

CSA SUN KYRGYZSTAN CONTRIBUTES TO PROVINCE NUTRITION PLANS

In Kyrgyzstan, children under 5 years old suffer from various forms of malnutrition; 12% are stunted and 7% are overweight. Based on latest data available (2012), 43% of children 6-59 months and 35% of women of reproductive age suffer from anemia.¹ According to the National Statistical Committee, energy and protein consumption of children 1-3 years old are 20% and 42% deficit, respectively.² Less than half (46%) are exclusively breastfed.

Malnutrition in Kyrgyzstan results from various social challenges such as low income, high level of migration, insufficient knowledge of people about balanced nutrition, weak food systems, a lack of water irrigation, inaccessibility of settlements, and outdated knowledge of agricultural technologies, among others.

Civil Society Alliance Scaling Up Nutrition (CSA SUN) Kyrgyzstan was founded in 2014 and currently unites 52 organizations working in various fields at the community and national level. Meanwhile, 12 new organizations have applied for membership in the CSA. The main focus of the CSA in Kyrgyzstan is to promote the realization of the population's right to food, especially women and children.

In 2019 and 2020, the CSA developed and approved key internal documents such as the Sustainability Strategy, Advocacy and Communication Strategy, Regulation on Grants, and Regulation on Conflict of Interest. In line with Advocacy and Communication Strategy, the CSA remains focused on expanding and strengthening subnational multi-stakeholder platforms on nutrition and food security, advancing nutrition budgets, changing people's dietary habits, promoting the right to food, and building the capacity of CSA members.

Through the SUN Pooled Funds Grant (December 2019 – June 2021), CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan was able to develop nutrition subnational plans in two oblasts.³ Donors have taken advantage of the successful experience and the creation of the Multi-stakeholder Platform on Food Security and Nutrition (FS&N) and Plan on FS&N in the 3rd oblast (Batken) is underway.

Multi-stakeholder plans for nutrition and food security

In 2019, CSA members assisted in establishing the Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSP) for Food Security and Nutrition in two pilot oblasts³ that has the highest level of anemia among women and children: Naryn and Issyk-Kul. Members of MSPs are representatives from local authorities, the health care, social protection system, education, and civil organizations.



Meeting to develop oblast MSP plans in Naryn

Since 2019, MSPs annually developed two oblast nutrition plans that were approved by the governments of Naryn and Issyk-Kul. The plans were coordinated with the National Food Security and Nutrition Program for 2019-2023 and are now being implemented.

¹ National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic - NSC, NSC, Ministry of Health - MOH/Kyrgyz Republic, and ICF International. 2013. Kyrgyz Republic Demographic and Health Survey 2012. Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic: NSC, MOH, and ICF International. Available at <http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR283/FR283.pdf>.

² Food Security and Poverty Bulletin, 2021

³ An oblast is an administrative division or province in Russia and in some of its former constituent republics led by oblast government administrations.

Through the effort of the CSA, the members of MSPs incorporated in the plan the needs of 12 vulnerable villages for consideration and additional resources. CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan also conducted trainings on food security and right to food among village activists and civil servants. CSA members are actively involved with government agencies in the planning, monitoring, and reviewing of nutrition and food security plans of oblasts.

An additional KGS 3,172,000 (USD 38,216) was raised to implement two subnational plans in 2020. In Issyk-Kul, 16 new organizations joined the MSP from 2020 to 2021. Hence, a total of 24 organizations represent the oblast: five ayil okmotu, an executive body in a territorial entity; one state oblast and three district administrations; three Regional Agriculture Development Bureau (RUAR), and 11 oblast and business organizations.

Digital Innovation for Nutrition

A competition for digital innovations that improve nutrition in rural areas was held on 3-5 August in Bishkek, participated by contestants aged 17 to 62 years old.



Mother and child testing the game Play. Eat. Grow.

Thirty-six young people (21 males, 15 females) composed of Information Technology (IT) experts, designers, nutritionists, doctors, and entrepreneurs that grow organic products participated and developed 10 prototypes of mobile applications. Four winners were selected after discussions with communities and stakeholders. And the following mobile applications were launched:

1. **Play. Eat. Grow.** - a mobile game for children ages 10-17 to raise awareness on the principles of good nutrition;
2. **Eat Right** - a food planning app for households

or people who buy and prepare food for their families;

3. **Charba market** - a platform for buying and selling agricultural products from farmers; and
4. A **website** for the Issyk-Kul local government with a section dedicated to MSP for Nutrition and Food Security for the benefit of MSP members, other stakeholders, and for transparency and accountability.

The first three innovations above were tested by 110 children and 365 adults from the villages of Issyk-Kul and Naryn from May 31 to June 4 2021. Another competition was held on June 4 to 28, 2021 to disseminate and further promote these applications in the pilot villages. Under the terms of the competition, participants distributed the applications to 163 beneficiaries (111 women, 52 men, 36 children).

By July 2021, Eat Right was used for more than 630 hours, Play. Eat. Grow. for 203 hours, and the Charba Market for 186 hours. In Eat Right, 604 out of 630 people made a meal menu for a family. From the 139 registered users, 19 users published an advertisement to sell agricultural products in the Charba Market application.

Awareness raising on nutrition through 24 TV

In order to raise the awareness of women and men on nutrition issues and healthy eating behavior, a television program titled "Eating Healthy" was launched. This show is in Kyrgyz language and will be aired on prime time every Saturday evening for 1 year at the state channel, ELTR.



Shooting of 24 TV Program participated by volunteers.

Learning exchange with CSA Rwanda

On April 17-22, 2021, through the public fund for food security and nutrition, an exchange learning visit was organized between CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan and SUN Alliance Rwanda. The Kyrgyz delegation learned from the experience of SUN Alliance Rwanda on multi-stakeholder participation in the

development, implementation, and reporting of multistakeholder nutrition plans.



CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan and Rwanda exchanged learnings on multi-stakeholder participation in nutrition plan development

The delegation of Kyrgyzstan consisted of two representatives from the oblast administrations and two from local NGOs from Naryn and Issyk-Kul oblasts, as well as two representatives of SUN Kyrgyzstan.



CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan visits a village in Rwamagana District

As part of the learning exchange, two meetings were held at the national level and four at the subnational level. In the meetings, they discussed the role of the oblast in the creation and implementation of nutrition plans, as well as mechanisms for integrated planning, financing, and accountability at the oblast level.

Challenges, lessons and ways forward

Social and Political Unrest

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the release of the parliamentary elections results in Kyrgyzstan were cancelled. The President resigned and eventually, the Kyrgyz Republic changed its government system from parliamentary to a presidential system. CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan encountered delays in the implementation of the Pooled Fund Project due to the consequent social unrest and socio-political issues. Thus, the CSA explored ways of working with new people within government agencies, informing them about the goals, milestones achieved, and the role requested from the new focal person.

Communication gap between national and subnational MSPs

CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan observed an existing communication gap between the national MSP and two sub-national MSPs that have been established. As of now, two levels of MSP are only linked through the initiative of the CSA. More joint discussions on nutrition between the members of national and sub-national MSPs (government bodies, NGOs, educational institutions) are needed to improve technical capacities and multi-level coordination. CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan proposes to connect these two levels during different meetings at the national level, and through a Regulation on the Multi-stakeholder Platform which calls for conducting and connecting reviews of the National Food Security and Nutrition Program at both levels. The draft Regulation has been submitted for consideration of the government.

From these experiences, CSA SUN Kyrgyzstan learned the value of identifying a fine focus, and considering the limited implementation needs in planning its targets and activities so as to avoid being overwhelmed.