



# Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network Secretariat 4.0 Strategy (2026–2030)

*Locally led, globally connected and inclusive by design*

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Students and PTA members collecting vegetables in Injas Primary School garden, Kuajok, Warrap State, South Sudan



# Executive summary

The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Civil Society Network (CSN) brings together more than 5,000 civil society organisations across 67 countries, working collectively to end malnutrition in all its forms. It is one of the four global networks of the SUN Movement, a country-led, multi-stakeholder initiative that unites governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, donors, businesses and civil society to ensure that everyone, everywhere, can realise their right to good nutrition.

As the civil society arm of the Movement, the SUN CSN connects, strengthens and amplifies local voices – from community-based organisations to youth groups – and connects these with global non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It mobilises communities, brings evidence from community action into policy spaces, and holds decision-makers and duty bearers to account.

## Context

Over the past decade, the Network has grown steadily, evolving from a small group of national alliances into a globally recognised platform for collective action, advocacy and accountability. At the country level, Civil Society Alliances (CSAs) have become trusted partners to governments and technical agencies, contributing to shaping national nutrition plans, influencing budgets, advancing gender equality, integrating nutrition into other agendas such as climate and food systems, as well as embedding youth participation into policy dialogue.

Developed through an inclusive consultation process involving more than 200 stakeholders, including CSAs, youth leaders, international NGOs (INGOs) and regional groups, the SUN CSN 4.0 strategy (2026–2030) builds on the achievements of the 3.0 period while directly addressing the challenges identified, from fragile financing and uneven capacities to the need for deeper localisation and stronger accountability. It brings together the four



Students eating a school meal, Sri Lanka



regional strategies (Asia, East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Islands, and Latin America and the Caribbean) into a single coherent global vision, to clarify how the SUN CSN Secretariat will contribute to the SUN Movement's 4.0 Strategic Framework by aligning civil society action with collective objectives on governance, sustainable financing and strengthened capacity for nutrition.

## Spirit of the SUN CSN 4.0 strategy

The spirit of SUN CSN 4.0 is that of a Network that is *locally led, globally connected and inclusive by design*. It commits to deepening localisation by shifting resources and decision-making closer to where impact happens; to strengthening regional structures and peer-to-peer learning; and to ensuring that women, young people and local communities play an intentional and meaningful role in shaping priorities, governance and advocacy. It also reinforces the Network's commitment to local-to-global advocacy, ensuring that evidence and experiences generated by CSAs and communities inform national policies, regional agendas and global nutrition commitments, while global advocacy efforts remain grounded in local realities and accountability.

## Vision

A world free from malnutrition in all its forms, where a united and strong local civil society plays a leading role in ensuring everyone's right to safe, healthy and nutritious food.

## Mission

To coordinate, strengthen and amplify local civil society leadership for equitable, accountable and cross-sector action that transforms systems and secures improved nutrition outcomes globally.

## Strategic objectives (2026–2030)

Localisation is the underpinning principle across all strategic objectives. By placing regional and national representatives at the heart of decision-making and resourcing, the Network will ensure that CSAs can coordinate effectively, lead joint advocacy efforts, scale up good practices and deliver solutions that respond directly to the priorities of affected communities.

### SO1: From short-term approaches to resilience: sustainably governed and resourced CSAs

Strengthen CSAs' institutional resilience, credibility and financial sustainability through inclusive governance, effective partnerships and diversified funding mechanisms for nutrition; ensuring that civil society remains a stable, independent and trusted voice for nutrition, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

### SO2: From representation to inclusive leadership: youth, gender and civic space for nutrition impact

Promote inclusive leadership by amplifying youth- and women-led initiatives, safeguarding civic space and ensuring that community voices meaningfully contribute to decision-making. Through the expansion of the Youth Leaders for Nutrition programme, CSAs will convene community dialogues and champion intergenerational, gender-responsive action and accountability.

### SO3: From rights to results: advocacy and accountability for nutrition integration

Advance civil society advocacy and accountability to integrate nutrition across health, food, climate, gender and social protection systems. SUN CSN will strengthen CSAs' advocacy capacity, uphold nutrition commitments, mobilise new ones, and connect national and regional efforts to global policy spaces.



Pasteurised donated breast milk is used to nourish vulnerable infants who cannot be breastfed directly, such as premature babies, low-birthweight infants, and those with medical conditions requiring special care, Vietnam. Photo: Minh Quyết | Alive & Thrive

#### **SO4: From evidence to influence: amplifying effective civil society practices for nutrition**

Strengthen civil society's generation and use of citizen-led evidence, knowledge and storytelling to shape nutrition policy and narratives so they reflect local realities. Through peer learning, communications support and improved knowledge management, SUN CSN will amplify members' impact and visibility.

#### **Accountability and governance**

Strong and inclusive governance remains the foundation of localisation in SUN CSN 4.0. Building on the progress made under 3.0, the Network will further strengthen representation and transparency across its structures, ensuring that CSAs, young people and regional representatives have a meaningful voice in shaping decisions. SUN CSN will also reinforce mutual accountability and stronger feedback between actors at the national, regional, and global levels through regular consultations and inclusive dialogue, ensuring that governance is both representative and effective in driving locally led action across the Network.

# Abbreviations

|                   |                                                                                     |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AUDA-NEPAD</b> | African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development         |
| <b>C4N</b>        | Civil Society for Nutrition                                                         |
| <b>CIFF</b>       | Children’s Investment Fund Foundation                                               |
| <b>CSA</b>        | Civil Society Alliance                                                              |
| <b>CSN</b>        | Civil Society Network                                                               |
| <b>ECSA-HC</b>    | East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community                                  |
| <b>EU</b>         | European Union                                                                      |
| <b>FCDO</b>       | UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office                                     |
| <b>GIZ</b>        | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German cooperation agency) |
| <b>(I)NGO</b>     | (International) non-governmental organisation                                       |
| <b>MEAL</b>       | Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning                                 |
| <b>MSP</b>        | Multi-stakeholder platform                                                          |
| <b>N4G</b>        | Nutrition for Growth                                                                |
| <b>SDG</b>        | Sustainable Development Goal                                                        |
| <b>SUN</b>        | Scaling Up Nutrition                                                                |
| <b>UN</b>         | United Nations                                                                      |
| <b>UNFSS</b>      | United Nations Food Systems Summit                                                  |
| <b>UNOPS</b>      | United Nations Office for Project Services                                          |
| <b>WHA</b>        | World Health Assembly                                                               |
| <b>WHO</b>        | World Health Organization                                                           |

# Introduction

## About the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network

The Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network (SUN CSN) is part of the broader Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. SUN leads a global effort to end malnutrition in all its forms, a major cause of child deaths and chronic diseases, as well as a barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SUN unites **67 countries**, four Indian states and thousands of partners, including governments, donors, businesses, civil society and United Nations (UN) agencies, to foster political will, secure financing and promote cross-sector collaboration. By aligning resources with country needs, the SUN Movement supports the development of strategic nutrition initiatives, promotes integrated solutions across sectors and amplifies countries' voices in international advocacy, making a tangible impact in ending malnutrition. The SUN Movement is country-owned and country-driven. Through national multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), governments bring together partners from across civil society, UN agencies, donors, business and academia to align policies, resources and programmes – fostering

collaboration and reducing duplication through the breaking down of siloes.

**The Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Network (SUN CSN) is the single coordinated local civil society network.** Its **global secretariat** is hosted by Save the Children UK, with regional leads currently hosted by Save the Children International and the Philippines-based International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR). It connects, strengthens and amplifies the work of over 5,000 organisations to elevate civil society voices into national, regional and global decision-making platforms.

Network membership spans community-based organisations to international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), **organised in national Civil Society Alliances (CSAs)**, who act as credible technical partners to SUN Government Focal Points and other nutrition stakeholders. CSAs contribute to joint planning and review of national nutrition plans; strengthen national MSP functionality by supporting transparency, mutual accountability and evidence generation; and create structured spaces for youth and marginalised voices in policy processes. Each CSA coordinates up to hundreds of

**A SUN project ambassador delivering a workshop on nutrition, breastfeeding and child development, Chongwe, Zambia**



civil society organisations, including but not limited to community-based organisations, women's organisations, youth organisations, faith-based actors and academic institutions. CSAs improve nutrition outcomes through community mobilisation, policy, advocacy and accountability efforts, as well as research, programmes and service delivery.

