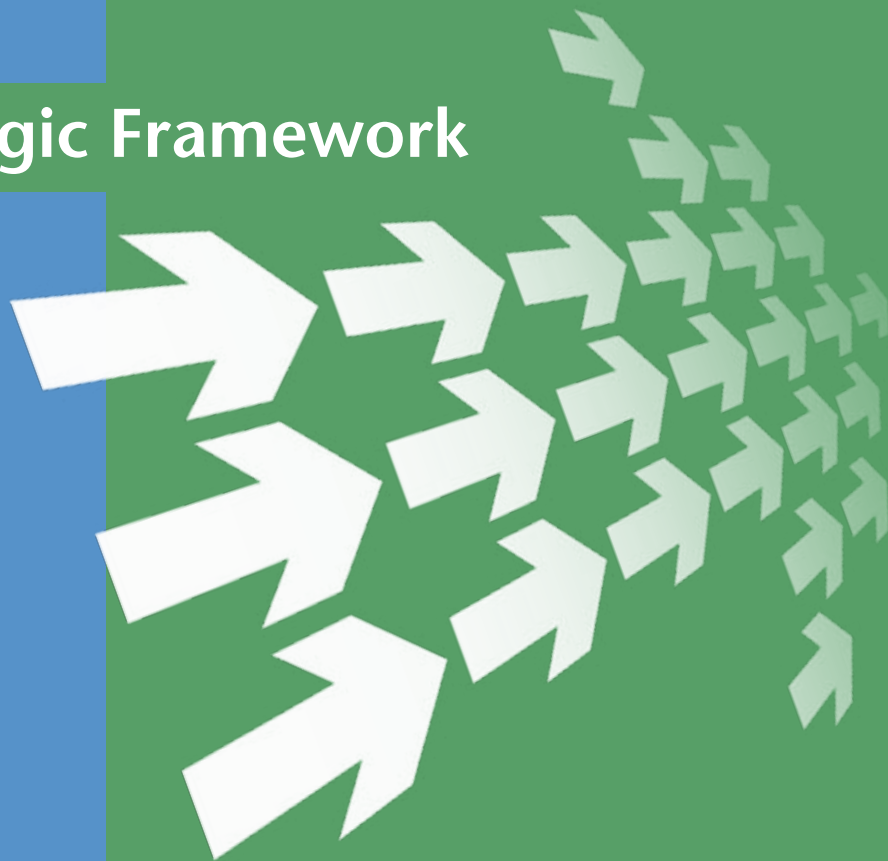




United Nations
System

Standing
Committee on
Nutrition

Strategic Framework



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United Nations
System

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The SCN was conceived to serve as a point of convergence for the UN system in the area of nutrition and food and nutrition policy, ensuring that the system-wide response is indeed greater than the sum of the individual efforts. The SCN is not in itself another agency. The SCN is a forum in which the agencies come together to harmonize policies and programmes, coordinate activities, and act together to achieve global nutritional aims. Its structures and functions exist to support the overall effort, to do what no single agency, acting alone, can do.

The importance of food and nutrition in human development is widely recognized in both high income and middle to low income countries. However, development plans commonly pay little attention to food and nutrition problems, in spite of their being dominant among the leading causes of disease and disabilities in both developed and low income countries.

The Standing Committee on Nutrition of the UN System (SCN) is a policy harmonization forum where UN agencies, Bilateral Partners and NGOs/CSOs come together to exchange information and discuss nutrition related issues. After three decades the SCN members now consider it is time for the SCN to move beyond just advocacy work, and contribute more concretely to the development of harmonized actions for accelerating the improvement of all types of malnutrition and to help achieve the majority of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the country level within the framework of the Millennium Declaration. As stated in the UN Agencies Report of the 31st Session in 2004: *the SCN is at a critical junction in its existence, and business as usual will no longer suffice.*

As a result, the SCN Steering Committee reviewed the 2000 SCN *Strategic Plan*, the SCN body discussed proposed updates at the 31st, 32nd and 33rd Sessions. This new Strategic Framework was approved at the 33rd Session in March 2006 and replaces the 2000 *Strategic Plan*. The Framework will guide the development of activities by the SCN over the next five years and be reviewed again in 2010. (The separate SCN *Action Plan* is a rolling five year plan, that will serve to guide the development of more detailed annual work plans, subject of course to funds being raised.)

VISION AND MANDATE

1. The SCN vision is a world free from hunger and malnutrition, where there are no longer impediments to human development.
2. The mandate of the SCN is to promote cooperation among UN agencies and partner organizations in support of community, national, regional, and international efforts to end malnutrition in all of its forms in this generation. It will do this by refining the direction, increasing the scale and strengthening the coherence and impact of actions against malnutrition world wide, and raise awareness of nutrition problems and mobilize commitment to solve them at global, regional and national levels.

PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

3. The principles which should guide the SCN actions include:
 - supporting country ownership and leadership of the development agenda
 - working within the global development framework (for example Millennium Development Goals)
 - promoting human rights based development and good governance
 - promoting the integration of nutrition in the national, regional, and global development agendas.
4. The main elements of the SCN strategy are to facilitate and strengthen synergies in the following areas:
 - creating and strengthening political, public and agency commitments
 - developing human capacity for nutrition in development and emergencies
 - building and maintaining the evidence base, documenting lessons learnt on nutrition in development and in emergency situations

- promoting and strengthening intersectoral approaches and coordinating mechanisms, for harmonizing actions and generating value added in addressing malnutrition
- strengthening planning, programming and budgeting to deliver effective interventions at scale
- monitoring, evaluating and reporting on nutrition trends
- bringing attention to emerging issues and knowledge gaps related to the prevention of malnutrition and problems it causes
- convening *ad hoc* task forces to resolve specific issues of inter-agency concern.

KEY ACTIVITY AREAS

5. In pursuit of these general elements five key activity areas are identified for the SCN as follows:

Develop and implement a strategy for high level advocacy and strategic communication

- Disseminating evidence on the role of nutrition in human development and key nutrition messages to selected decision making bodies and forums
- raising stakeholders awareness of the linkages between malnutrition, poverty and food insecurity, as well as associated vulnerability factors; and the importance of good nutritional status for avoiding sickness and/or recovering from sickness
- ensuring that nutrition is on the agenda of key meetings with senior managers, including governing bodies of constituent agencies.

Track and report on progress towards achieving the MDGs and other nutrition related goals, including nutrition related chronic diseases (NRCDS), in both development and humanitarian aid settings.¹

- continue with periodic publication of the Report on the World Nutrition Situation (RWNS)
- compile evidence on the contribution of nutrition to MDGs and NRCDS for the RWNS

¹ The Report of the Secretary General Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration presented at the September 2005 Summit emphasized that the MDGs need to be pursued as part of a larger development agenda that also encompasses the needs of the middle income developing countries, questions of growing inequality, and the wider dimensions of human development.

- ensure the incorporation of relevant nutrition-related indicators in the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards achieving the MDGs, allowing for the identification and monitoring of causes of malnutrition (food security, health and care) within a livelihoods framework.

Facilitate integration of nutrition into MDG related activities at the country level through the UN coordination system

- promote and facilitate country case studies on the integration of nutrition in MDG-related activities
- through its UN agency members, promote and facilitate at country level collaboration of all UN agencies, NGOs/CSOs and Bilateral Partners, for appropriate integration of nutrition into the MDG processes in selected countries
- promote and facilitate the training of persons in selected countries to mainstream nutrition into MDG processes.

Mainstream human rights approaches into the work of the SCN

- integration of the human rights based approaches into the thematic working group substantive domains
- promotion of the Voluntary Guidelines and pre-existing international instruments for realizing the human right to adequate food.

Identifying key scientific and operational gaps

- identifying emerging issues and filling of knowledge gaps
- accelerating the transfer of the latest knowledge into action to fill the implementation gap.

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

6. *The SCN's tripartite nature* From its inception in 1977 the SCN has progressively become more inclusive in its membership, and now it has three full constituencies. Bilateral Donors were observers at the UN inter-agency meetings from its inception, and IUNS represented civil society. Since 1999

SCN has consisted of three constituencies: the UN agencies, including other international and regional development finance institutions, and intergovernmental bodies; the Bilateral Partners, including representatives from both high income and low income countries; and civil society, including international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and other civil society representatives. The NGOs provide a broad spectrum of scientific, technical and service expertise to link the SCN to civil society. This includes, for example, links to academics and technical groups, international NGOs, and emergency and disaster relief service groups. They provide independent review at several levels, such as technical and scientific soundness of publications, projects and programmes, and an on-site analysis of needs, opportunities and constraints to agency programme effectiveness and their implementation with a human rights context.

