

UN Nutrition Operational Modalities

1. Background

In 2019, the constituent member agencies¹ of the Steering Committee of the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the UN Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (UN Network) decided to merge the two entities. Under the guidance of the UNSCN Chair and of the Deputies of these agencies¹, the process was initiated to establish a single entity to be called UN Nutrition. Terms of Reference (ToRs) were developed and shared with the Principals of the five above-mentioned agencies. On the 29th of February 2020, UN Nutrition was created.

The aim of this paper is to outline key operational modalities for UN Nutrition to effectively serve all UN Member States. It outlines the set-up of UN Nutrition and its functions at the global and country levels. It also outlines the structure and size of a light and agile UN Nutrition Secretariat, with an accompanying budget and funding sources.

2. Scope and Functions of UN Nutrition

The ToRs foresee UN Nutrition as an inter-agency coordination mechanism for nutrition at global and country levels that brings UN agencies together to accelerate progress for nutrition. It aims to ensure that nutrition actions and efforts at global and country level are connected, aligned, mutually supportive, and well-coordinated.

The ToRs identify the following core functions for UN Nutrition:

- Ensure aligned advocacy and policy coherence for nutrition;
- Identify and coordinate strategic issues around nutrition;
- Identify emerging issues, promote and support knowledge management and innovation; and
- Translate global level guidance into country-level guidelines, action and impact.

Among its other functions, UN Nutrition will also serve as one of the Networks of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement.

3. UN Nutrition Membership

At the global level, membership of UN Nutrition is comprising of the five, constituent member agencies¹ and is open to all other UN agencies who have an interest in nutrition, are willing to join this

¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO.

coordination mechanism, and are willing to contribute financially with an annual fee agreed upon bi-annually.

At the discretion of the constituent members of UN Nutrition, additional non-UN entities, including financial institutions, can be invited, on ad-hoc basis, to join UN Nutrition as observers. At the country level, membership is encouraged to all UN agencies that have an interest, engagement or involvement in nutrition.

UN Nutrition is a coordinating mechanism whose force is representative of its members. By joining UN Nutrition, agencies ensure that the UN system speaks with one voice and provides coherent support to Member States to address malnutrition in all its forms. The greater number of agencies, the greater the collective voice for nutrition. In turn, this enhances the collective capacity to support intersectoral, integrated, coherent and effective policies and actions on nutrition at all levels.

Members profit from a network of like-minded professionals and experts with which they can partner and exchange know-how. Additional benefits of joining UN Nutrition include:

- Opportunities for strengthening networking and partnerships;
- Invitations to join the regular UN Nutrition meetings (virtual and face-to-face) which will provide an opportunity to benefit from nutrition knowledge-sharing and information exchanges, including the possibility of receiving additional intelligence;
- Opportunities for contributing to the shaping of a global nutrition agenda, by supporting the development of joint statements and products;
- Increased visibility of each agency's nutrition work which could be amplified through ECOSOC reporting, through participation in meetings and events, through various media channels with global reach.

Prospective members will be encouraged to embrace and participate in the following activities and initiatives:

- Subscribe to the food and nutrition goals and targets defined by the World Health Assembly, the SDGs and other internationally agreed objectives;
- Formulate a formal commitment to the Decade of Action on Nutrition and present progress reports on its implementation;
- Synchronize nutrition efforts with those of the other members, so as to provide unity of action in the pursuit of the common goals;
- Support and contribute to the production of joint statements, policy briefs and other harmonized UN Nutrition knowledge products;

- Support and contribute to the delivery of harmonized and coherent development cooperation in the food and nutrition spheres;
- Be accountable to other members and hold other members accountable for the joint work of UN Nutrition.

4. Governance of UN Nutrition

4.1 Chair

As per the ToRs, the five constituent member agencies elect a Chair at least at the level of the Assistant Principal. The Chair is appointed by consensus amongst the Principals of the five constituent member agencies of UN Nutrition, for a term of two years, that is renewable once. As much as possible, the Chair position should be occupied on rotational basis among the five constituent member agencies. The Chair will occupy this honorary position *ad personam*². The Chair will chair Steering Committee meetings, liaise with the Principals of the member agencies, represent UN Nutrition in global and country fora, liaise with the Office of the UN Secretary General and with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and support resource mobilization for the Secretariat.

4.2 Steering Committee

As stated in the ToRs, the Steering Committee is made up of the five constituent member agencies (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO). Members of the Steering Committee are the global nutrition leads from the above-mentioned agencies, with the authority to make strategic decisions. Moreover, two additional members representing other UN agencies can be included on a rotational basis. The two additional members can serve for a term of two years, which could be renewable. With a focus on results, the Steering Committee gives strategic direction to UN Nutrition, provides oversight to the work of the Secretariat and supports implementation of activities. The ToRs of the Steering Committee will be defined by the five constituent member agencies and may be modified at their discretion in due course of time. The Steering Committee will meet at least quarterly; it will review, among other things, progress reports by the Secretariat.