## SUN CSN's unique strengths

Across regions and countries, SUN CSN members collectively bring distinctive contributions to ending malnutrition:

- **Local outreach:** With its presence in 67 countries, 55 national CSAs, seven civil society efforts (CSAs in the process of formalising their structures), over 5,000 community-based organisations, and a growing number of community-based youth networks, SUN CSN is the **only global nutrition network rooted in national civil society alliances**, bridging local realities with regional and global decision-making.
- **Diversity:** With its diverse membership, from local to international levels, SUN CSN addresses malnutrition in all its forms through advocacy, service delivery, programming and policy, both on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions (e.g. gender, health, social protection, food systems and climate).
- **Credibility:** CSAs are respected partners to governments, UN agencies, businesses, academics, donors and the media in shaping nutrition programming, policy, financing and discourse.
- **Catalyst for equity and youth leadership:** SUN CSN champions local efforts, protects and strengthens civil society space, and uniquely enables youth networks to bring community voices to inform local and national action.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Being part of the SUN Movement gives the SUN CSN a unique platform to link local realities with high-level decision-making, driving mutual accountability and coordinated action across all sectors and actors working to end malnutrition.
- **Impact:** From responding on the frontlines of climate and human-made crises to promoting long-term, preventive solutions to malnutrition, influencing national budgets and policies, or securing nutrition commitments, CSAs are strengthening systems, empowering communities and proving that locally led action delivers sustainable nutrition impact.
- **Solidarity:** A proven ability to offer learning between peers, strengthen capacities, mobilise around shared priorities and speak bravely with a united voice in regional and global fora makes SUN CSN a platform where its members can express their solidarity.

### *SUN CSN's journey*

has been defined by a belief that lasting change in nutrition begins with community-led solutions, bold advocacy and civil society leadership at every level. From influencing national nutrition policies and budgets, holding governments accountable for their commitments, amplifying the voices of youth and community leaders, to driving innovative programmes – including those that connect nutrition to climate resilience, gender equality and food systems transformation – SUN CSN has shown that when civil society is united, impact follows.



# SUN Civil Society Alliances (CSAs)

## Latin America and the Caribbean

Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Ecuador  
El Salvador  
Guatemala  
Honduras  
Panama  
Peru

## Asia

Afghanistan  
Bangladesh  
Cambodia  
Indonesia  
Kyrgyzstan  
Laos  
Myanmar  
Nepal  
Pakistan  
Papua New Guinea  
Philippines  
Sri Lanka  
Tajikistan  
Timor Leste  
Vietnam

## West and Central Africa and Islands

Benin  
Burkina Faso  
Cameroon  
Central African Republic  
Chad  
Comoros  
Congo  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Guinea  
Guinea-Bissau  
Liberia  
Madagascar  
Mali  
Mauritania  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Senegal  
Sierra Leone  
Togo

## East and Southern Africa

Botswana  
Burundi  
Eswatini  
Ethiopia  
Kenya  
Lesotho  
Malawi  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Rwanda  
Somalia  
South Sudan  
Sudan  
Tanzania  
Uganda  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

# Background to the SUN CSN strategy

## Nutrition at a crossroads: the context shaping SUN CSN strategy 4.0

The period 2026–2030 begins at a moment of profound disruption for global nutrition. Despite more than a decade of rising political commitment and multisectoral action, the world is significantly off track to meet the **World Health Assembly (WHA) targets** by 2030. Stunting and wasting remain unacceptably high and are rising again in some contexts. Reports from the **World Obesity Federation** and **The Lancet** project that more than half of the world's adult population will be overweight or obese by 2035, with related health and economic consequences escalating sharply. Low birthweight, micronutrient deficiencies and early childhood overweight show minimal improvement. These trends are compounded by an increasingly volatile global environment: climate change seems to be spinning out of control, altering food systems and disease patterns; geopolitical instability and protracted conflict are disrupting access to essential services; and deepening social and economic

inequalities, exacerbated by recurring economic shocks, continue to reduce households' ability to afford and access healthy diets.

At the same time, nutrition financing is entering a period of unprecedented contraction. According to a **2025 Standing Together for Nutrition study**, overall development assistance for nutrition programmes fell by 44% compared to 2022 levels, while humanitarian needs continue to surge, putting millions of lives at risk. Fragile and conflict-affected states face the greatest vulnerabilities, with limited domestic financing capacity and shrinking opportunities to attract external resources. The need for more resilient, integrated and country-led approaches is therefore urgent. Embedding nutrition within climate adaptation, food systems transformation, primary health care, social protection and gender-responsive policies will be essential to ensure progress. In this context, civil society has a pivotal role in sustaining political leadership, safeguarding civic space, ensuring accountability and bringing community realities to the centre of multisectoral decision-making.



A youth advocate documents insights during an inclusive adolescent nutrition dialogue in Bauchi State, Nigeria, part of a listening campaign to amplify young people's voices on malnutrition. With thanks to Finian Ali, Youth Coordinator (Nigeria)



## Aligning behind and adding value to SUN 4.0

Against this backdrop, the SUN Movement is moving from its 3.0 strategy (2021–2025) into the new 4.0 period (2026–2030), and SUN CSN is aligning its strategic direction behind this refreshed collective framework.

With its deep reach and strong presence in national platforms, SUN CSN ensures that nutrition action remains people-centred, rights-based and grounded in local realities. In a context where malnutrition is worsening across its full spectrum, from persistent undernutrition to rising overweight and obesity, civil society plays a critical role in addressing not only immediate needs but also the systemic drivers behind them, including inequitable food systems, gender inequality, climate change and constrained civic space.

This strategy sets out how the SUN CSN Secretariat will support civil society to contribute to the Movement's vision of a world free from malnutrition in all its forms, clarifying the SUN CSN added value and unique contribution within SUN 4.0. It particularly articulates how the Network will support CSAs to be key enablers of policy coherence, accountability and sustainability across the **SUN Movement 4.0's** three overarching objectives:

- **SO1 – Strengthen and sustain strong policy and advocacy environments:** By amplifying citizen voices and bringing community evidence into national decision-making, CSAs ensure that nutrition policies and plans reflect local realities and uphold rights-based approaches. Stronger CSAs help institutionalise civil society participation in multi-stakeholder platforms, reinforcing inclusive governance and sustained political commitment to nutrition.
- **SO2 – Sustainability, knowledge management and capacity strengthening:** With enhanced technical and organisational capacity, CSAs monitor service delivery, identify implementation bottlenecks, and generate community-led evidence to improve

programme quality and responsiveness. The SUN CSN Secretariat's regionalised structure enables continuous peer learning, knowledge sharing and cross-country collaboration, anchoring sustainability through stronger systems for evidence use, coordination and adaptive learning.

- **SO3 – Increasing sustainable financing for nutrition:** Empowered CSAs play a pivotal role in advocating for predictable, long-term and equitable financing for nutrition. Through budget tracking, participatory monitoring and citizen-generated accountability mechanisms, they hold duty bearers to account for resource allocation and results. At the same time, the SUN CSN Secretariat mobilises partnerships and facilitates access to flexible funding that strengthens civil society's financial resilience and leadership in national nutrition agendas.

## How the SUN CSN 4.0 strategy was developed

The SUN CSN 4.0 strategy was developed through an **extensive online and in-person consultation process involving over 200 stakeholders**, including members of the SUN CSN Steering Group, representatives from our CSAs, 19 Youth Coordinators, INGOs, SUN Global Support System stakeholders and the SUN Executive Committee, ensuring that diverse perspectives shaped its priorities. Importantly, **it reflects and integrates the four CSA-led regional strategies** (East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Islands, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean), aligning national, regional and global levels into a coherent whole.

The strategy also draws on the evidence and insights generated throughout the 3.0 phase, including findings from successive SUN CSN annual surveys and direct feedback from members. These inputs provided a detailed picture of what worked well and where persistent challenges remained. **This careful assessment of successes and constraints, further detailed in Annex 1 of this strategy,**

ensures that SUN CSN 4.0 builds on the strongest foundations of the Network while directly addressing the barriers that limited civil society's ability to drive sustained nutrition impact in 3.0.

## What this strategy is not

**This strategy is not designed to prescribe programming for CSAs.** Each region has its own strategy that reflects their priorities and realities. The programming objective included in the 3.0 strategy has therefore been removed. Similarly, the SUN CSN Secretariat will not lead on research, programme implementation or policy development. These remain the responsibility of CSAs, regional groups, INGOs and specialised partners, including technical assistance providers, whose expertise and leadership drive the Network's collective impact.

Instead, **SUN CSN 4.0 is a strategy for the global Secretariat:** a framework to guide how we will connect, support and amplify our members' work and progress to contribute to the SUN Movement's 4.0 vision, and how we will strengthen governance and accountability across the Network. The Secretariat will not deliver everything directly. Many of the actions and results envisioned in this strategy will rely on collaboration with Network members and partners. The Secretariat's role is to enable, connect and facilitate, by mobilising global technical expertise, evidence and financial resources, coordinating contributions across global, regional and national members, and ensuring collective efforts remain aligned with country priorities and rooted in local leadership.

## *SUN CSN's core values*

- **Rights-based approach** – Nutrition is a fundamental human right.
- **Equity and fairness** – Prioritising those most affected by malnutrition.
- **Empowerment and participation** – Communities lead in shaping and implementing solutions.
- **Accountability and transparency** – Clear commitments, honest reporting and mutual trust.
- **Collaboration and solidarity** – Harnessing collective power across sectors and borders.
- **Respect for local knowledge** – Valuing indigenous, community-based and experiential knowledge.
- **Sustainability and resilience** – Long-term solutions adaptable to crises.
- **Integrity** – Acting ethically and with purpose in all we do.