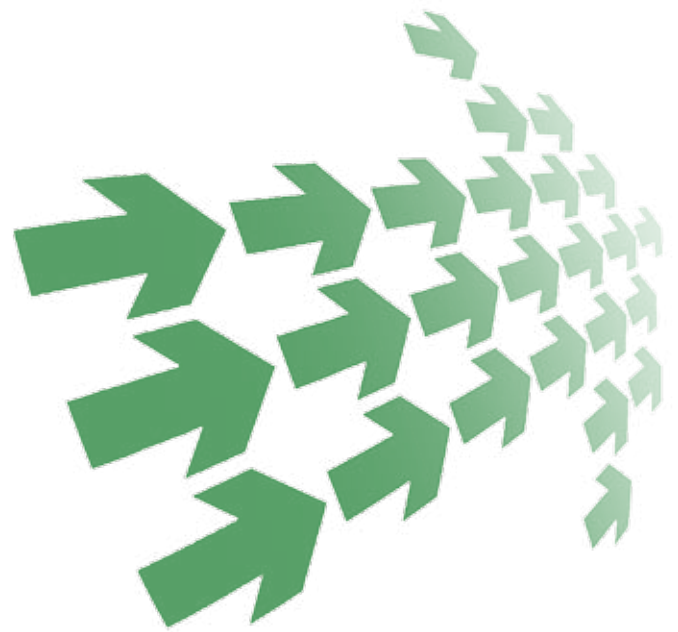
7. *Annual Sessions* include parallel meetings for each of the three constituencies; a public symposium, Working Group and business meetings, and are open to all participants. In its early years, SCN Sessions were always held in the headquarters of one of the UN agencies. In the last ten years the Sessions have been held every alternate year in a low income countries as well as being hosted by Bilateral Partners. Furthermore, since 1998 three Bilateral Partners (Norway, Germany and Brazil) have hosted the Annual Session. The SCN makes special efforts to ensure a reasonable balance of participants from the low income countries at its meetings. The work of the SCN is based on the principle of consensus-building and inclusiveness.
8. The SCN acknowledges the *private commercial sector*, and especially the food and drink and associated industries, as important actors engaged in nutrition related activities. The SCN is developed guidelines for interacting with the private sector, especially those industries with commercial interest in the nutritional nature and quality of food and drink, with the intention among other issues of being open and clear about potential conflicts of interest, and ensuring that these aspects are adequately managed.

9. *The Working Groups* are at the heart of the SCN. Through Working Groups, participants take an active role in the work of the SCN, promoting the successful implementation of programmes, sharing advocacy and review tasks in the substantive areas deemed of greatest importance by the collective SCN body. Each Working Group has a chair and two co-chairs, one from each of the three clusters, and an annual work plan which is aimed at identifying and filling both knowledge and implementation gaps. The Working Groups host workshops as an integral part of the annual SCN Session. Generic terms of reference for Working Groups further explain their mandate and responsibilities (see Terms of Reference 1 page 8)
10. *Membership* SCN membership is primarily determined by institutional affiliation among its three constituencies, namely the UN organizations, the Bilateral Partners (donor and recipient countries together representing their governments) and the Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations (NGO/CSO). Those that belong to the UN agencies and/or the Bilateral Partners are easily categorized. Those that are not in these two categories are considered to be in the NGO/CSO constituency, which includes representatives of *not for profit* non-governmental humanitarian and developmental aid agencies active in food and nutrition, representatives of academic, research and civil society organizations, and interested academicians and researchers. The desirability for a greater private sector engagement is recognized, but they are not seen as members *per se*. Such interaction would have to be facilitated by special arrangements. Participation of members within the three constituencies varies considerably, with some being more active than others. Active members of the SCN get involved in its ongoing activities through the Working Groups and/or the Task Forces of the Steering Committee. The NGO/CSO and the Bilateral Partners constituencies, as well as the Working Groups, keep lists of their members which are shared with the Secretariat.
11. *The Chair* The SCN Chair is on election a senior UN official and is expected to provide leadership in the field of food and nutrition policy. The Chair is supported by a Vice Chair. The Chair advocates and mobilizes actors and actions aimed at accelerating the reduction of hunger and malnutrition and the achievement of global goals. Specifically the Chair maintains regular high-level interaction with the Chief Executive Board (CEB), ECOSOC, and other UN bodies, Bilateral and the NGO/CSO community and engages all bodies that have a role in the reduction of malnutrition worldwide. The Chair guides the SCN in developing a strategic approach to bringing substantive nutrition matters to the attention of the CEB. The expected minimum term of office of the Chair is two years, and can be re-elected for a maximum of three two years terms, for a total of six years. The Steering Committee is responsible for selecting the Chair and the Vice Chair, which ideally should represent both low and high income countries. (See Terms of Reference 2 and 3 page 9 and 10)
12. *The Steering Committee* A Steering Committee of not more than ten members (composed of at least five UN agencies, and at least one each from the Bilateral and NGO/CSO constituencies) under the leadership of the SCN Chair guides and monitors the implementation of the *Action Plan* in the context of the *Strategic Framework*. Steering Committee members are appointed by the Chair for a three year period which is renewable. The UN agency representatives are the leading nutrition staff member from the agency concerned, and alternates are only permitted at the discretion of the Chair. One of the UN agencies on the Steering Committee represents the other agencies not represented on the SC. (See Terms of Reference 4 page 10).
13. *The Secretariat* is headed by the SCN Secretary. It carries out tasks assigned by the SCN, supports the Chair in executing his or her executive functions, facilitates the work of the Steering Committee, and acts dynamically to strengthen networking and ensure follow-up. Key tasks include the organization

and follow-up of the annual Sessions and Working Group activities, preparation of reports for the CEB and to support the Chair in mobilizing support and resources for carrying out the *Action Plan*. The Secretariat is also responsible for managing a peer review process in support of SCN publications to ensure their high quality (See Terms of Reference 5 page 10).

FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

14. The core and programme biennium budgets are presented separately, and approved as a package by the SCN body at the annual Session, together with a rolling five year *Action Plan*. The SCN Steering Committee will report through the Chair once per biennium on core budget matters and on progress with the *Action Plan* to the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the Chief Executive Board (CEB).
15. The core funding of the SCN Secretariat is provided by the UN Agencies. The Bilateral Partners provide funds to the programme budget, and civil society is encouraged to contribute also. It is acknowledged that a lot of in kind support is provided by all the of the SCN constituencies, and especially by the NGOs/CSOs.
16. The cost of housing the SCN Secretariat is accounted for as a *contribution in kind* from the hosting agency.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Generic Terms of Reference for SCN Working Groups

Working Groups are the driving force of the SCN. Through Working Groups, operating continuously, participating agencies, Bilateral Partners and the NGOs/CSOs take an active role in the work programme of the SCN, to achieve the harmonizing, information sharing, advocacy and review tasks in the substantive areas deemed of greatest importance by the Steering Committee, representing the collective SCN body.

Purpose

The purpose of SCN Working Groups (WG) includes:

- sharing information on latest scientific advances, programmes and innovations in the specific substantive nutritional area of the WG
- through information sharing and networking, assisting in the harmonization and alignment of agency actions, and reinforcing key agency actions in areas of mutual concern
- identifying critical issues for further attention by SCN participating bodies. This includes identifying gaps in current policies, strategies, programmes, guidelines, norms and standards, identifying relevant actors and suitable ways to address the gaps and to take the substantive agenda forward. Work may be carried out through dedicated task forces (see below) or other suitable mechanisms including holding workshops and publishing the results as SCN Policy Papers in the Food and Nutrition Bulletin of the UNU
- provide advice to the Secretariat and the SCN Chair, and perform tasks as necessary on technical issues related to the substantive nutritional area of the Working Group.

Structure, composition and operating procedures

- a) Each WG to have a chair, appointed by the SCN Chair upon recommendation from the WG for a

renewable three year period. The WG chair should generally be from a UN agency, but the SCN Chair may also appoint a WG chair from among the NGO/CSO cluster or the Bilateral Partners cluster of participants in the SCN. The lead WG Chair should have two co-chairs, one from the Bilateral Partners and the other from the NGO/CSO cluster, also following recommendations from the WG.

- b) Responsibilities of WG chairs include:
 - engage the WG in preparation of a concise one-to-two year work plan for review by the SCN annual Session
 - to take leadership on the frequency, format and venue of WG workshops or other events
 - to take leadership to organize a workshop on the substantive theme of the WG during the annual SCN Sessions and submit an agenda to the Secretariat by February 1st, in advance of the annual SCN Session. The workshop should include a review of latest scientific and programmatic advances in the field, a consolidated report of agency actions on the topic, with particular focus on regional and country actions, emerging issues for consideration and resolution, and a discussion of the work plan for the forthcoming year
 - when additional mid-year workshops are planned, work with the Secretariat to find a host, raise funds if needed, and organize the workshop.
- c) Each WG to appoint one or more rapporteur(s), who, with the WG chairs, serves as anchor for the group throughout the year, and is responsible for sharing information about the WG activities with participants and other interested parties. The rapporteur(s) assists the chairs with the preparation of agendas for workshops and other WG activities, prepares meeting reports and tracks follow-up actions. The rapporteur(s) liaises with the Secretariat to finalize and disseminate reports. The function of rapporteur(s) can be assigned on a year-by-year basis at the annual meeting, and can be carried out by participants from any cluster in the SCN.
- d) Each WG should have a core of members representing *at least three UN agencies*, as well as Bilateral

and NGO/CSO participants. Membership is voluntary and open to all interested persons, but membership requires active participation in the functioning of the group during the course of the year. Each WG must facilitate the participation of persons in leadership positions in nutrition programmes in low income countries in WG activities.

- e) Working Groups should present their work programme for approval to the SCN during the annual Session. The WG may recommend that the SCN appoint dedicated task forces to carry out specific tasks on behalf of the SCN. Such task forces will have specified terms of reference, which will specify concrete deliverables and a limited life span. Task forces will report to the SCN through the relevant Working Groups, and will be disbanded on completion of their specific task.

Working Group themes and lifespan

The SCN Chair, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will periodically review the themes of the WGs, and make recommendations to the SCN body regarding themes requiring new WGs. SCN participants can at any time submit proposals for WG themes to the SCN Chair for consideration. This will help to ensure that priority issues and relevant substantive areas are addressed. The continued existence of a WG is not automatic, but will be confirmed by the Chair, on the basis of the performance of the WG, after the annual Session. Similarly, the SCN Chair will review the slate of WG chairs and make necessary adjustments, after consultation with the Steering Committee.

2. Terms of Reference of the Chair, UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition

The Chair should provide leadership in the field of nutrition through effective advocacy and support to the members' global nutrition strategies.

