

SCALING UP NUTRITION IN ZIMBABWE



DISTRICT FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY COMMITTEES
SENSITISATION AND SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Introduction

In line with the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, the FNC is mandated to “promote a cohesive national response for food security and nutrition security through coordinated multi-sectoral action.” The commissioning of Food and Nutrition Security Committees (FNSCs) was fostered at national, provincial, district and sub-district level to better understand the challenges and strengths within a changed socio-economic context, in order to inform a strategy to revive and strengthen decentralized coordination for food and nutrition security. The FNSCs lead the coordination of food and nutrition security issues and support the implementation of global, regional and local legal frameworks that aim to improve the overall quality of life of the locals, SUN Movement included. By improving nutrition, human capital can be built and fuel economic growth for generations to come. However, nutrition's full impact can only be unleashed when all sectors play their roles.

Objectives

The objectives of the meetings were:

- To sensitise the subnational structures on the SUN movement
- To assess each DFNSC's contribution towards the four SUN strategic processes
- To give a snapshot of progress and current state of institutional transformations for SUN in Zimbabwe
- To identify key constraints/ challenges and further identify possible recommendations for improvement
- To revitalise working methods and relations between stakeholders

The Approach

The national SUN convener (Food and Nutrition Council) and the UN Network organised meetings in the four districts. The discussions were centred on how the committees are working towards scaling up nutrition. The SUN movement's Monitoring and evaluation framework was used as a tool to help assess progress or contribution of the district within the SUN Movement. The DFNSCs are composed of membership from different sectors including health, agriculture, women affairs,

education, and community development among others. The stakeholders who attended the meetings were mainly from government, development partners and civil society organisations. The Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Committees were represented in the meetings.

Presentations were made in a bid to introduce the participants to the SUN concept and frameworks. Participants were later divided into groups, each with a SUN process to carry-out the self-assessment exercise. The districts undertook self-assessment against the four SUN processes which are:

1. Ensuring the existence of a coherent policy and legal framework for nutrition
2. Bringing people in the same space through multi-stakeholder platforms
3. Common results framework for national nutrition plan (aligned programming)
4. Mobilising and tracking resources with an impact on nutrition

The progress on each of the four processes was assessed by examining the behavioural changes of SUN stakeholders in the district. For each of the four SUN processes, the level of behaviour was determined through the use of a pathway of change called a Progress Markers (PM). The PMs indicate levels of behaviour that can be expected as the SUN Movement evolves. Each PM is further explained in this note with a narrative and examples/signs of behaviour to help assess whether the steps/progress markers are;

- (i) Not applicable (N/A);
- (ii) Not started (0);
- (iii) Started (score 1);
- (iv) On-going (score 2),
- (v) Nearly completed (score 3);
- (vi) Completed (score 4) in-district (as seen in the assessment criteria table (next)

SCALING UP NUTRITION IN ZIMBABWE

N/A	0	1	2	3	4
Not applicable	Not started	Started	On-going	Nearly completed	Completed
Progress Marker not applicable to current context	Nothing in place	Planning begun	Planning completed and implementation initiated	Implementation complete with gradual steps to processes becoming operational	Fully operational/Targets are achieved/On-going with continued monitoring/Validated/Evidence provided

Group representatives shared with the main forum as a way of validating and agreeing on the scoring and supporting evidence in the template. During the validation process of the scores, the same template was used to ensure mutual accountability efforts to scale up nutrition within the district. The representation of the provincial committee in the four meetings ensured that the SUN concepts are understood and the SUN self-assessments process could be initiated at subnational level.

District Highlights

Multi-sectoral Coordination

Generally, all the four districts were doing well in the process 1,2 and 3. The progress in the pillars could be attributed to the systems strengthening mechanisms that have been put in place since the formation of the sub-national committees. Stakeholders from different sectors are meeting to discuss food and nutrition security issues. The districts have also been operating within the legal frameworks as guided by the policies, guidelines or terms of reference. There is existence of multi-sectoral work plans that are costed and developed from the community contributions. The existing work plans are prioritised and they have measurable targets and guides. The majority of the institutions have come to realise their roles in food and nutrition disciplines.

The districts performed well under pillar 3 due to the development of multisectoral workplans under the MSCBM. The workplans were used as yardsticks for progress and committees indicated that they also review

the workplans in line with emerging data and the current context. However for some districts, the workplans were not costed for particular thematic areas.

Policy and Legal Frameworks

The DFNSCs are the implementers of the policy and legal frameworks in the country. Various policy documents were available for the committee to operationalise. However, the districts felt they were not involved in the policy formulation process and it was highlighted that the multi-sectoral platforms(MSP) should be used for policy consultations to ensure all sectors contribute to the overall formulation of legal frameworks. In addition, participation of subnational MSPs would also ensure policies are grounded on the prevailing environment as guided by the implementers. Minimum efforts are made by subnational structures to influence policy reviews as evidenced by advocacy material produced.

Finance for Nutrition and Resource Tracking

Process 4 was a challenge in all the districts. The finance information was not available within sectors as well as within the district MSPs. The Local authorities and some civil society organisations share the budgetary allocations for their programmes of works. However, there was no existence of reporting mechanisms including regular financial reports, independent audit reports, cost effectiveness studies and multi-sectoral consolidation of the sectoral nutrition spending (including off-budget). The fragmentation within sectors could be a contributing factor since representatives from the accounts departments of the member organisations do

SCALING UP NUTRITION IN ZIMBABWE

not attend the DFNSCs meetings to provide such crucial information. More so, the central budgeting mechanism being employed currently limits the participation of unit ministries in budgetary allocations. The same weakness was evidenced by lack of social auditing by the communities on some of the funds. Districts failed to put up financial tracking systems for in-district activities.

Key recommendations

Process 1

- Expand committee membership to include religious leaders, in-district research institutions and the business community representatives
- Data capturing techniques and resources to be improved for instance the number of Tablets per ward to be increased from 1.
- To expedite involvement of urban wards in scaling up nutrition.
- Compilation of newsletters to keep communities abreast with developments in the districts

Process 2

- Learning from the interventions and change in behaviour within communities, the district must develop a common narrative and joint statements (policy briefs, publications) to effectively influence policy-making and other related development interventions.
- Continuous engagement of Parliamentarians at all levels is critical to foster discussions around policy issues
- The National Food and Nutrition Security Committee needs to scale up the engagement of sub-district structures and provide them with information with regards to existing policies.
- To expedite the production of policy briefs and outreach initiatives
- Ensure full participation of other sectors like the Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services and health promoters in cascading information to communities

Process 3

- The National Food and Nutrition Security

Committee to capacitate sub-national levels on the development of advocacy tools in order to strengthen on the documentation of best practices and behaviour change stories.

- Need to provide Ward FNSCs with constraint removal budgets to improve data collection and submission of reports to districts
- Coordination assessed and identified weak participation of CSOs hence the need to motivate the stakeholders for increased and consistent participation in local meetings
- Need to capture the lessons learnt and share with other districts so as to scale up local initiatives

Process 4

- Improved funding to scale-up the implementation of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions e.g. Nutrition sensitive agriculture and social protection, Vitamin A supplementation at community level
- SUN Movement should assist in ensuring that the districts are equipped with budgets where necessary such that adjustments and gaps are noted
- Incorporate the participatory approach for financial planning and tracking
- Capacitation of DFNSC members on financial planning and tracking
- Decentralization of activities such as budgeting
- Need to cost all plans

Conclusion

Subnational structures should be involved in the self-assessment process at national level so as to capacitate all levels to appreciate their contribution to country milestones. The SUN movement sensitisation meetings ought to be carried out in more districts.