# Looking ahead to 2030

As we look towards 2030, although the challenges are as urgent as ever, there are also unprecedented opportunities to strengthen local leadership, integrate nutrition into global priorities and mobilise solidarity across borders. Over the 3.0 period, SUN CSN members have helped to clarify what drives progress – and also what holds it back: fragmented and short-term funding, fragile governance structures, uneven technical capacity, shrinking civic space, and gaps in meaningful inclusion of women, young people and marginalised communities.

## Defining the spirit and direction of SUN CSN 4.0

SUN CSN 4.0 marks a new chapter for the Network. This next phase coincides with the final stretch towards the **Sustainable Development Goals**, as well as the extended **UN Decade of Action on Nutrition** and **WHA targets** in 2030, making the 2026–2030 period especially symbolic. In this decisive moment, strengthening locally led leadership has become essential to translate nutrition commitments into impact.

By bringing decision-making closer to CSAs, redistributing resources, and intentionally opening space for community and youth leadership, SUN CSN 4.0 aims to tackle the root causes of many of the persistent limitations of 3.0: building a stronger governance where it was fragile; strengthening capacity where gaps hindered progress; protecting and expanding civic participation where space was shrinking; and anchoring advocacy in lived experience and community realities.

The spirit of SUN CSN 4.0 is therefore a Network that is **locally led, globally connected and inclusive by design**. A locally led Network means that national and regional voices drive priorities and advocacy; while being globally connected ensures that these experiences shape, and are amplified through, international platforms. Inclusivity is reflected in how the Network operates: intentionally creating space for women, young people and communities to meaningfully participate in the Network's mission through governance, dialogue and feedback loops.



16-year-old Sajna looks after a patch of land in Sylhet, Bangladesh



## Clarifying SUN CSN's value-add for members

Within the Network, we have a much clearer picture of our network members, their focus areas (geographic, thematic and technical), their progress and challenges, and their unique needs and priorities. **In SUN CSN 4.0, the Secretariat is making a conscious effort to clearly define its offer to members:** what value the Secretariat provides to each segment of our membership, and how every part of the Network – CSAs (including young people), regional groups and INGOs – contributes to and benefits from our collective action. This clarity ensures that our strategy responds directly to members' realities, strengthens accountability and demonstrates the unique added value of civil society within the wider SUN Movement.

**The SUN CSN Secretariat** provides the enabling architecture. It supports coherence, strengthens capacity, facilitates cross-country learning, and ensures national civil society voices influence global and regional decision-making spaces. The Secretariat directly contributes to 4.0 by strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration, supporting nutrition integration, strengthening domestic resource mobilisation, creating an enabling environment with policymakers, and reinforcing monitoring, learning and accountability mechanisms across the Network.

## SUN Civil Society Alliances – the heart of the Network

**CSAs are the backbone of SUN CSN.** CSAs coordinate advocacy, accountability, service delivery, programmatic work and mobilisation efforts, and serve as civil society's organised voice in each country: engaging with other stakeholders, liaising with SUN Government Focal Points, actively participating in multi-stakeholder platform meetings, and contributing to the design, implementation, budget analysis and monitoring of National Nutrition Plans. CSAs are usually guided by an executive committee composed of diverse members, which ensures coordination, representation and accountability within the Alliance. Some CSAs are hosted by established

organisations – including 26 by local NGOs and 11 by INGOs – that provide administrative and technical support, while others are independently registered entities with their own legal identity. Through membership of SUN CSN, CSAs gain access to seed funding, governance and fundraising support, tailored technical assistance, and global platforms that amplify their national priorities.

**In the 4.0 phase, CSAs will be encouraged and supported to scale up their efforts in bringing the voices of affected populations into decision-making. Mechanisms such as community dialogues will capture lived experiences and local evidence, ensuring that policies and accountability processes are shaped by those most impacted by malnutrition, and grounding the Network's agenda and action in community realities.**

## Regional groups – bringing support closer to communities

To ensure tailored support, enhanced capacities, peer-to-peer learning and stronger advocacy, CSAs are organised into four regional groups:

**Asia, East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Islands, and Latin America and the Caribbean.** Each region is supported by a Senior Regional Adviser who provides direct technical assistance, facilitates learning exchanges and ensures regional priorities are elevated within the global Network. They provide continuity and alignment between national realities and global decisions, ensuring that SUN 4.0 priorities flow both ways: from CSAs to SUN governance, and from SUN Movement guidance to functional country-level adaptation. They nurture collaboration between CSAs, SUN Government Focal Points and SUN regional hubs.

Some regional groups are moving towards the establishment of their own governance mechanisms, enabling members to play a stronger role in shaping regional strategies, priorities and outputs. These governance structures not only strengthen accountability and ownership at regional level but also feed directly into the global governance



Women cooking at a local market on the outskirts of Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire

of the Network, ensuring that regional perspectives shape global advocacy, strategy and decision-making.

**In 4.0, the Secretariat will seek to expand regional teams to improve tailored support to CSAs and leverage regional dynamics and advocacy opportunities. It will also include regional representatives on the SUN CSN Steering Group. This two-way flow brings decision-making closer to members while reinforcing SUN CSN's collective voice and impact across borders.**

### Young people in civil society – building legitimate mandates, and driving accountability one community dialogue at a time

To strengthen inclusivity and accountability, SUN CSN has always placed youth engagement at the core of its approach. **Through SUN CSN's flagship Youth Leaders for Nutrition programme, young people have gained mentoring and training, financial and technical support for youth-led community dialogues, and direct pathways to decision-making spaces within national MSPs and in regional and global advocacy spaces.**

In SUN CSN 4.0, the Secretariat will aim to scale meaningful **youth participation across the whole SUN Movement, starting within SUN CSN at the community level.**

Instead of positioning young people as tokenistic 'ambassadors' or 'spokespeople' on behalf of CSAs and other SUN Stakeholders,

the SUN CSN Secretariat and individual CSAs will enable young people to build their own legitimate mandate through the delivery of local dialogues with marginalised communities. When these young people participate in decision-making processes, they will not act as disempowered individuals, but as empowered representatives of the communities with whom they have engaged, bringing to bear all the skills, knowledge and experience they have developed in the process. Starting at the community level, SUN CSN is enabling young people to act as leaders today, rather than waiting for them to make their valuable contributions when they are older.

Each Alliance is encouraged to work with Youth Coordinators who will lead community dialogues, ensuring that advocacy and accountability are grounded in the lived realities of the most affected populations. By capturing testimonies, evidence and recommendations directly from communities, Youth Coordinators will help CSAs shape policy positions that are rooted in local priorities and more responsive to equity and inclusion. Beyond amplifying community voices, **Youth Coordinators will strengthen accountability by tracking commitments, mobilising peers and bringing fresh perspectives across sectors such as climate, food systems, gender and health.** They, together with the SUN CSN Secretariat, will also act as vital connectors, linking national youth voices with regional platforms and global advocacy spaces.

## Global Members (INGOs) – allies and amplifiers

SUN CSN also includes a constituency of international NGOs. **INGOs provide key operational, technical and financial support**, helping to strengthen the capacity of CSAs and support regional groups. In some instances, INGOs directly host CSAs – an essential contribution that helps foster CSAs' resilience, institutional strength and long-term sustainability. INGOs also **bring significant added value through their global advocacy reach, technical expertise and convening power in multilateral spaces**. They relay SUN CSN priorities and contribute to its mission of amplifying nutrition across sectors such as health, climate, food systems and gender.

For INGOs, joining the SUN CSN offers a platform to **speak with one voice**, aligning advocacy and messaging across national, regional and global levels. It provides a mechanism to connect global mandates with locally defined priorities, reinforcing commitments to shifting power to civil

society and strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination. The Network also enables INGOs to build shared agendas, identify collaboration opportunities, and contribute to more coherent and impactful regional and global advocacy within the broader SUN Movement.

**In SUN CSN 4.0, the Secretariat will be more intentional about mapping out global members' expertise and presence in CSAs** to align their contributions with country-led priorities, avoid duplication and ensure that INGO support strengthens local civil society capacity to the best extent possible. **The Secretariat will more regularly convene INGOs to share technical support opportunities, coordinate global advocacy and funding efforts, and generally increase their engagement in the Network. It will also ensure their knowledge and technical assistance benefit CSAs**, particularly where members' needs in some areas – such as gender, climate and conflict – are not met by their own capacities.



Sarah, 25 with Chiplumutso, 3 months, is part of a mother's group hosted by a SUN alliance member

## Building on what works

SUN CSN 4.0 builds on what has consistently proven effective across the Network. This section distills the lessons and strengths that will continue to guide the Secretariat's work, highlighting approaches that have delivered tangible results and will remain central to the strategy moving forward – albeit, in some cases, adapted or refined to reflect the priorities outlined in the 4.0 phase. **Annex 1 provides an overview of achievements and challenges from the 3.0 period, including concrete country examples that have shaped the direction of this strategy.**

### The Secretariat's evolving ways of working: advancing regionalisation, localisation and inclusive governance

A major step forward under the SUN CSN 3.0 period was the **deepening of regionalisation and localisation** across the Network. For the first time, **close to 70% of SUN CSN funding reached the regional and country levels**, enabling direct support for governance, advocacy and capacity strengthening – areas where impact is most tangible. The creation of four regional groups, each supported by full-time Senior Regional Advisers, brought coordination, technical assistance and peer learning closer to national CSAs. The four CSA-defined regional strategies highlight how these situations play out differently, and how civil society is uniquely positioned to break down siloes by embedding nutrition across sectors.