Specific duties

- a) Fulfil a dynamic leadership role through regular high-level interaction with the CEB/HLPC/UNDG and other UN bodies, Bilaterals and the NGO/CSO community and engage all bodies concerned with working towards a world free from hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. Guide and assist in the preparation of the agenda for the annual Session; Chair the annual Session; attend other SCN-related meetings during the year.
- b) Oversee the work of the SCN Secretariat and maintain close communication with the Secretary, delegating tasks as appropriate in order to ensure effective and efficient management.
- c) Take initiative in raising funds for the ongoing work programme of the Secretariat.

Resources available to the Chair

- SCN Secretariat
- Working Groups on a number of key themes – there are currently nine
- Steering Committee consisting of representation from UN agencies, Bilateral Partners and NGOs/CSOs
- The core and programme budgets as approved at the SCN Annual Session
- The Vice Chair

Expectations of the Chair and/or his/her organization

- the Chair must be a Senior Official (at least ADG level) from one of the participating UN agencies upon election
- be able to commit at least 20 working days per year, including annual sessions
- provide funding for travel on behalf of the SCN to attend periodic *face-to-face* meetings of the Steering Committee, meetings of the CEB/HLPC, and technical conferences, such as the IUNS Congress, as well as annual Sessions of the SCN itself, individual meetings with SCN members; and for meeting with the SCN Secretariat
- office accommodation, communications and secretarial assistance for the Chair
- to provide at least six months notice of their intention to cease being the Chair, in order to allow the Steering Committee time to find a successor.

3. Terms of reference of the Vice Chair

The Vice Chair is selected from the Steering Committee members, by the Steering Committee, to assist the Chair in carrying out their functions, including standing for the Chair as and when necessary.

Specific duties

- a) To stand in for the chair in their absence at Steering Committee meetings
- b) To carry out specific tasks as delegated by the Chair.

4. Terms of Reference SCN Steering Committee

At its 26th Session the SCN made far-reaching proposals to revitalize interagency collaboration in support of an intensified global, regional and local fight against malnutrition. An Interim Programme Steering Committee was appointed for one year to advise the SCN on revisions to its structure and processes. The Steering Committee has remained in place and is now the main driving force behind SCN work.

The Steering Committee holds monthly conference calls with a set agenda. The minutes are prepared by the Secretariat with a record of what actions need to be taken by whom in between conference calls. Conference calls are initiated by the Secretariat.

The SCN Chair appoints Steering Committee members for a two to three year period, after broad consultation with the SCN. The Committee includes not more than ten representatives, with at least five from UN agencies, and at least one NGO/CSO and at least one Bilateral Partners representative. Steering Committee members should take advantage of informal contacts at other meetings to carry out their work and to gather suggestions and ideas for the deliberations of the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members should communicate regularly to the wider SCN body on the work of the Committee, its actions and draft proposals. The Committee reports to the SCN Chair. UN agency participation in the Steering Committee must be reflected in an appropriate level of core funding to the SCN.

The functions of the Steering Committee are the following:

- Guide and facilitate the implementation of the *Action Plan* through the specific task forces
- Monitor follow-up of recommendations made by the working groups and their task forces
- Identify strategic venues for the SCN Chair to give key note speeches on nutrition
- Assist in the identification of new issues to be addressed by the SCN
- Provide support to the Chair and Secretariat in pursuit of the SCN mandate and goals.

5. Terms of Reference SCN Secretariat

The Secretariat is administered by the Secretary of the SCN, who reports to the Chair. The Secretary, a senior nutrition and/or food and nutrition policy professional, preferably with a broad UN experience of nutrition programming as well as a post graduate qualification in nutrition, is selected by the Steering Committee, and appointed by the Chair for a two year term, renewable for a maximum of three terms. The Secretariat staff are hired and supervised by the Secretary in accordance with the administrative rules of the hosting body and in consultation with the Chair.

The main tasks of the SCN Secretariat are the following:

Play a pivotal role in the development and implementation of the SCN Action Plan, foster dialogue and understanding amongst the UN agencies and others to initiate and sustain planned activities; track progress achieved against agreed milestones; make recommendations to the Steering Committee on flexible adaptation of the Action Plan to emerging issues within the SCN; report also on problems encountered and propose means to solve them.

Raise awareness of the causes, costs and consequences of malnutrition through dissemination of information, the principle avenues being the SCN publications

and website; serve as a point of contact for information on nutrition policies, programmes and events of the UN agencies.

Act dynamically to strengthen networking to ensure effective follow-up action to SCN decisions and recommendations, as well as those of other UN fora at which specific functions are assigned to the SCN. This involves keeping SCN participants in touch with one another and informed; helping to identify gaps, complementarities and possible overlap in programmes. Represent the SCN in meetings/discussions with international, governmental, non-governmental bodies, Bilateral Partners and the scientific community.

Every two to three years publish a Report on the World Nutrition Situation to document malnutrition prevalence and trends worldwide, as well as to present information on global issues affecting nutrition. These reports offer analysis and interpretation of nutrition problems throughout the life cycle. Tables and figures are often provided by the UN agencies and others. The editing, formatting and design of the report, is done by the SCN Secretariat.

