



NEWS RELEASE

UN AGENCIES MEET IN NAIROBI TO ENHANCE COOPERATION IN GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST MALNUTRITION

NAIROBI, 26 August 2013 – The UN System Network for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) is holding its first meeting in Africa from 26-28 August in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together experts from various UN agencies working on the continent to drive forward the fight against undernutrition.

Of the 34 countries that account for 90 percent of the global burden of stunting, 22 are in Africa, a study in the leading medical journal, *The Lancet*, found earlier this year. Eighty percent of the world's stunted children live in just 14 countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Tanzania, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo. In sub-Saharan Africa, 40 percent of children under 5 years of age are stunted.

More than 100 participants from 17 African countries, as well as regional and global representatives from various United Nations agencies, will share their knowledge and discuss ways of strengthening joint action at country level to tackle nutrition deficiencies across Africa.

The meeting will also mark the official regional launch of the UN System Network for SUN, an interagency platform that facilitates joint UN action in nutrition. This network will bolster ongoing UN efforts to share expertise with countries that request help in addressing undernutrition.

The partnership is part of the broader SUN Movement, which is founded on the principle that all people have a right to food and good nutrition. Already more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America have joined the movement. They are improving and expanding their nutrition programmes, supported by donor countries, UN organisations, civil society and the private sector.

“There is now increasing recognition that a lack of nutrients can cause irreversible damage to children’s minds and bodies, as well as affecting their future economic prospects,” said David Nabarro, the SUN Coordinator. “Countries are giving increasing importance to nutrition as a development priority, encouraging different sectors to ensure that their programmes are nutrition-sensitive. They seek responsive and well-coordinated external support that helps them enable all people – especially women and children – to enjoy good nutrition, especially between pregnancy and a child's second birthday.”



The UN System Network for SUN is an integral part of this global cooperation. By combining specialist agencies' expertise and knowledge, the UN System Network for SUN assists governments in tackling nutrition challenges by offering support in developing cross-sector strategies, costing national nutrition action plans and identifying funding shortfalls, exploring ways to scale up and roll out plans at district and community level, and identifying better ways to monitor progress and evaluate results.

“The work of each of these UN agencies in assisting countries to fight undernutrition is critical on its own, and by pulling together we can multiply the impact of our individual efforts to produce even more of an impact,” said Ramiro Lopes da Silva, the chair of the meeting and of the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition.

At the Nutrition for Growth summit in London in June, world leaders, including from SUN countries, signed a global compact to prevent at least 20 million children from becoming stunted, and save at least 1.7 million lives by 2020. The Global Nutrition for Growth Compact was endorsed by development partners, businesses, and scientific and civil society groups. The SUN Movement welcomed the compact as an indication of unprecedented determination to end the injustice of malnutrition.

The Nairobi meeting will offer a critical forum to drive this interagency cooperation forward. The meeting will strengthen coordination on the most effective ways to combat undernutrition. It builds on work already underway when SUN was officially endorsed by heads of UN agencies from Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

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