In the 4.0 period, the Secretariat will **deepen this shift**, ensuring that regionalisation and localisation shape how the Network is governed, resourced and supported. Decision-making and funding will move closer to where impact happens, with stronger and expanded regional teams, stronger regional partnerships, clearer pathways to implementing the regional strategies, and more inclusive governance with the nomination of regional executive committees. The SUN CSN Secretariat will continue to act as a **facilitator and connector**, brokering knowledge, partnerships and resources in service of its members.

## Building skills, sharing solutions

Civil society's ability to influence policies and systems depends on strong, skilled and connected organisations. Under 3.0, the SUN CSN Secretariat invested in training, exchanges and mentoring that allowed CSAs to strengthen their expertise and learn from one another. In 4.0, SUN CSN will continue these efforts through the institutionalisation of the **flagship peer-to-peer learning programme** which ensures that evidence and good practices from one CSA can inspire change in others, scaling up innovation and building a stronger, more resilient network. The inclusion of small grants for the implementation of country action plans following the visit will allow for greater sustainability and scale, as seen through the impacts achieved in 2025.

### Reinforcing governance and sustainable resourcing

Strong governance and predictable resources are the foundation of effective civil society action. Under 3.0, SUN CSN provided small grants that allowed alliances to mobilise members, strengthen their governance structures, improve multi-stakeholder collaboration, advance efforts in thematic areas, and sustain advocacy and accountability work. Despite the dire financial landscape, some CSAs successfully secured funding to run their collective operations.

**In 4.0, SUN CSN will continue to provide targeted governance and resource mobilisation support to CSAs**, including through adapted training and tools, connections with funding opportunities and donors, the provision of the new version of the Fundraising Radicals training focused on domestic resource mobilisation, the continuation of the small grants programme to deepen innovative approaches, a new governance kick-starter programme with seed funding for emerging and stagnant CSAs, and a peer learning programme enabling burgeoning Alliances to learn from more established ones. The aim is to support Alliances in becoming more sustainable through diversified and ideally domestic funding options.

## Locally led advocacy

Across the Network, civil society has demonstrated its ability to connect community realities with national and global policy change. Under 3.0, SUN CSN members achieved concrete advocacy gains such as defending breastfeeding rights, advancing gender equality, integrating nutrition into health and food systems, and climate resilience frameworks, and more broadly promoting the need to integrate nutrition across sectors as a key lever of development and prosperity.

**In 4.0, SUN CSN will build on these achievements and the synergies with the Global Compact for Nutrition Integration** by deepening coherence across its thematic areas, and will continue to provide and broker **technical assistance, peer learning and cross-regional exchanges**. This will in turn allow CSAs to share and adapt successful models of nutrition integration across systems.

The SUN CSN Secretariat will ensure that advocacy priorities are **defined by members themselves through a local-to-global advocacy strategy** that draws from the regional

strategies, rather than being shaped by global events. Such a strategy will strengthen the Network's collective capacity to influence multisectoral policies, linking local realities with regional and global platforms and promoting integrated advocacy around mutually reinforcing priorities, ensuring that civil society perspectives inform both national plans and global policy frameworks.

## Youth engagement as a driver of inclusivity and equity

Young people are not only beneficiaries of action on nutrition; they are leaders in their own right, upholding accountability at every level. SUN CSN recognises that lasting change requires intergenerational collaboration, and that young people must be equipped and resourced to shape decision-making at every level. Through the delivery of community dialogues, young people have captured and amplified the voices of those most affected by malnutrition, ensuring that advocacy and policy reflect lived realities. **In 4.0, SUN CSN is proposing to scale up the effective model of youth-led community dialogues across the entire network.** This initiative will be led

by CSAs and young people, and enabled through the creation of an online toolkit resource hub, the provision of small grants from the CSN Secretariat, and ongoing training and support for all CSAs and young people engaged in this work.

A lesson from 3.0 is that meaningful youth engagement requires multi-stakeholder support and collaboration across the SUN Movement to succeed at the country level. Therefore, SUN CSN is also leading efforts with SUN Global Support System colleagues to implement a Movement-wide youth participation framework. This will clearly articulate the contribution from each SUN network towards supporting meaningful youth participation within the Movement. SUN CSN's contribution of youth-led community dialogues

would be foundational, with other networks and stakeholders creating the enabling environment for young people to influence



**SUN CSN Philippines Youth Coordinator Shanerisse Tamondong displays a paper plate showing ingredients of a healthy meal at the N4G Summit in Paris in 2025**



**Zainab Swaleh, 56, a civil society member of the SUN Movement in Mombasa, Kenya, grows food in a rooftop garden, using her harvest to feed her family, sell at market and promote urban gardening in her community**

community-informed policy change. Other SUN networks and stakeholder groups will have their own youth engagement initiatives, which the SUN CSN will proactively engage with, working to find synergies and avoid duplication of effort.

More detail can be found in the **SUN CSN Youth Participation Strategy**, and the **SUN 4.0 Youth Participation Framework**, which have been developed in consultation with a wide range of SUN stakeholders including young people from across multiple sectors.

### **SUN CSN as a guardian of accountability**

In times of shrinking civic space and mounting global crises, civil society's accountability efforts are indispensable. Across regions, SUN CSN members have acted as guardians of accountability, ensuring that commitments on nutrition are not only made but are also tracked, financed and delivered. Under 3.0,

however, CSAs often struggled to access the financial and technical support required to sustain accountability work. Many lacked resources to attend MSP meetings or to invest in independent monitoring.

### **In 4.0, SUN CSN will explicitly address these barriers**

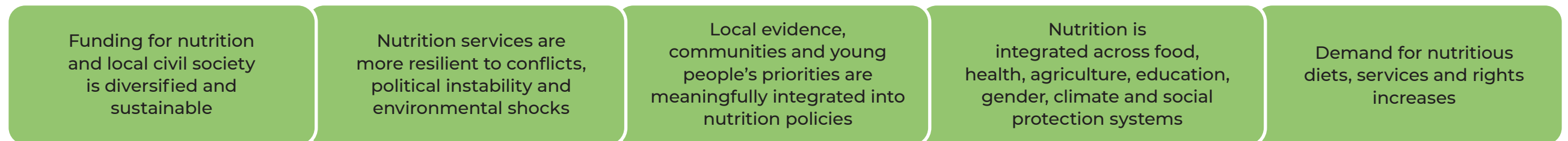
by funding social accountability approaches (notably community dialogues), supporting CSA participation in the SUN CSN Steering Group, and offering regional accountability training sessions. Members across regions will continue to independently monitor commitments – from local and national governments, financial partners and the private sector – and mobilise citizens to demand their rights. By grounding accountability in community voices, the Network helps ensure that nutrition commitments are followed through and remain visible, even when political attention or resources shift.

# SUN Civil Society Network's Theory of Change

*Which ultimately contributes to*

**VISION** A world free from malnutrition in all its forms, where a united and strong local civil society plays a leading role in ensuring everyone's right to safe, healthy, and nutritious food.

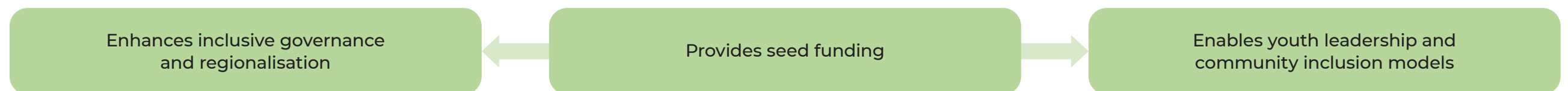
*Which leads to*



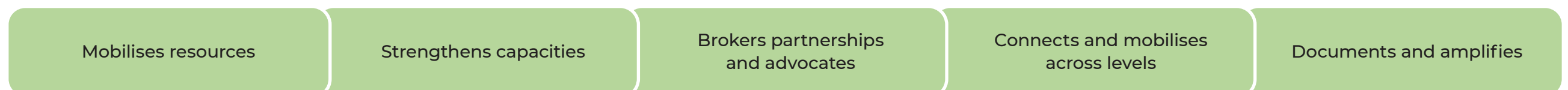
## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



## CROSS-CUTTING APPROACH: LOCALISATION



## SECRETARIAT CORE FUNCTIONS



**NETWORK MISSION** To coordinate, strengthen and amplify local civil society leadership for equitable, accountable and cross-sector action that transforms systems and secures improved nutrition outcomes globally.