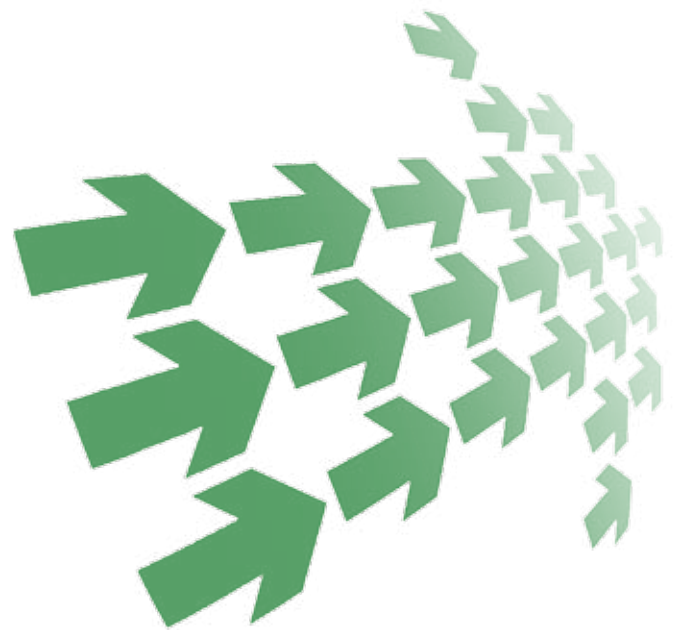
Implement a programme of work, as approved by the SCN, together with a biennial budget. Currently the main element in this programme is three ongoing series of publications: *SCN News*, reports of the *Nutrition Information in Crisis Situations* and *Nutrition Policy Papers*, as well as the SCN website. Based on the translation of the *Strategic Framework and Action Plan* into annual work plans, the focus of this work will evolve.

Organize and service Annual Sessions of the SCN, as well as Working Groups and task forces convened under the auspices of the SCN; develop symposia topics and organize and service symposia and special meetings to raise awareness of emerging nutrition issues. This work is aimed at harmonizing nutrition policies across the UN and involves preparing technical and other documentation for discussion, participating in the work of the meetings and drafting reports.

Serve as Secretariat to the SCN Steering Committee, organize their meetings, prepare minutes and ensure timely follow-up to agreed activities.

In collaboration with the Chair, raise funds to cover costs of the programme of work of the Action Plan, from Bilateral donors, private foundations and UN agencies. Liaise with the Secretariat's host agency to effectively administer these funds and to report back to donors on products and disbursements.

Manage a peer review process to ensure the high quality of the SCN technical publications. This process seeks to involve expertise from UN agencies, Bilateral Partners, NGOs/CSOs.



Annex 1

Background

- a) The SCN was established by ECOSOC in 1977 to serve as the focal point for promoting harmonized nutrition policies and strategies throughout the UN System, and to strengthen collaboration with other partners for accelerated and more effective action against malnutrition. From its inception, Bilateral government representatives and members of civil society have participated actively in SCN activities. Changes have been proposed to the way the UN System deals with nutrition for over a decade,² with however very little actually having changed to date. The important areas of change proposed by Dick Heyward, one of the founding fathers of the SCN, related to: 1) the focus and content of the UN system support for food and nutrition interventions, 2) the scale of the systems response to the nutrition problem; and 3) the organization of the UN system to foster and support national and local food and nutrition programmes. These recommendations are still pertinent today and are addressed by the SCN *Action Plan*.
- b) At its 26th Session in 1999 the SCN concluded that unless action for nutrition was accelerated, hunger and malnutrition would persist for another century.³ A higher level of commitment and effort was therefore considered to be required. Prior to 2000 the SCN was guided by an Advisory Group on Nutrition (AGN) composed of distinguished experts from the field. At the 27th Session in 2000 a *Strategic Plan* was adopted, the AGN was disbanded, and a Steering Committee (SC) established to guide and monitor the work of the SCN. The SC is comprised of five UN agency representatives and one each from the Bilateral and NGO/CSO constituencies, and is supported by the Secretariat and guided

by the Chair. The *Strategic Plan* was to have been evaluated in 2003/4, but that did not materialise. A mid-term review⁴ of the Secretariat concluded that beyond publications and the annual session, little more was being achieved. The implementation of the *Strategic Plan* was supposed to be facilitated by the Secretariat, but this has proved to be beyond its limited resources. Nobody really understood whose responsibility it was to implement the plan. The intention to transform the *Strategic Plan* into time bound action plans was never realized.