4.3 Accountability

UN Nutrition members are mutually accountable and are accountable to Member States via ECOSOC, through the UN Nutrition Chair. The UN Nutrition Chair liaises with the Office of the Secretary General. UN Nutrition members at country level are accountable to the UN Resident Coordinator (RC).

² This means that the Chair does not represent the Organization she/he comes from. In the event the Chair leaves the organization, the chairmanship will not be automatically passed on to his or her replacement. Consensus will be sought for the election of a new Chair.

5. Secretariat

The ToRs specify that UN Nutrition is supported by a Secretariat, the structure of which should be agile and light, but also fit for purpose.

5.1 Secretariat's Functions

The Secretariat will facilitate the collective actions of UN Nutrition across the core functions as outlined below:

Core Function 1: Aligned advocacy and policy coherence for nutrition:

- a) *Adopting coherent and unified advocacy and policy action and messaging, engaging with key stakeholders, without conflict of interest, and speaking in one voice³*
- Ensure that UN Nutrition is a leading voice in advocacy and policy actions on nutrition, coordinates the development of coherent and unified positions, and complements efforts of other partners;
 - Facilitate discussions between UN agencies to align their positions and actions when they engage with other platforms for nutrition, such as the Global Nutrition Cluster, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), and other development processes relevant to nutrition, such as, for example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UN Water;
 - Support countries to use findings from country-level, multi-sectoral analyses to help establish a common nutrition narrative, inform data-driven advocacy and foster increased policy coherence across sectors.
- b) *Enabling the formulation of joint global approaches, and the alignment of policies, strategies and guidance in response to country needs and requests*
- Assist UN Nutrition members in the formulation of joint approaches, and support the development of joint policies, strategies, statements and guidance in response to country needs and requests;
 - Support UN agencies at the country level to engage with senior government leaders, donors and civil society with one voice, leveraging findings from comprehensive analytics and supporting the development of a UN common nutrition agenda that is aligned to

³ The list of activities presented under each sub-function in section 5.1 is not exhaustive but exemplary.

national priorities and contribute to foster multi-stakeholder engagement (e.g. government, civil society, donors);

- Represent UN Nutrition in international fora and meetings, sharing collective UN messages and action;
- Organize and facilitate meetings and side-events to disseminate unified positions and showcase good practices, including those undertaken at all levels.

Core Function 2: Identify and coordinate strategic issues around nutrition:

c) *Ensuring UN alignment behind the SDGs, ICN2 Framework and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and behind national plans and priorities*

- Support the delivery of impact and the monitoring of achievements in the six action areas of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025);
- Support strengthening country functions and support the monitoring and reporting of UN country action at all levels;
- Engage continuously with intergovernmental bodies (e.g. World Health Assembly, the CFS) to identify strategic opportunities to advance the nutrition agenda.

d) *Leveraging partner UN agencies' expertise to broker coordinated technical assistance to governments and appropriate in-country stakeholders*

- Position the UN as a valued technical assistance provider and use tools, guidance, implementation packages developed by UN Agencies;
- Provide in-depth country level support to policy development.

Core Function 3: Emerging issues, knowledge-management and innovation:

e) *Promoting and supporting knowledge sharing across the UN and beyond*

- Prepare and disseminate technical reports, flagship publications, including the maintenance of web content, drawing upon existing UN expertise;
- Host and support communities of practice and other knowledge sharing platforms on selected nutrition related topics;
- Assist in the documentation and dissemination of success stories of UN collective action, especially country level;
- Promote sharing of knowledge and of good practices, and South-South learning.

f) *Identifying, tracking and addressing emerging issues on nutrition.*

- Contribute to tracking and addressing emerging issues on nutrition.
- Prepare and disseminate discussion papers and policy briefs on emerging nutrition issues;
- Table emerging nutrition issues at UN Nutrition gatherings to help raise awareness and improve knowledge/skills of UN staff on these topics.

