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SUMMARY REPORT OF THE JOINT EVALUATION OF THE REACH INITIATIVE (2011–2015)

**Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and
Undernutrition**

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Ms H. Wedgwood
Director
Office of Evaluation
tel.: 066513-2030

Mr D. Habtemariam
Evaluation Officer
tel.: 066513-3169

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition initiative supports governance of country-level nutrition responses. It brings together WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The initiative's activities began in 2008 and were expanded in 2010.

This evaluation, covering 2011 to 2015, focused on the role of the initiative's secretariat and its work in Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Serving the dual purpose of accountability and learning, it assessed the initiative's relevance and appropriateness, performance, the factors explaining results, and sustainability.

The evaluation found that the initiative fits well with the priorities of the international nutrition agenda and of partner agencies, including with gender and equity objectives. At the country level, it has complemented the work of the Scaling Up Nutrition movement. However, its theory of change underestimated the importance of the level of political commitment from governments, the political economy of the United Nations, the importance of accountability, and incentives for support to the initiative within the United Nations. The initiative's timeframes were overambitious.

The initiative has made substantial progress in two of its four outcome areas, contributing to: Outcome 1, increased awareness and commitment; and Outcome 2, strengthening national nutrition policies and programmes. Less has been achieved with regard to Outcome 3, capacity development, and Outcome 4, increasing effectiveness and accountability. The initiative's high-level planning, tools and analytical work highlighted equity and gender issues in nutrition, but the initiative has not progressed on the agendas in these areas. Across the eight countries, results were achieved at lower costs than budgeted, allowing timelines to be extended.

Various factors explain these results. The initiative provided a unique facilitating and catalytic function at the country level as a result of its neutrality, flexibility, quality of technical tools, links with national planning and priorities, and – in the opinion of many national stakeholders – its competent staff. The initiative has been a main facilitator of Scaling Up Nutrition at operational level. However, it did not excel in forming diverse and strategic global partnerships, and it continues to lack support from United Nations agencies and the overall nutrition environment. The initiative's transition plans for transferring nutrition governance activities to national authorities were developed too late, sometimes requiring resources to extend the facilitator's period of engagement. Scaling Up Nutrition is likely to be affected by the

initiative's transition to new modalities as its facilitator roles are phased out. Overall, the results and achievements of the initiative are unlikely to be sustainable unless additional investments and efforts are made.

Noting that far-reaching decisions concerning the initiative have recently been made with the initiative becoming the coordinating body for the United Nations Network for Scaling Up Nutrition, the evaluation's recommendations centre on: i) maintaining the initiative's focus as a neutral facilitator of nutrition governance at the country level; ii) expanding timeframes for engagement; iii) strengthening incentive structures within the United Nations to contribute to the initiative; iv) redesigning the theory of change; v) improving alignment with other technical support in nutrition; and vi) strengthening support for issues related to gender and equity.

DRAFT DECISION^{*}

The Board takes note of “Summary Report of the Joint Evaluation of the REACH initiative (2011–2015)” (WFP/EB.2/2015/6-C*) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2015/6-C/Add.1*, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1. This document summarizes the evaluation of the United Nations Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH) initiative, which supports participating countries in strengthening the governance and management of nutrition programmes. Partners include WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); the International Fund for Agricultural Development has an advisory role.
2. REACH was initiated in 2008 as part of a global nutrition agenda that had evolved significantly since the 1992 International Conference on Nutrition. In 1977, the United Nations established a Standing Committee on Nutrition to harmonize nutrition policies and standards across United Nations agencies.¹ By 2008, growing scientific consensus on the causes and consequences of various forms of malnutrition,² mounting evidence of the impacts of malnutrition on national economies,³ and the global food price crisis had catalyzed action. There was also recognition of the “deeply fragmented and dysfunctional nature of the global aid architecture for nutrition”,² and the need for more momentum, and better leadership and coordination.
3. Against this backdrop, REACH began in Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Mauritania in 2008, followed by Sierra Leone in 2010. Also in 2010, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement began, which aimed at galvanizing countries’ commitment to stronger nutrition response. Between 2008 and 2015, REACH gradually covered 20 countries (Table 1).
4. The evaluation assessed the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of REACH activities and results in Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.⁴ It also assessed the REACH secretariat’s role, processes, coordination arrangements, governance and partnerships. Conducted between January and June 2015, it covered activities implemented from 2011 to 2015.
5. This evaluation faced three limitations: i) it was conducted during a period of major deliberations on the future of the United Nations Network for SUN, culminating in the decision that the REACH secretariat should coordinate the SUN network;⁵ ii) its scope included only one of the three pilot countries – Sierra Leone – and excluded four of the first-generation REACH countries – Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia and the Niger; and iii) a full counterfactual comparison was not feasible because of the nature of REACH. Appropriately, the evaluation team adopted a theory-based approach, drawing on the REACH theory of change (Figure 1) with contribution analysis based on the eight country studies.⁶ Gender and equity concerns were integrated throughout the evaluation. The evaluation team drew on

¹ <http://www.unscn.org/en/mandate/> The steering committee was created as the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations Subcommittee on Nutrition; its structure and focus evolved over time.