*Then*

*If the SUN CSN Secretariat*

# Strategic objectives



## Localisation: the underpinning approach behind all strategic objectives

**Investing in locally led solutions and civil society is the most sustainable option for achieving lasting nutrition results.** Experience shows that when systems collapse or crises hit, it is local civil society actors who remain active, continuing to serve communities and defend their right to food and nutrition, often under the most challenging conditions.

**In SUN CSN 4.0, localisation underpins all four strategic objectives.** The SUN CSN Secretariat will continue to drive this through inclusive and representative governance structures, global advocacy rooted in local evidence, regional strategies driving local ownership, and the small grants mechanism increasing CSAs' sustainability.

**A volunteer serves cassava and chicken to children at a 'FRANC' centre for community nutrition and early childhood development in Côte d'Ivoire**





# Strategic Objective 1

## From short-term approaches to resilience: sustainably governed and resourced CSAs

### Background

CSAs are the backbone of SUN CSN, bringing legitimacy, local reach and the ability to connect communities with policy processes. They are often the single civil society entity representing diverse local, national and international nutrition actors at country level, and their ability to coordinate civil society action is what makes them crucial partners for governments, donors and technical agencies. Yet many remain fragile, under-resourced, and reliant on short-term funding and volunteer work. Those in fragile and conflict-affected settings face even greater challenges and need tailored support. Improved governance provides CSAs with the legitimacy and coordination capacity that make them credible partners. This credibility in turn facilitates resource mobilisation, and their enhanced governance and financing create the stability and capacity needed for them to mobilise domestic resources, influence policy, sustain collective action and deliver tangible nutrition results.

### Objective

To strengthen CSAs' institutional resilience, credibility, and financial sustainability through inclusive governance, effective partnerships and diversified funding mechanisms for nutrition.

### Expected outcomes

1. CSAs function effectively as trusted partners within SUN MSPs and are recognised for their nutrition expertise.
2. CSAs demonstrate financial sustainability and capacity to sustain coordination and implement collective strategic action plans, including in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

To achieve this, the SUN CSN Secretariat will:

- **Provide tailored governance workshops and tools** according to CSAs' status, context, capacity and needs, delivered during national and regional workshops.
- Develop a Network-wide **resource mobilisation strategy** supporting CSA-defined regional priorities, with decentralised financial mechanisms where needed.
- Offer fundraising **training** to all CSAs in the course of the strategy period.
- Continue the **small grants programme** to support CSAs in strengthening member engagement and governance structures, driving innovative approaches, and scaling up good practices.
- Launch the new **governance kick-starter programme** with seed funding for emerging and stagnating CSAs, including in fragile and conflict-affected settings.
- **Offer resource mobilisation training resources** (e.g. funding opportunities bulletins, documentation of good practices, peer learning, connections with INGOs, technical and financial partners) to support CSAs in mobilising domestic, sustainable and flexible funding.
- **Adapt support for CSAs in fragile and conflict-affected settings** with flexible governance approaches, connections with humanitarian actors and relevant partners (including potential donors), and tailored peer learning opportunities.
- **Ensure meaningful civil society representation in the broader SUN Movement's governance**, i.e. SUN Government Focal Points, MSPs, the SUN Lead Group and Executive Committee, and SUN Movement regional hubs.



# Strategic Objective 2

## From representation to inclusive leadership: youth, gender and civic space for nutrition impact

### Background

Lasting progress on nutrition cannot be achieved without the leadership and ownership of the communities most affected. Civil society connects directly with communities, bringing their voices, knowledge and lived experiences into national and global decision-making. Young people in particular are essential drivers of change: they mobilise peers, bridge generations, and ensure that policies respond to future needs as well as present realities. Women also play a pivotal role in advancing nutrition outcomes, both as leaders and as those most affected by malnutrition, often bearing the responsibility for family nutrition. Their meaningful participation is therefore essential to shaping responsive programmes, policies and solutions. Civic space is the precondition for their participation. By convening communities, building awareness of rights and amplifying local perspectives, civil society ensures diverse community voices shape tailored and meaningful nutrition actions.

### Objective

To promote inclusive leadership for nutrition results by amplifying youth- and women-led initiatives, safeguarding civic space, and ensuring local voices shape decision-making affecting nutrition outcomes.

### Expected outcomes

1. Young people, women and community actors are meaningfully included and valued within SUN Movement structures.
2. CSAs and young people regularly convene community nutrition dialogues that inform MSPs and national decision-making processes.
3. Civil society space is safeguarded and expanded, with documented cases of CSAs being included in shaping nutrition decisions.

To achieve this, the SUN CSN Secretariat will:

- **Provide tailored governance, advocacy and safeguarding workshops**, tools and peer exchanges to support CSAs, MSPs and SUN structures in meaningfully including young people and women in their membership, governance and decision-making structures.
- In line with SUN CSN's **Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitment**, **scale up the Youth Leaders for Nutrition programme** by embedding youth engagement in CSAs, strengthening existing and new youth networks to organise community dialogues, resourcing contextualised action plans, and elevating community voices to inform national, regional and global decision-making processes.
- **Sponsor SUN CSN members, particularly women, young people and marginalised groups, to contribute their local expertise at advocacy opportunities** at national, regional and global levels.
- **Resource and scale youth- and CSA-led community nutrition dialogues.**
- Leverage the SUN Movement's, INGOs' and partners' expertise to integrate **gender-transformative** activities, promote wider inclusion of marginalised groups, and showcase progress and impact on closing the gender nutrition gap.
- **Carry out SUN CSN's flagship peer learning programme and communities of practice around different thematic and technical areas**, starting with the intersection between nutrition, gender and climate.





# Strategic Objective 3

## From rights to results: advocacy and accountability for nutrition integration

### Background

Malnutrition does not exist in isolation. It is intricately linked with gender inequality, climate shocks, weak health and social protection systems, and dysfunctional food systems that too often prioritise profit over health. These same systems are now driving a rapid rise in overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases, alongside persisting undernutrition. To achieve lasting progress, **nutrition must be integrated into these systems as a cross-cutting priority.** Civil society is uniquely positioned to drive this integration by linking community realities to policy spaces, defending the right to food and

nutrition, leading bold advocacy, and holding governments and private actors to account.

**CSAs already bring strong local advocacy and accountability capacity, rooted in community experience. The task is to elevate this leadership, share it across the Network, and connect it strategically to regional and international platforms.**

### Objective

To advance civil society advocacy and accountability to integrate nutrition across health, food, climate, gender and social protection systems.

Mercy Konzi, 37, from Kwale, Kenya, works as a farmer near Nyalani dam, which was established by the Kenyan Red Cross, one of the SUN Movement's partners. The dam pumps water to irrigate the fields.



## Expected outcomes

1. CSAs achieve policy and budgetary gains that embed nutrition across sectors such as health, food systems, gender and climate.
2. Civil society upholds accountability towards governments and the private sector on their N4G and other nutrition-related commitments.
3. CSA voices, advocacy achievements and good practices gain visibility and recognition in global and regional fora.

## To achieve this, the SUN CSN Secretariat will:

- **Provide tailored advocacy and political communications training and peer-learning** programmes, including at regional CSA workshops.
- **Sponsor SUN CSN members to contribute their local expertise at advocacy opportunities** at national, regional and global levels, ensuring that CSA priorities shape international agendas, while leveraging the Network's INGO members and other technical assistance providers as amplifiers and allies.
- **Offer tailored technical assistance to strengthen CSAs' monitoring functions** in budget analysis, advocacy towards parliamentarians and social accountability towards governments' fulfilment of the right to food and nutrition, as well as commitments made through the SDGs, WHA targets, N4G and national nutrition plans.
- In line with SUN CSN's N4G commitment, **support CSAs to engage in strategic advocacy towards private sector and government actors** to promote nutrition equity and accountability in food systems. This includes action to improve the availability and responsible marketing of nutritious and safe foods, reduce the promotion of unhealthy ultra-processed products – especially to vulnerable populations – and ensure that food companies act in the public interest and contribute meaningfully to national nutrition goals.
- **Report on its progress against N4G commitments** and amplify progress achieved by CSAs on accountability for their own and their government's commitments.
- **Support civil society advocacy campaigns** by coordinating joint messaging, amplifying CSA-led initiatives and linking them to regional and global platforms.
- **Advance nutrition integration across sectors** by brokering partnerships with members of the Global Compact for Nutrition Integration, facilitating knowledge exchange and promoting evidence that demonstrates how to embed nutrition into other sectors.
- **Mobilise young people, women and civil society to deliver community dialogues** and elevate their priorities, evidence and solutions for healthy diets to inform policymaking.





# Strategic Objective 4

## From evidence to influence: amplifying effective civil society practices for nutrition

### Background

Civil society brings grounded expertise, lived experience and community-generated evidence – all of which are often overlooked in national and global decision-making. To sustain nutrition results, evidence and good practices must be organised, shared and translated into compelling stories and clear messages that reach policymakers and the public. Knowledge management is critical to connecting learning across the network, avoiding duplication, and ensuring that local innovations inspire global change. Media engagement and communications are equally essential to amplifying voices, shifting narratives, and increasing accountability. Together, evidence, knowledge management and communications strengthen the credibility and influence of civil society.