Core Function 4: Translate global level guidance into country-level actions, guidelines and impact:

g) *Disseminating relevant global guidance developed by UN agencies as well as relevant knowledge and technologies across stakeholders at country level*

- Deploy analytical tools, guidance and other resources to countries, including governments and UN colleagues, to improve the coordination of multi-sectoral nutrition actions and inform decision-making;
- Share global issues with country-level teams and feed country perspectives into global discussions.

h) *Working with UN Resident Coordinators in a coordinated, proactive and relevant manner to elevate and integrate nutrition into national agendas and plans.*

- Support and empower UN country-teams (UNCTs), RCs, and Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), in order to elevate the nutrition agenda and strengthen UN Nutrition collaboration in support of governments, through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF);
- Provide country-support for UN joint programming on nutrition and for increased engagement on nutrition of UN agencies, funds and programmes;
- Coordinate among the respective UN agencies to ensure a timely response to country-requests for technical assistance;
- At the request of country teams, backstop UN agencies to support the activation and functioning of UN Nutrition at the country level by providing guidance and follow-up (e.g. developing ToRs, engaging UN RCs, supporting Chairs of UN Nutrition);
- Facilitate multi-sectoral nutrition processes, including through facilitation services (REACH⁴-like activities), where applicable;

⁴ Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition

5.2 Engagement with the Scaling up Nutrition Movement

UN Nutrition will serve as the UN Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. In this capacity, the UN Nutrition Secretariat will:

- Contribute to advance the aims of the SUN Movement and support SUN processes at the country level, including capacity strengthening of SUN Government Focal Points and country coalitions;
- Contribute to the activities of the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) and, on behalf of its members, actively participate in relevant processes and meetings of the SUN Movement support system; including among others, SMS's task forces;
- Nominate UN candidates to serve on the SUN Executive Committee when required;
- Liaise with other SUN Networks, fostering inter-network collaboration at all levels;
- Contribute to strengthen SUN-wide accountability, including through the MEAL (Monitoring, Learning, Accountability, and Evaluation) system.

At the request of governments and upon the availability of funding, UN Nutrition, with the support of its Secretariat, can mobilize facilitation services (REACH-type activities) to support SUN processes at the country level. These services build off the considerable expertise gathered through REACH and draw upon its diagnostic and analytical tools and resource materials. The services will provide tailored capacity strengthening to SUN Focal Points and in-country stakeholders in support of well-coordinated, participative, multi-sectoral nutrition processes while contributing to improve nutrition governance and management. The coordination of these activities would be part of UN Nutrition Secretariat's core work and budget at the country-level and will be part of a separate funding stream which will rely on external donors' contributions. The external donors' contributions will be directed to hire national facilitators who will work with a range of actors (including government and UN), across different sectors to catalyse and nurture multi-sectoral engagement on nutrition.

The facilitators at the country level will further capitalize on their neutrality to create an enabling environment for increased UN collaboration on nutrition, including joint programming, helping UN Nutrition speak with one "nutrition" voice at the country level. The facilitators will serve as a linking agent between the various SUN networks and will continue to spark (and support) increased inter-network collaboration at country level, thereby helping to maximize nutrition gains.

5.3 Special Projects

In addition to the facilitation services, the UN Nutrition Secretariat may develop, promote and/or host special projects as proposed by the Steering Committee, that may fall outside the scope of the regular work and funding of the Secretariat.

5.4 Administrative Functions

In addition to the core functions described above, administrative functions include:

- Support the Chair and Steering Committee with the mobilization of resources;
- Prepare and submit yearly reports, including to ECOSOC;
- Organizing meetings;
- Ensure that administrative, financial and budget management processes are in line with the regulations and guidelines of the hosting institution.

5.5 Secretariat's Structure

The structure of the Secretariat is articulated around the functions of UN Nutrition and will be light, agile and fit for purpose. The Steering Committee should guide the Secretariat in prioritizing activities it should deliver on and for which UN Nutrition funds will be utilized.

Executive Secretary (P5): The Executive Secretary will be responsible to lead and manage the Secretariat, including the running of its day to day business including: the preparation, management and implementation of the approved work plan and budget, the recruiting of staff and consultants, and the management of approved projects and initiatives. The Executive Secretary will oversee both country and global level support and will ensure that the two streams are integrated and mutually supportive. The Executive Secretary will also play a key role in leading advocacy for nutrition in strategic events at global, regional and country level and will be responsible for building new partnerships. The Executive Secretary will coordinate special projects – including country-level facilitation services - and ensure their efficient and effective delivery. The Executive Secretary, with the guidance of the Chair and Steering Committee, will also play a key role in resource mobilization.

The Executive Secretary will be recruited through a competitive process, including vacancy announcement with clear Terms of Reference, following the recruitment guidelines of the hosting institution, which will be FAO, until such time as the Steering Committee agrees on alternative arrangements that best suit the operations of UN Nutrition. The global nutrition leads of the constituent agencies will be responsible for screening all candidates and for identifying the Executive Secretary.