- c) During 2004 the SC began a process of review and reform of the *Strategic Plan*. Based on deliberations made at the SC retreat in Tivoli (January 2004), a series of recommendations were presented to the SCN at the 31st Session held at the UN in New York in March. These included a new vision and mandate, principles and strategic elements, and four essential areas of action. Although the special attention to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) proposed by the SC was welcomed by all three constituencies, either as a short term goal or as the current development framework, the Bilateral Partners and the NGO/CSO constituencies considered it unwise to focus all the SCN's activities on MDGs alone. In addition the human rights aspects of the MDGs provided by the Millennium Declaration are considered essential elements for the SCN. The SC Tivoli retreat proposal to carry out Country Case Studies on how to strengthen food and nutrition components of national poverty reduction plans and to bring these results to the next session was agreed.
- d) After the 31st Session further work carried out by the Secretariat and the SC has contributed to the ongoing reform of the *Strategic Plan*. A review of the Working Groups was carried out by the Secretariat and formed the basis for SC recommendations

2 Heyward, E.J.R. 1992. The United Nations System and Nutrition: The need for change in a more democratic world. Martin J Forman Fifth Annual Memorial Lecture. New York: Helen Keller International.

3 At current rates of progress it will take until 2080 for hunger to be eliminated and 2110 for stunting to become a rarity.

4 Kennedy, E. 2002. Mid-term Performance Review of the SCN Secretariat. Geneva: SCN Secretariat.

discussed at the January 2005 SC meeting. At that SC meeting a further proposal for the governance structure and the basis for funding modalities were also agreed. Preliminary guidelines were also developed on how to manage interaction with the private sector as recommended during the 31st Session. The Secretariat also completed the Country Case Study Exercise, with a series of conclusions and recommendations which are of great relevance to the development of an *Action Plan*. These many recommendations were shared with the membership at the 32nd Session for discussion in the various constituencies.

- e) In June 2005 the SCN together with ECOSOC held a special information meeting at the UN on the Critical Role of Nutrition for Reaching the Millennium Development Goals. This was in preparation for the September 2005 Millennium +5 High Level Plenary of the UN General Assembly. There was general agreement among participants that income poverty reduction and increased food production alone will not solve the nutrition problems of the poor in low income countries. Furthermore if special efforts are not made to tackle these global nutrition problems, the achievement of most Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be seriously compromised.

Overview of the malnutrition problem

- f) Various efforts have been mounted during the last decade to try to combat malnutrition in all its forms. Coordinated multisectoral international and national actions were proposed in the 1992 International Conference on Nutrition, and the 1996 World Food Summit. For the most part, the response to under-nutrition has been piecemeal and confined within narrow discipline and sectoral boundaries. All too often only the immediate food shortage or disease

causes are addressed, ignoring deeper-seated causes notably unfair trade, suffocating debt, inequitable land distribution, and environmental degradation – all closely linked to a process of inequitable economic globalization. Although there are notable successes (e.g. against iodine deficiency disorders and vitamin A deficiency in most regions, and in promoting breastfeeding in many countries) the international response for reducing undernutrition has generally been insufficient, due to insufficient resources and political commitment and insufficient coordination, resulting in reduced impact.⁵

- g) Despite decades of international action and considerable progress in some areas and regions, undernutrition remains a pervasive problem with devastating economic, social and health consequences. Undernutrition is both a cause and consequence of income poverty, and is exacerbated by the growing inequality between the rich and the poor, and by natural and man-made disasters. Considerable evidence has shown that this relative inequity has serious and measurable impacts on mortality both from undernutrition and non-communicable diseases. More alarming still is that undernutrition's negative effects are not limited to presently affected generations. Mounting scientific evidence indicates that undernutrition has adverse intergenerational effects that significantly increase its economic and other social costs.⁶ Investing in nutrition makes economic sense because it reduces health care costs, improves productivity and economic growth and promotes education, intellectual capacity and social development for present and future generations
- h) The malnutrition challenge is all the more pressing when considered in the light of emerging global issues. While improved food production and increased incomes have made food more readily

5 Gillespie S, McLachlan M, and Shrimpton R. 2003 Combating Malnutrition: Time to Act. The World Bank-UNICEF Nutrition Assessment. Washington: The World Bank.

6 Commission on the Nutrition Challenges of the 21st Century. 2000. Ending Malnutrition by 2020: an agenda for change. Geneva: SCN Secretariat.

available and accessible to more people, millions of poor people in many countries are still unable to secure their right to food in a sustainable and dignified manner. Millions more, when displaced by natural disasters and wars, are particularly vulnerable.

- i) At the same time the world is also increasingly affected by another sort of malnutrition. There are more than a billion adults world wide who are overweight and at least 300 million who are clinically obese. Among these, about half a million people in North America and Western Europe are dying from obesity related diseases. The problems of over and under nutrition are often thought of as separate problems of the rich and poor, but in reality both are deeply rooted in poverty. WHO has two strategies that are aimed at each of these problems, one being the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding, and the other the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Exercise and Health. However these two strategies are often pursued and promoted independently, as if the two problems were independent of each other.
- j) The emerging global epidemic of non-communicable or chronic diseases is no longer a problem restricted to affluent, industrialized countries. It is increasingly affecting low income countries and contributing to their existing burden of undernutrition.⁷ Thus in low income societies, diseases caused by caloric inadequacy and deficiency continue to persist, but now co-exist with the growing presence of nutrition related chronic diseases (NRCs) among adults; this is the *double burden* of malnutrition. Many of these NCDs are the result of changes in food systems and diet and life-style that characterize the *nutrition transition* that accompanies economic development, increased mechanization, the urbanization of societies and the commercialization and now globalization of food systems. NRCs take an enormous toll in