### Objective

To strengthen civil society's generation and use of citizen-led evidence, knowledge and stories to shape nutrition policies and shift narratives from local to global levels.

### Expected outcomes

1. Peer learning among CSAs strengthens member capacities and scales up successful practices.
2. Local and national civil society evidence and progress are systematically documented, analysed and communicated to inform and influence decisions.
3. CSAs and young people are equipped to engage proactively with media and digital platforms.
4. Civil society stories and perspectives gain visibility and resonance from local to global levels.

### To achieve this, the SUN CSN Secretariat will:

- In line with SUN CSN's N4G commitment, **create more spaces for CSAs to learn from each other** – facilitating and **documenting peer-to-peer exchanges and equipping members to turn learnings into advocacy impact.**
- **Scale up CSAs' local evidence and good practices** through **SUN CSN's flagship peer learning programme**, which equips CSAs to learn from a successful model and adapt it to their respective contexts.
- **Connect CSAs with academia, research institutions and UN Country Teams** by brokering partnerships that validate citizen-generated evidence, co-produce knowledge and ensure local experiences inform global debates.
- **Boost communications and visibility** by providing CSAs with digital, media, and storytelling support; ensuring they are equipped to elevate diverse voices (including women, young people and community actors) in national and regional platforms.
- **Amplify members' voices** through the SUN CSN website, social media and storytelling.
- **Strengthen knowledge and data management** for the Secretariat and CSAs by improving tools and systems that preserve institutional memory, support the mapping of members' expertise, and facilitate peer exchange and learning across regions. This includes enhancing the website as a regularly updated resource hub where members can access and share information, guidance, and experiences from across the Network.
- **Deliver and report on the Network's progress and impact through a robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) system.**



## Accountability and governance

SUN CSN will continue to **adapt its governance structures** in line with its localisation efforts. In 3.0, the SUN CSN Secretariat had already made its Steering Group more inclusive and representative with global, regional, national and youth representation. In 4.0, to prevent any power dynamics and to be as inclusive as possible, we will go one step further by ensuring that CSA and youth members are elected through a transparent process, have clearly defined roles, are well briefed ahead of meetings, benefit from structured opportunities to convey country perspectives, and receive translation and interpretation where needed, so that they can contribute equitably to discussions and decision-making processes. The Steering Group will also welcome regional representatives to ensure global decisions are made with the regional strategies and the members' best interests in mind. Steering Group meetings and consultations will be

designed to enable meaningful participation across languages, time zones and connectivity levels, ensuring that governance is not only more diverse, but also more equitable and effective.

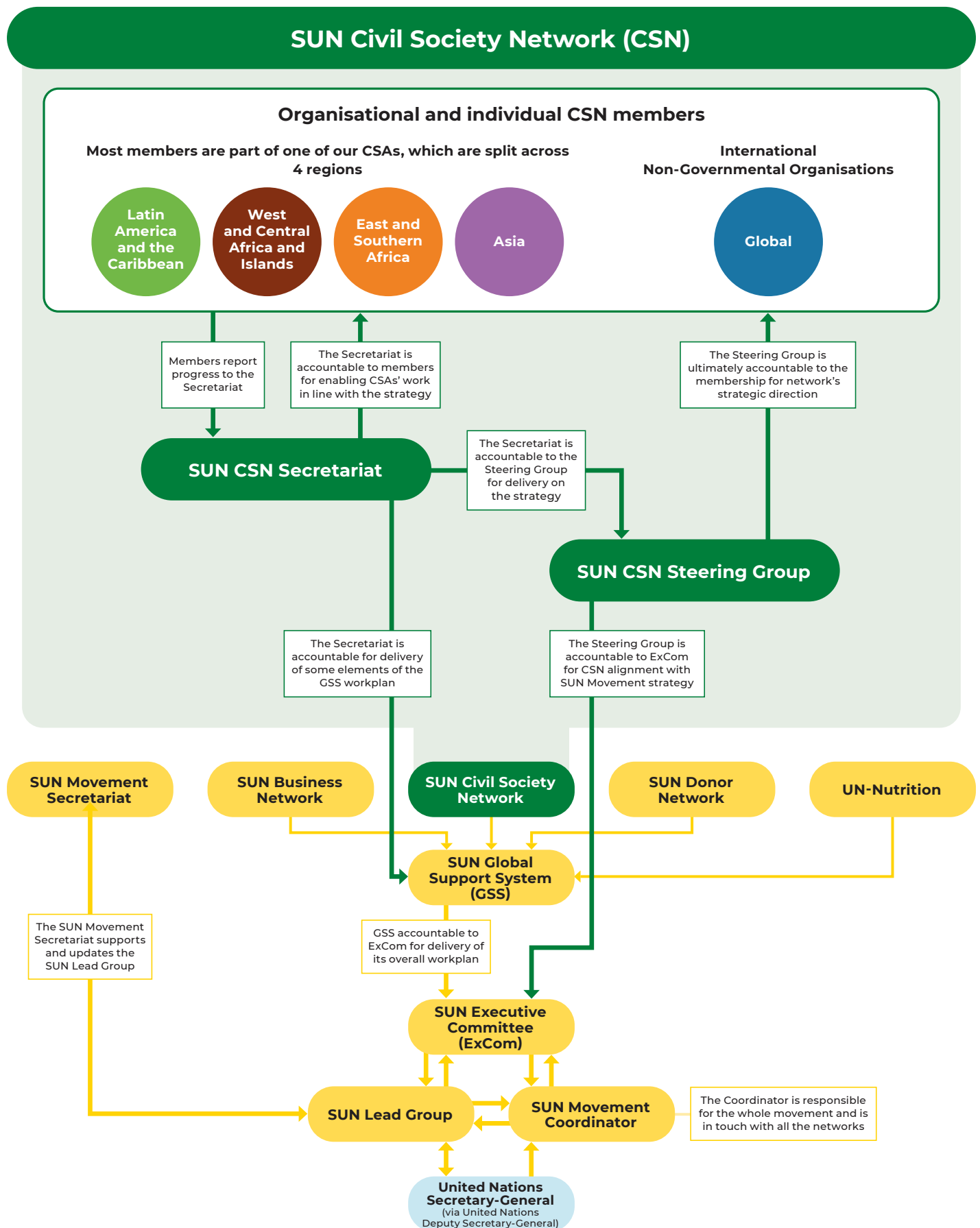
Beyond the Steering Group structures, the Secretariat will look at alternative ways to **improve feedback loops** between national and global levels to strengthen mutual accountability between CSN members, regional teams and the Secretariat. In addition to annual surveys, where CSAs provide direct feedback to the Secretariat and regional teams, this includes organising virtual assemblies to shape strategies, ensuring closer follow-up with sponsored participants, sharing outcome reports, and publicly declaring our progress against the Secretariat's N4G commitments and Network strategy.



School meals served at Injas Primary School, Kuajok, Warrap State, South Sudan



# SUN Civil Society Network accountability and governance



● SUN CSN ● SUN Movement

# Annex: Building on lessons learned from the SUN CSN 3.0 strategic phase

This annex summarises the key achievements and challenges of the SUN CSN 3.0 strategic phase, drawing on extensive consultations and the **SUN CSN 2024 annual survey**, which polled 56 CSAs and which had a record 86% response rate. It highlights the progress, innovations and lessons that have shaped the Network over the past four years and provides the foundation upon which SUN CSN 4.0 is built.

## SUN CSN 3.0: successes at a glance

The SUN CSN 3.0 phase marked a period of consolidation, expansion, and renewed confidence in civil society's leadership within the SUN Movement.

### Growing membership

The 2021–2025 period marked an important phase of consolidation and steady growth for SUN CSN, whose membership surpassed 5,000 organisations, regrouped in 55 official CSAs and 7 civil society efforts in the process of formalising their governance structures. New CSAs were created, including in **Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Republic of Congo and Timor Leste**. New international members also joined, including the **French Red Cross, Global Health Advocates, Catholic Relief Services, Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET), Global Civil Society Coordinating Group for the Global Financing Facility, People in Need, Smile Train, and the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus**. This steady expansion reflects the growing visibility and credibility of the Network, demonstrating its ability to bring together a diverse range of actors united by a shared commitment to end malnutrition.

It also confirms SUN CSN's relevance as a trusted platform for collaboration, learning and collective advocacy across countries and regions.

### Regionalisation

A major milestone of the 3.0 phase was the full operationalisation of the four regional groups: Asia, East and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa and Islands, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Each region benefited from a dedicated Senior Regional Adviser and, in the Africa regions, their own strategic or governance mechanisms. This, coupled with regular online and in-person regional CSA convenings, as well as close collaboration with the SUN Movement Secretariat regional hubs, brought support closer to the ground, enhanced peer learning, and ensured that regional priorities and realities directly shaped the Network's global agenda.

