



27/06/2013

**To: Dr Francesco Branca,
UNSCN Executive Secretary, and WHO Director,
Nutrition for Health and Development,
WHO, Geneva**

Dear Francesco,

Subject: Urgent need to establish mechanism for harmonization of policy and programme guidance on nutrition in emergencies

The members of the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) applaud recent achievements realised through the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, in terms of bringing nutrition to the top of the development agenda and placing greater emphasis on country-driven processes. However, the GNC would like to highlight the critical absence of a robust mechanism where a broad range of nutrition actors are able to share technical knowledge and experience; and develop and harmonize nutrition policy and technical guidance for both emergency and development contexts.

The function of harmonizing such processes was previously assured under the umbrella of the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition and its Working Group on Nutrition in Emergencies. However, since the cessation of the UNSCN annual meetings, this Working Group has *de facto* no longer been operational.

The Global Nutrition Cluster members therefore urges the SUN Movement Secretariat, the SCN Secretariat and the Nutrition Directors from the relevant UN agencies to support and actively facilitate the re-establishment of an effective and neutral mechanism for harmonizing policy and technical guidance on nutrition; with broad stakeholder participation, and ensuring that the necessary resources to make such a mechanism functional are made available. The GNC members emphasises that such a mechanism is all the more urgent given that governments and development partners are prioritising investment in nutrition, investments that are best supported by clear evidence and guidance on nutrition that links development and emergency contexts where relevant to promote resilience.

GNC members note that GNC global meetings have increasingly been dominated by discussion around technical guidance and harmonising of approaches. Although the membership of the GNC is very similar to the SCN Working Group on Nutrition in Emergencies, the GNC is not mandated or designed to be a forum for policy harmonization. Its role and responsibility is to support coordination of emergency nutrition responses in crises situations at country level. The ability of the GNC to support field coordination and optimal emergency nutrition response is undermined by gaps in policy and technical guidance on nutrition and an expectation that the GNC can fill this void.

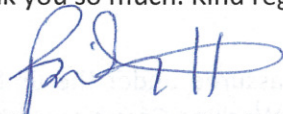
While the GNC members are primarily concerned with ensuring effective response to nutrition emergencies, it recognises that harmonization of guidance for nutrition in emergencies cannot be done in isolation of policy and technical guidance for nutrition in development contexts. Guidelines on Infant and Young Child Feeding in emergencies, for example, must be an adaptation of general guidance on IYCF in development context. Previously, the existence of thematic working groups under the umbrella of the UNSCN and dialogue during the UNSCN annual meetings facilitated coherence between thematic areas and between emergency and development contexts.

In light of this critical gap, the GNC members would like to propose that a meeting is held with the participation of all of the recipients of this letter, to discuss potential options and identify the most appropriate mechanism whereby a broad range of professionals working on nutrition could share technical knowledge and build consensus on key policy issues and develop or advocate for common technical guidance.

The GNC members would suggest that this meeting is held late July (specific dates tbc), we would suggest that the meeting is held in Geneva, with participation by video conference or skype for those unable to attend in person.

We would appreciate your timely response.

Thank you so much. Kind regards,



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CC: Barbara Burlingame, Principal Nutrition Advisor, FAO, Rome,

CC: Jomo Sundaram, Assistant Director General, Economic and Social Department, FAO, Rome

CC: Martin Bloem, Senior Nutrition Advisor, WFP, Rome

CC: Werner Schultink, Chief, Nutrition, Associate Director, UNICEF, New York

CC: Dr David Nabarro, Co-ordinator, Movement for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), and UNSG Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition

CC: Dermot Carty, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, Geneva

Note that the Nutrition Cluster has the following partners at Global level

1) Action contre la Faim (ACF), 2) CARE, 3) Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 4) Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) / University of Louvain, 5) Concern, 6) Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN), 7) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 8) Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA), 9) Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), 10) GOAL, 11) Helen Keller International (HKI), 12) Help Age International, 13) Inter Action, 14) International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), 15) International Medical Corps (IMC), 16) International Relief & Development (IRD), 17) UNICEF, 18) International Rescue Committee (IRC), 19) Merlin, 20) Micronutrient Initiative (MI), 21) Nutrition Works, 22) Oxfam UK, 23) Samaritan's Purse, 24) Save the Children UK, 25) Save the Children USA, 26) Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN), 27) Terre des Hommes (TdH), 28) The Earth Institute Columbia University, 29) Tufts University Feinberg International Center, 30) UCL Institute for Global Health, UNICEF 31) UNHCR, 31) University of Westminster, 32) Valid International, 33) World Food Programme (WFP), 34) World Health Organization (WHO), 35) World Vision International (WVI), 36) Plan International, (The following donors are also active members of the GNC: Department for International Development, (DFID), ECHO, OFDA/USAID)