The position will be funded by FAO, until such time as the Steering Committee agrees on alternative arrangements that best suit the operations of UN Nutrition. The Executive Secretary will be accountable to the Chair and to the Steering Committee. In addition, the Executive Secretary will report preferably to an Assistant Principal. Should this option not be viable, the Executive Secretary's first-line manager will be the FAO Director of Nutrition, until such time as the Steering Committee agrees on alternative arrangements that best suit the operations of UN Nutrition.

Business Support (G4): The person will provide general administrative, logistics and budget support to the Executive Secretary and to the rest of the Secretariat. The staff will be seconded by FAO to the Secretariat, until such time as the Steering Committee agrees on alternative arrangements that best suit the operations of UN Nutrition.

Professional Technical Officers (P4): These officers will provide technical oversight of UN Nutrition core functions and activities at global and country levels. These persons will oversee the technical aspects of the Secretariat's priority areas under their jurisdiction and will have a background in nutrition and/or any related areas. In addition, they will directly support the Executive Secretary with work planning, budget preparation, resource mobilization, timely submission of reports to ECOSOC, updates to SMS and others as needed and will support with the recruitment of consultants, as needed. The two officers will be seconded to the Secretariat by WFP and UNICEF, until such time as the Steering Committee agrees on alternative arrangements that best suit the operations of UN Nutrition.

5.6 Secretariat's budget

The annual core budget of the Secretariat will cover staffing costs as well as costs to support the running of the Secretariat and field support activities (e.g. travels). It is expected that the budget of the Secretariat will be covered by the five constituent member agencies either through: 1) an annual contribution to be agreed upon or 2) through the secondment of one of the Secretariat's staff. WHO commits to contribute USD 150,000 per year and IFAD USD 200,000 per year.

5.7 Secretariat's Staffing and Costs

Position Title	Contract Type	Grade	Cost (USD)
<i>Executive Secretary</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>P5</i>	<i>248,700</i>
<i>Business Support</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>G4</i>	<i>88,800</i>
<i>Professional Officer</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>P4</i>	<i>204,000</i>

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<i>Total Costs</i>			<i>745,500</i>

5.8 Secretariat’s additional sources of funds:

In addition to the contributions of the five constituent member agencies, it is expected that additional funds for the Secretariat will come from the following sources:

- Membership fees for all members that will need to contribute to a standard, minimum due to be agreed upon;
- The hosting institution also commits to take charge of the additional hosting costs (e.g. office, workspace, facilities, services);
- Funds mobilized from donors and/or UN in support of special projects, including facilitation services.

5.9 Secretariat hosting arrangements

The UN Nutrition Secretariat will be hosted by FAO in its headquarters in Rome until such time as the Steering Committee agrees on alternative arrangements that best suit the operations of UN Nutrition. The Secretariat’s staff will be 100% dedicated to support the approved work of the Secretariat, even though some of the staff members might be not based in Rome.

6. UN Nutrition at the country level

6.1. Organizational structure of UN Nutrition at the country level

The set-up and structure of UN Nutrition will be agreed upon by country-level leadership and UN RCs. This flexibility will enable the UN to leverage existing structures. Where possible and agreed upon, UN Nutrition at the country level will build on the successful experiences of the UN Network and could absorb its various operational modalities. It is suggested that country-level operational modalities are outlined in ToRs that will be established for UN Nutrition at the country level. UN Nutrition will engage with and support national leadership driving the nutrition agenda and will also seek to engage RCs in activities to reinforce the need and value of UN collective action on nutrition.

6.2 Priorities of UN Nutrition at the country level

The priorities of UN Nutrition will be outlined and agreed upon at the country level; this will include agreement on roles and responsibilities (both collective and agency-specific). As previously discussed in section 5, the Secretariat will provide a range of support to actions undertaken in countries through UN Nutrition. The following functions refer to those to be carried out by the UN Nutrition platforms at the country level:

- Ensuring aligned UN support for nutrition to national priorities, plans and platforms, maximizing synergies and minimizing duplications;
- Engaging in a coordinated manner with SUN processes and efforts at the country level;
- Developing coherent, and unified advocacy and communication efforts engaging with key stakeholders with one voice;
- Developing joint approaches and coherent programmes as well as resource mobilization strategies within the context of UNSDCF/UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) and other United Nations frameworks.

UN Nutrition at the country level will liaise, among others, with SUN focal points, and SUN Networks and with all appropriate stakeholders to ensure countries are supported in the most efficient way to scale up their efforts in nutrition.

7. Going forward:

A yearly face-to-face meeting should be held to monitor compliance to UN Nutrition's mandate and workplan. The meeting should provide an opportunity to undertake administrative and technical discussions, including updates on emerging nutrition issues of relevance to UN Nutrition.