financing, governance, coordination and range of interventions and approaches. The SUN Movement is well placed to make a political and public case for 'right-sizing' the humanitarian and development investments in these fragile states.

11 Focus more on accountability

Many nutrition commitments have been made in the past and while tremendous strides have been made in achieving these goals, there remains a lack of accountability structures and mechanisms to ensure sub-national and national progress towards commitments. As countries look to develop further commitments in the lead-up to the 2020 Nutrition for Growth Summit, it is critical that accountability mechanisms are developed. As noted by country delegates, the SUN Movement can better facilitate the generation of accountability structures. The Joint Annual Assessments could include such a focus.

12 The global SUN Movement support structures have proved a value-add to countries

The global SUN support structures have proved a value-add to countries, but there is a recognition that they should become more demand-driven in order to better serve countries' needs and priorities. This can be further enabled through the rapid exchange of effective learning between countries and sub-regionally.

At the midpoint of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, the 2019 SUN Global Gathering was a pivotal moment to reflect on country progress and share successes and challenges. Issues highlighted at the Global Gathering have clear relevance for the 2020 Nutrition for Growth Summit and the next iteration of the SUN Movement, Road Map 3.



Visit to Bo, Sierra Leone by Gerda Verburg, SUN Movement, Coordinator

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