### Partnerships and collaboration

SUN CSN 3.0 saw stronger collaboration with technical, advocacy and financial partners. At the global level, the Secretariat worked closely with C4N-SUN,<sup>1</sup> EU4SUN,<sup>2</sup> Save the Children, World Vision International, CARE's CASCADE programme and the SUN Global Support System to expand opportunities for CSAs to access resources, training and policy spaces. Strategic engagement with the School Meals Coalition, the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism, and the Nutrition Dialogues partnership broadened civil society participation in global advocacy. At the regional level, new partnerships, particularly in East and Southern Africa with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF), the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC),

<sup>1</sup> An element of the joint German–EU Capacity for Nutrition facility

<sup>2</sup> A European Commission-funded project led by the Spanish cooperation agency with support from the French cooperation agency

the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD), World Vision International, and Action Against Hunger, translated into concrete support for advocacy, capacity strengthening and policy dialogue.

### Youth engagement and community accountability

The flagship Youth Leaders for Nutrition programme grew from a small cohort of 13 Youth Leaders for Nutrition in 2018 into youth networks led by 19 national Youth Coordinators by 2025. The role profile for young people within the programme evolved from a “youth advocate” role towards a community-focused convenor of young people to engage the most marginalised communities in meaningful dialogues. In partnership with their SUN CSA, and enabled by small grants distributed by the SUN CSN Secretariat, these young people built country-level youth networks, led community dialogues, and elevated local evidence to national and global decision-making spaces.

Through the partnership with the 4SD Foundation and World Vision International, more than 100 communities across 14 countries were reached through youth-led and CSA-led Nutrition Dialogues between 2024 and 2025.

In **Guinea**, young leaders are formally integrated into CSA governance, helping shape advocacy priorities. In **Ghana**, the CSA mobilises young people through school nutrition clubs and media campaigns to hold decision-makers accountable. In **the Philippines**, the SUN Youth Coordinator co-drafted the National Nutrition Plan and ran listening campaigns with young people. In **Malawi**, the Youth Leaders for Nutrition programme enabled young advocates to secure representation in community committees and district-level decision-making. In **Nigeria**, backed by the support of the SUN MSP, the SUN CSN youth coordinator and the CSA’s youth network mobilised 117 young people across six states to deliver 57 community dialogues, engaging underrepresented voices, including people with disabilities.



SUN CSN Youth Coordinators Messeny Bafouro (Guinea-Conakry) and Finian Ali (Nigeria) join other young people from around the world in the UNESCO Global Headquarters to jointly finalise the Nutrition for Growth Summit Youth Call to Action in Paris, France, 2025



## Peer-to-peer learning

Guided by members' feedback and annual surveys, the Secretariat expanded opportunities for knowledge exchange and mutual learning. Structured and comprehensive **peer learning visits**, such as the “Enhancing capacities for nutrition-sensitive programming” exchange in **the Philippines** and the “Closing the gender-nutrition gap” visit in **Vietnam**, enabled members to adapt proven models to their own contexts. In **Sierra Leone**, the CSA successfully advocated for enhanced breastfeeding support across the workplace by piloting its first-ever workplace breastfeeding support programme serving over 300 female healthcare workers and strengthening the national commitment to exclusive breastfeeding. This success, which is tied to multi-sector support and which delivered on new N4G commitments, is due to be replicated, with plans to expand to markets and factories, with national policy reform to follow. Informal exchanges also flourished following regional gatherings, including cross-country collaboration between **Uganda and Pakistan** on media advocacy, and between **Cambodia and Myanmar** on nutrition-sensitive agriculture. These experiences not only strengthened technical capacities but also deepened solidarity and trust across the Network.

Cross-country exchanges flourished, for instance between **Peru and Ecuador** on sustainable partnership building, and between **Nigeria and Ghana** on member engagement and governance. In Asia, with the support of C4N and IIRR, countries came together in the Philippines to exchange and learn from different sustainable school meal programmes. These programmes go beyond nutrition; they strengthen local food systems, promote climate-resilient agriculture and reduce food waste, a true illustration of integrated action on nutrition, food security and climate adaptation.

## Capacity strengthening

Under 3.0, SUN CSN made significant investments in strengthening civil society capacity. Through targeted initiatives such as the budget analysis and advocacy training of trainers in partnership with the German cooperation agency (GIZ) and Save the Children UK, and access to the award-winning *Fundraising Radicals* programme, CSAs were equipped to mobilise resources, influence budgets and diversify their funding base.

These efforts translated into a wide range of practical capacity-strengthening opportunities across the Network. CSAs benefited from **budget analysis and advocacy trainings** in **Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Mozambique, Ecuador and Colombia**; governance workshops tailored to specific needs; an **innovative fundraising programme** that boosted confidence and skills to approach donors; **a financing and MEAL workshop** in West Africa; **a community of practice on food systems**; and a **storytelling and writing workshop**. **In Latin America, a regional accountability course reached more than 40 civil society actors**, with plans to adapt and replicate it in both African regions in 2026.

## Governance and seed funding

By reinforcing both governance and resourcing, the SUN CSN Secretariat supported Alliances to act as a stable, credible and independent leader in ending malnutrition. In **Nigeria**, the CSA strengthened its governance structures and offer, allowing it to set up membership fees and a business development committee, and to raise funds for implementing their collective strategy. The **Namibia** CSA secured funding from GIZ and the European Union (EU) allowing it to build capacity around multi-stakeholder collaboration and strengthen the engagement between civil society and the government, the media and the private sector – resulting in the establishment of the SUN Business Network. The Alliance in **Tanzania**, however, suffered from budget cuts during the implementation of the flagship United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Lishe

project, funding for which was supposed to run until 2028. Both the emerging and well-established Alliances, however, made strides in improving their governance structures, with one notable success being **Colombia**, which made great use of a SUN CSN small grant to develop core sustainability tools – in governance, advocacy, communications and resource mobilisation – which significantly strengthen their positioning in national nutrition policy. Some CSAs, such as **Nigeria** and **the Philippines**, also deepened multi-stakeholder collaboration and inclusivity by including Youth Coordinators in their governance structures.

The Network's sub-granting mechanisms also provided crucial seed funding that enabled alliances to **pilot innovations and test new advocacy models** that were later scaled up across regions. In **Cambodia**, for example, a small grant supported work linking nutrition with climate-smart agriculture and school feeding. In **Burkina Faso**, seed funding enabled a budget analysis pilot that went on to become a regional good practice in accountability.

### From local to global advocacy

Across the 3.0 period, civil society advocacy contributed to tangible outcomes: stronger protection of breastfeeding, greater gender equality, deeper integration of nutrition into health and food systems reforms, and the inclusion of nutrition in climate-resilience frameworks; reinforcing nutrition as a cornerstone of sustainable development.

### Protecting breastfeeding and advancing gender equality

Across all four regions, SUN CSN members defend breastfeeding rights, promote maternity protection and elevate women's leadership in CSAs and policy platforms. In **Liberia**, the CSA successfully advocated for the passage of the national Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes and promoted workplace breastfeeding protections. In **Sierra Leone**, joint advocacy with the SUN-led Food Systems Coordination Unit led to the



**Ibsan, 12, holding corn from her family's corn field in the Dry Corridor region, Guatemala**

inclusion of breastfeeding policies in new N4G commitments. In **Zimbabwe**, sustained advocacy by the CSA led to the establishment of a dedicated breastfeeding room in Parliament, a landmark initiative demonstrating institutional commitment to supporting working mothers. In **Laos**, the Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Awards increased breastfeeding at work by 32% within two years, engaging both civil society and private employers. In **Ecuador**, the CSA linked women's rights with the human right to adequate food, embedding gender equity into national nutrition policy.

### Building resilience to climate change

Climate shocks increasingly disrupt food security and livelihoods. In **Niger**, the CSA connects nutrition advocacy to resilience efforts, supporting communities affected by recurrent droughts and food crises. In **Burkina Faso**, civil society promotes indigenous crops and dietary diversity as climate-resilient strategies. In **Pakistan**, the CSA acted as first responders during devastating floods, advocating for nutrition-sensitive disaster risk reduction. In **the Philippines**, the CSA integrated nutrition into climate-smart agriculture, promoting indigenous vegetables and school gardens to strengthen food and nutrition security.

### *Securing nutrition within health systems*

Malnutrition cannot be addressed without resilient and equitable health systems that guarantee access to essential nutrition services. In **Mali**, civil society mobilised parliamentarians and communities to enshrine the right to food in the constitution, strengthening nutrition governance amid weak health service delivery. In **Sierra Leone**, budget advocacy led to a dedicated line for nutrition within the Ministry of Health, reinforcing system capacity. In **Kenya**, the CSA ensured nutrition was integrated into the national Universal Health Coverage framework, linking community health services with nutrition goals. In **Kyrgyzstan**, advocacy secured national health insurance funds for folic acid supplementation, improving maternal nutrition and service equity.

