



Action brief

Strengthening parliamentary governance for food and nutrition security: a regional case

Countries: Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Topics: Social mobilization, advocacy and communication

Sub-topics: Engaging parliamentarians for legislative advocacy, budget oversight and public outreach

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Overview



By virtue of their mandates, parliamentarians are well-positioned to help address food insecurity and malnutrition issues. Their strategic position allows them to shape policies and establish appropriate legislative frameworks to ensure access to healthy diets. They also play a key role in raising awareness, fostering dialogue among stakeholders and allocating resources to promote healthy diets from sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems.

Over the last few years, various global and regional initiatives have encouraged the mobilisation of parliamentarians in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. In 2018, the Global Parliamentary Summit against Hunger and Malnutrition aimed to strengthen political commitment to achieve SDG 2 internationally. The Madrid Declaration emanating from this summit laid the foundations for regional platforms encouraging learning and sharing of experiences between parliaments.



SDGs





It is in this context that the Network of Parliamentary Alliances of Central Africa for Food and Nutrition Security (RAPAC-SAN) was created after the Brazzaville forum in November 2019 under the leadership of FAO, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Network has achieved these commitments by supporting the formation of parliamentary alliances in several countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians on the food and nutrition situation in their countries, and recalling the role they must play in order to generate political commitment and improve budget allocation for food and nutrition security.



Period covered

Since 2018.



Objectives of the action brief

This good practice calls for a paradigm shift in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition by rallying parliamentarians of all stripes to act together. It highlights the role of regional networks in mobilising, supporting and guiding national parliamentary alliances to contribute to advocacy, building political commitment, strengthening the legislative and policy environment, and improving budget allocation for food and nutrition security issues.



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What action was taken?

Since 2019, the Network of Parliamentary Alliances of Central Africa for Food and Nutrition Security (RAPAC-SAN) has contributed to the establishment of seven national parliamentary alliances in Central Africa. The creation of RAPAC-SAN thus paved the way for effective collaboration and coordination of the national parliamentary alliances of the [SUN Movement Convergence Hub](#), including Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The RAPAC-SAN plays a role in creating norms and legal frameworks governing the establishment of national alliances, the development of thematic guidance sheets, advocacy for nutrition-specific budgets, and the organisation of regular peer exchanges between countries to support policy momentum and advocacy. In addition, the regional network organises awareness-raising days and capacity-building workshops for MPs, who most often are not nutritionists (although some are health professionals), on food and nutrition security issues.

The activities of RAPAC-SAN also include the holding of regional conferences that aim to assess the progress of the implementation of the Alliance in 11 Central African countries. These conferences are instrumental in creating favorable policy frameworks and the use of parliamentary diplomacy in support of food and nutrition security in the region.

In the context of the support, guidance, training and funding of RAPAC-SAN and FAO, national parliamentary alliances have made significant progress in 2023, such as the adoption of crucial laws on food fortification or the right to adequate food. For example, in November 2023, the National Assembly of the **DRC** adopted a draft law aimed at strengthening food security by promoting livestock farming as a key sector for economic growth, preserving the ecosystem in accordance with environmental standards.

In addition, the creation of commissions dedicated to food and nutrition security in the Senate and the National Assembly in the **Republic of the Congo** was a significant



example of how parliamentarians can help shape and strengthen the institutional framework to include the issue of food and nutrition security within legislative institutions.

The role of parliamentary alliances is not limited to legislation, but also extends to the allocation of nutrition-specific budgets. For example, in 2023 in the **CAR**, the parliamentary alliance engaged in advocating for the creation of budget lines dedicated to nutrition at the Primature, thus contributing to the adoption, allocation and disbursement of a budget line specific to the coordination of nutrition in the national budget.

The achievement of these initiatives and tangible results was the result of close collaboration with RAPAC-SAN, as well as the United Nations network for nutrition, in particular FAO.



What would the countries do differently?

The COVID-19 pandemic not only hindered the deployment of parliamentary alliances, but also compromised the quality of online training due to internet connection problems and lack of interaction. This highlights the need to establish direct and close in person contact with the parliamentarians.

In addition, to ensure the sustainability of the initiatives, it is recommended that regional networks support the development of knowledge products and communication tools, and prepare reports and information kits for awareness-raising and advocacy purposes, given the high turnover of MPs.



Adaptation and applicability

In order for other regional networks to undertake this process of involving parliamentarians more and supporting them in their commitment and determination to combat hunger and malnutrition, it is advisable to carry out the following actions:

- **Organize regular awareness-raising days for parliamentarians on various themes such as the state of food and nutrition security (FNS), the multisectoral nature of nutrition, their role and commitment to improving the health of populations, among others.**
- **Mobilize parliamentary engagement in the SUN Movement platform, as well as other meetings initiated by technical and financial partners such as NGOs, United Nations agencies and donors.**
- **Raise awareness among parliamentarians to become more involved during their parliamentary recess in the provinces in order to meet and exchange with the various customary authorities and members of civil society on local food and nutrition security issues and challenges. This allows them to better understand the realities of the communities in the provinces and to advocate effectively at the central level during the meetings of the National Assembly.**
- **Keep in touch with the parliamentary alliances active at the regional level, in order to be aware of the initiatives carried out in other countries and to exchange experiences.**





What was the role of the SUN Movement in this good practice?

Promoting a multisectoral approach, the SUN Movement's role was above all to unite the efforts of all the platform's member actors, including parliamentarians, to ensure better coordination on nutrition. The active participation of national alliances in the SUN Movement's national multisectoral nutrition platforms has been crucial in aligning their actions and advocacy with the annual nutrition priorities. More specifically, the following can be mentioned:

- Mobilisation of parliamentarians in governance and resource allocation for nutrition.
- Institutionalization of national coordination mechanisms between Parliament and the SUN Movement platform,

promoting the involvement of parliamentary alliances in the development of multisectoral strategic plans for nutrition or the establishment of provincial nutrition committees.

- Contribution to overcoming the challenges related to the frequent rotation of members of parliamentary networks and the financial constraints to carry out awareness-raising activities. Partners such as the United Nations networks for nutrition, in particular FAO, or SUN civil society networks, supported the alliances by organising exchanges with other parliamentary alliances or offered financial support to participate in international workshops.



Next steps

The next steps include:

- Capitalize on the leadership capacities and expertise of regional networks such as RAPAC-SAN to maintain the mobilization, strengthening and support of parliamentary alliance participation within the SUN Movement national platforms.
- Establish mechanisms to promote the ownership and financial autonomy of national parliamentary alliances, including considering the financing of their activities from the budget of the National Assembly, in order to ensure their long-term economic viability.



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Further information



<https://www.fao.org/partnerships/parliamentary-alliances/en/>



<https://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/en/c/1199235/>



<https://www.fao.org/partnerships/parliamentary-alliances/news/news-article/en/c/1268811/>



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https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Burundi_Feuille-de-route-nationale-renforcement-des-systemes-alimentaires_VF-vf.pdf

Scaling Up
NUTRITION

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