lives (33 million premature deaths world wide) and account for about 59% of premature deaths due to heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and obesity. NRCs account for at least 40% of all deaths in low income countries and represent an even greater proportion of loss of disability adjusted life years (DALYs); they constitute an immense and growing global health problem imposing additional economic and health burden on low income countries.⁸ People worldwide have a right to good quality, safe food-based on sustainable food systems and renewable food resources, especially those derived from local and indigenous food species and harvest.

- k) Undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and nutrition related chronic diseases are increasingly found to co-exist in communities, and even the same households, in the majority of countries. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is also undermining gains in nutrition as manifested by deterioration in nutritional status in highly affected regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. People worldwide have a right to good quality safe foods. Accordingly, addressing food safety issues at community, national and international levels have gained increasing importance.
- l) Reducing malnutrition is a key component of and for the elimination of poverty.⁹ Several human rights conventions oblige states and their partners, including international organizations to take actions separately and together to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. A human rights approach to development means the achievement of goals through sustainable and empowering processes. Many social, economic and cultural rights can only be realized progressively. It is therefore important to define the realization by time-bound targets. These targets should be set at country level, and then aggregated at regional and global levels. Malnutrition reduction is recognized

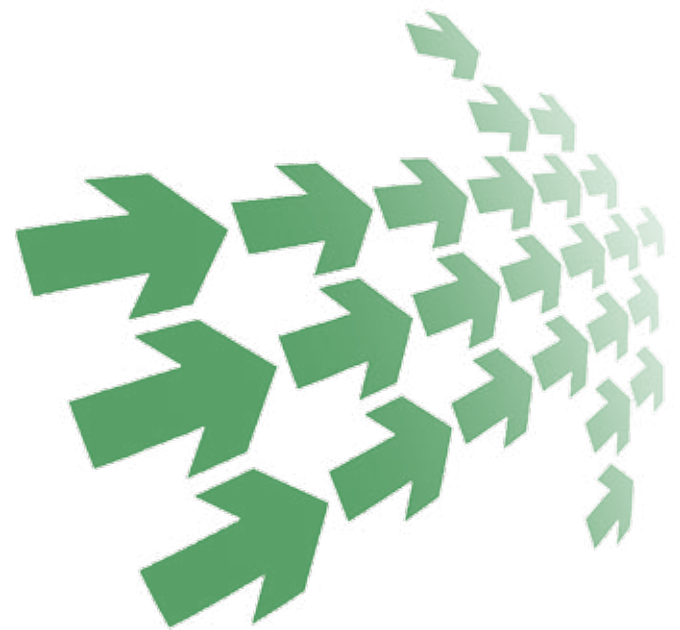
7 Schmidhuber, J and Shetty, P 2005 Nutrition transition, obesity & noncommunicable diseases: drivers, outlook and concerns. SCN News. 29: 13-20. Geneva: SCN Secretariat.

8 WHO 2005 Preventing Chronic Diseases; a vital investment. Geneva: WHO.

9 SCN 2004 5th Report on the World Nutrition Situation: Nutrition for Improved Development Outcomes. Geneva: SCN Secretariat.

as one of the key indicators for monitoring progress in poverty reduction. For this reason the Millennium Declaration and the associated Development Goals provide an unprecedented opportunity to give greater prominence to the entire nutrition effort, as governments and world development leaders unite around a comprehensive approach to poverty and development.

- m) The realization of most human rights requires responsibility, legitimacy, participation, and resources. Resources include human, economic and organizational resources. The first two are most often recognized. Organizational resources are not. Organizational resources include both formal and informal institutional arrangements. These play a crucial role in closing the gap between what is known and what is actually done. Efforts should be made to come up with appropriate institutional arrangements at various levels, from community level, to national, regional and global levels, so that malnutrition reduction can be achieved within the target time frame. Social mobilization and capacity building, especially at community level, are an essential integral part of institutional arrangements which will lead to sustainability in prevention and control of malnutrition.
- n) To grasp this opportunity and support countries in fulfilling their obligations regarding the right to food and to be free from malnutrition, the nutrition community must set itself a strategic agenda, and mobilize strongly for its implementation. The SCN exists for this purpose: it was conceived to serve as a point of convergence for the UN system in the area of nutrition and food and nutrition policy, ensuring that the system-wide response is indeed greater than the sum of the individual efforts. The SCN is not in itself another agency. The SCN is a forum in which the agencies come together to harmonize policies and programmes, coordinate activities, and *act together* to achieve global nutritional aims. Its structures and functions exist to support the overall effort, to do what no single agency, acting alone, can do.





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