### *Transforming unjust food systems*

Civil society is at the forefront of challenging inequitable food systems that undermine nutrition, while advancing local and sustainable alternatives. In **Benin**, civil society campaigns promote affordable, nutritious local foods while challenging policies that favour imports of ultra-processed products. In **Burkina Faso**, the CSA advances agroecology and farmer-led initiatives to strengthen access to diverse, climate-hardy foods. In **Indonesia**, sustained advocacy strengthened wheat flour fortification standards to meet World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, reducing iron deficiency nationwide. In **Ecuador**, the CSA helped push stunting onto the political agenda, leading to a national policy with budget and monitoring mechanisms, even in contexts of political instability.

### *Integrating nutrition across sectors*

Civil society is not only a delivery partner but often **a catalyst for systemic change**. CSAs contribute to multisectoral coordination frameworks, engage government and partners, and monitor progress to ensure that implementation remains aligned with national commitments and community needs. For example, in **Ethiopia**, civil society is actively supporting the implementation of the national

Food and Nutrition Strategy by advocating for nutrition integration across health, agriculture, and education sectors.

### *Bringing our members priorities to the global stage*

SUN CSN continued to bring local civil society perspectives into global policy spaces. Through inclusive consultations and “virtual assemblies”, the Network defined collective advocacy priorities reflecting a truly local-to-global approach. These priorities informed coordinated civil society positions for major global moments such as Nutrition for Growth (N4G), the World Health Assembly (WHA), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Global Congress on the Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). Active participation in the School Meals Coalition and global climate dialogues further strengthened the visibility of civil society voices in international decision-making.

### *Accountability and the delivery of N4G commitments*

CSAs have continuously demonstrated the power of social accountability. In **Nigeria**, evidence-based advocacy by the CSA led to the creation of budget lines in multiple ministries, increases in allocations, and new nutrition departments in government institutions. In **Mali**, civil society budget tracking secured an annual budget line of 600 million West African CFA francs for therapeutic foods, and mobilised mining companies to finance local nutrition programmes. In **Kenya**, the CSA consolidated N4G commitments into a national accountability framework and established a Parliamentary Caucus on Nutrition to ensure sustained political oversight; while in **Malawi**, persistent budget analysis resulted in dedicated nutrition lines at the district level. In **Peru**, civil society established a food security and food systems observatory, creating a platform to engage decision-makers and social movements in dialogue on progress and setbacks in public policy and investment. And in **Pakistan**, the CSA successfully doubled the excise duty on sugary

drinks and banned them from government meetings, a tangible step in holding fiscal policy accountable for nutrition outcomes.

Under SUN CSN 3.0, the Network also successfully **delivered and reported collective progress** on its own N4G commitments. Notable successes include Civil Society Alliances' meaningful engagement in national nutrition plans, visible progress in budget advocacy against public expenditures, an increasing number of alliances integrating gender-transformative actions in their workplans, and peer-to-peer learning through the documentation of good practice action briefs shared within and between countries. CSAs also played a key role in tracking government national commitments and advocating for greater investment transparency. The inclusion of civil society results in the Global Nutrition Report's Nutrition Accountability Framework in

2024 reflected the Network's collective progress and reinforced its reputation as a driver of accountability within the SUN Movement.

SUN CSN Youth Coordinators also reported on their own commitments, demonstrating significant progress in establishing youth networks, engaging with the most marginalised communities, and elevating community evidence to inform policy and decision-making processes at local and global opportunities, including at the 2025 N4G Summit in Paris.

### Evidence and visibility

During this period, quantitative and qualitative annual surveys demonstrated CSAs' challenges, progress and impact, and generated more than 20 CSA and youth case studies and **good practices**, on subjects ranging from budget tracking and media advocacy to breastfeeding promotion and youth-led accountability.



A family's food store in their home at an informal settlement in the La Guajira region of northern Colombia



Together, these country examples form the foundation of SUN CSN's emerging evidence library, a growing repository of civil society innovations and lessons. They also help tailor the SUN CSN Secretariat's offer to members according to evolving needs and priorities. Strengthened communications capacities and an improved digital presence have also given greater visibility to members' results and collective impact.

### A stronger, more connected and more sustainable Secretariat

The period also marked a turning point in the Secretariat's own sustainability. Through improved financial planning, expanded donor engagement, and clearer role delineation within the Global Support System, the Secretariat secured multi-annual funding and stabilised its core operations. In addition to **Irish Aid's** and the **Swiss Development Cooperation's** continued core funding, the SUN CSN Secretariat benefited from much welcome additional financial support throughout the 3.0 strategy period from: the UK **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)**, the **French Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs**, the **GIZ**, **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)**, **CIFF**, and **Save the Children UK**. The 3.0 period saw the Secretariat staff grow in numbers, resulting in a balanced team combining global, regional and technical expertise to better serve members' needs. These developments have laid a stronger foundation for the Secretariat's continued role as a facilitator, connector and advocate for civil society within the SUN Movement.

## SUN CSN 3.0: Challenges at a glance

Despite significant progress, SUN CSN 3.0 also exposed deep and persistent challenges, from chronic underfunding to shrinking civic space and mounting global crises, that limited the full potential of civil society to lead systemic nutrition change.

### Fragmented and shifting financing landscape

The nutrition financing landscape remains fragmented and increasingly unpredictable. While many SUN countries have developed strong national nutrition plans, these are rarely matched with sufficient resources. Competing global agendas, including humanitarian response and climate, have further reduced the availability of dedicated, long-term nutrition funding.

In this context, CSAs often rely on short-term and fragmented funding to sustain their coordination, advocacy and accountability roles. Sixty-four per cent of CSAs report having no funding, with only 24% having funding in place in 2024. The absence of predictable core funding limits CSAs' ability to strengthen governance, pursue strategic planning and invest in long-term capacity development. This undermines efforts to sustain advocacy, retain skilled staff and align work with multi-year national plans. Unequal access to stable internet, digital tools and basic infrastructure further affects institutional stability and restricts meaningful participation in national, regional and global processes.

In several contexts, these financing troubles reduce CSAs' influence within multi-stakeholder platforms. In the 2024 survey, over 50% of CSAs reported that engagement with donors was among their weakest relationships. They pointed to a broader challenge around collaboration with financing partners, including the SUN Donor Network, to ensure that national and community-based organisations, whose proximity to communities makes them essential to sustainable change, are adequately and consistently resourced.

## Political instability and shrinking civic space

Across many SUN countries, CSAs and young people operate in environments marked by political volatility and limited civic space. Frequent changes in government, shifting institutional responsibilities and competing national priorities have disrupted coordination mechanisms and slowed progress on nutrition policy implementation. In some contexts, the absence of clear engagement frameworks or recognition of civil society's and young people's role has further limited their participation in decision-making. Administrative hurdles, restrictive regulations and outdated or unavailable data on the state of malnutrition have also constrained CSAs' ability to advocate effectively or hold duty bearers accountable. These challenges are particularly acute in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where civil society often works amid insecurity, resource scarcity and weakened state institutions.

Despite these obstacles, many CSAs continue to demonstrate resilience, maintaining collaboration with government counterparts, adapting advocacy strategies and finding creative ways to keep nutrition on the political agenda. Nonetheless, the persistence of shrinking civic space and political instability underscores the need for stronger protection of civil society and young people, and for mechanisms that safeguard their role as independent actors within the SUN Movement.

## A shifting global nutrition landscape

These challenges are compounded by wider global crises that are reshaping the nutrition landscape. Conflicts and political instability continue to devastate food and health systems, forcing millions into hunger and displacement. The accelerating impacts of climate change are eroding livelihoods, altering diets and reducing the nutritional quality of available foods. Meanwhile, profit-driven food systems are fuelling a rapid rise in overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases,

even as undernutrition persists. Highly processed foods, aggressively marketed and often cheaper than nutritious alternatives, are crowding out healthy, traditional diets and degrading ecosystems. **Together, these intersecting crises form a global nutrition emergency that demands bold, systemic change: one that links the right to food and nutrition with social justice, equity and environmental sustainability.**

For SUN CSN members, this evolving landscape brings new pressures and responsibilities. CSAs face overlapping crises putting strain on their capacity, from responding to climate shocks and food insecurity to addressing the growing burden of diet-related diseases. As governments' attention and resources are diverted, **civil society often remains the key voice defending the right to adequate food and nutrition for all, promoting universal access to nutritious and health services, and demanding more equitable, sustainable and healthier food systems.** These realities reinforce the need for greater solidarity, adaptability and cross-sector collaboration across the Network.

## Sustainability pressures on the Secretariat

While the Secretariat emerged from SUN CSN 3.0 with a stronger structure, clearer mandate and more stable funding base, these gains were achieved in a challenging environment. The Secretariat continued to operate with a lean team and finite resources while responding to growing expectations from members and partners. Expanding support across four regions, managing small grants, and meeting rising demand for technical and advocacy assistance placed sustained pressure on both staffing and financial capacity. These constraints underscored the importance of securing longer-term, predictable funding and strengthening regional capacities to share responsibility for delivery in the next phase.



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 [SUNCSN@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:SUNCSN@savethechildren.org.uk)

SUN CSN Secretariat,  
Save the Children, 1 St John's Lane,  
London EC1M 4AR, United Kingdom

Cover photo: A SUN project ambassador with  
food samples at a farm in Chongwe, Zambia

