



## The United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN)

- The Standing Committee on Nutrition of the UN System (SCN) is a **forum** where UN agencies, Bilateral Partners and NGOs/CSOs come together to exchange information and discuss nutrition related issues. The SCN is not another agency but a mechanism for facilitating joint work. It aims to ensure that the system-wide response is indeed greater than the sum of the individual efforts.
- The SCN **network** is open to all and includes most of the major players in the international food and nutrition arena. Alexander Müller (Assistant Director-General, FAO) is the tenth Chair since SCN was established in 1977. He chairs the Steering Committee which includes key nutrition actors in the UN agencies and representatives of the Bilateral and NGO/Civil Society groups.
- The **mandate** of the SCN is to raise awareness of nutrition problems and mobilize commitment to solve them at global, regional and national levels; to harmonize approaches, upscale and strengthen the coherence and impact of actions against malnutrition worldwide; and to promote co-operation amongst UN agencies and partner organizations in support of national efforts to end malnutrition.
- The SCN undertakes a range of **activities** to address this mandate:
  - Annual SCN Sessions are typically attended by some 300 participants. The past ten SCN Sessions have seen participation of not less than 26 UN agencies and development banks, 51 Bilateral Partners and more than 150 NGOs plus a wide range of academic institutions and other civil society actors.
  - SCN Working Groups and Task Forces enable members to work on topics of common interest including assessment, monitoring and evaluation, breastfeeding and complementary feeding, school-based approaches, nutrition in emergencies, household food security, ethics and human rights or capacity development.
  - The SCN's Reports on the World Nutrition Situation, published periodically, are authoritative sources on nutrition trends and issues. Nutrition Policy Papers and the SCN News summarize current knowledge on selected topics. Quarterly bulletins on Nutrition Information in Crisis Situations are published in collaboration with a large network of NGOs.
- At its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual session in 2006, the SCN endorsed a new **Strategic Framework** with a view to move beyond advocacy work, and to contribute more concretely to the development of harmonized actions for accelerating the improvement of all types of malnutrition and contributing to the achievement of most Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at country level. This led to the SCN agreeing at its 34<sup>th</sup> session to provide technical advisory services to the Ending Child Hunger Initiative (ECHUI), since re-branded as REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger), which is jointly supported by the heads of agencies of FAO, UNICEF, WHO and WFP.
- **Principles** to guide SCN actions are: consensus-building and inclusiveness, supporting country ownership and leadership of the development agenda; strengthening institutional capacity, promoting human rights based development and good governance; as well as the integration of nutrition in the national, regional, and global development agendas.
- The SCN welcomes participation and advice from philanthropic organisations and the commercial **private sector**. It acknowledges their role as important actors in the areas of food, health and nutrition. The SCN has developed and agreed upon a SCN Private Sector Engagement Policy in 2006 and is actively exploring ways of involving the private sector more in its work .
- **Malnutrition in all its forms amounts to an intolerable burden** not only on national health systems but the entire cultural, social and economic fabric of nations, and is the greatest impediment to the fulfilment of human potential. Investing in nutrition therefore 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.
- Nutritional status is an outcome of a series of determinants clustered into **food, health and care**. Each of these clusters is essential but alone insufficient for achieving nutrition security. The SCN provides a unique mechanism for effectively **linking agriculture and health for good nutrition** and for the UN agencies and its partners to **work together to reinstall nutrition at the top of the international agenda**.