² *The Lancet*. 2008. Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition: Executive Summary.

³ Hoddinott *et al.*. 2008. Effect of a nutritional intervention during early childhood on economic productivity in Guatemalan adults. *The Lancet* 391(9610): 411–416; Horton *et al.* 2010. *Scaling Up Nutrition: What will it cost?* Washington, DC, World Bank.

⁴ REACH activities in these countries are funded by Canada.

⁵ This decision was made in November 2014 and confirmed by a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2015 (REACH. 2015. Revalidation Agreement of the Memorandum of Understanding Among FAO, WHO, UNICEF and WFP Concerning the Hosting Arrangement of the REACH Partnership.).

⁶ Contribution analysis is a type of evaluation that assesses the contributions that an intervention makes to the observed results.

internal and external documentation, secondary data, REACH baseline and end-line data, 69 global-level and more than 300 country-level interviews, and a desk study of Sierra Leone. In addition, the team attended the annual REACH facilitators' workshop in March 2015.

TABLE 1: REACH COUNTRIES								
Countries	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Pilot								
Lao People's Democratic Republic								
Mauritania								
Sierra Leone								
First generation								
Bangladesh								
Ghana								
Mali								
Mozambique								
Nepal								
Rwanda								
United Republic of Tanzania								
Uganda								
Ethiopia								
Niger								
Burundi								
Chad								
Second generation								
Burkina Faso								
Haiti								
Senegal								
Myanmar								
Guinea								

Source: REACH September 2015.

THE REACH INITIATIVE

6. REACH is based on a theory of change (summarized in Figure 1), which envisages that the nutrition of children under 5 and women⁷ can be enhanced if country-level nutrition governance is improved, including political commitment to its importance. The initiative rests on two major assumptions:
 - i) A multi-sectoral approach is the most effective way to address undernutrition.
 - ii) Inter-agency collaboration is the most efficient mechanism for delivering the ultimate impact of reduced undernutrition.
7. The theory of change also assumes that improved nutrition governance requires progress towards increased awareness and stakeholder consensus, strengthened national policies and programmes, increased human and institutional capacity, and increased effectiveness and accountability.

⁷ The complete REACH theory of change is presented in Annex E of the evaluation report.

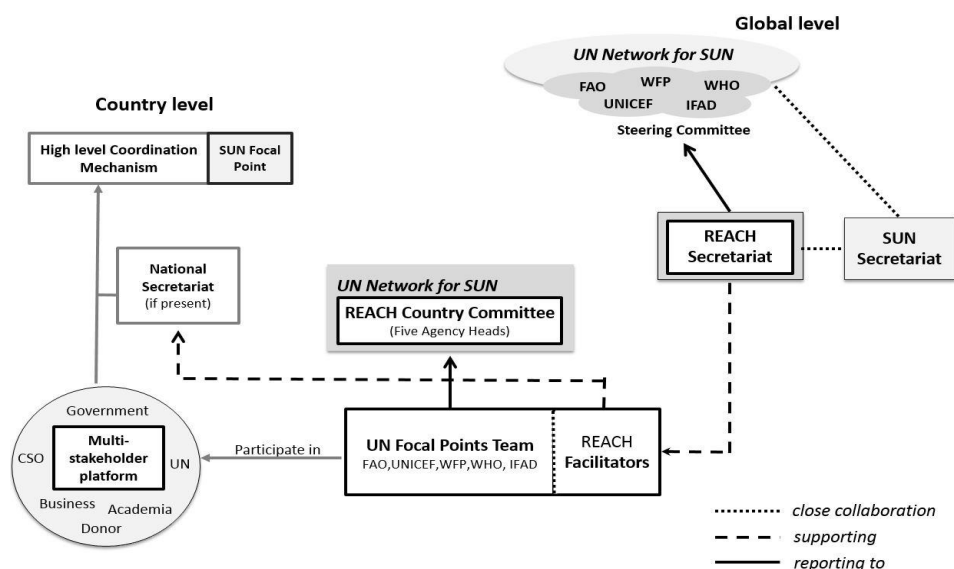
Figure 1: REACH theory of change



Source: REACH.

8. Figure 2 illustrates the global and country-level structures and institutional architecture for REACH. The initiative operates through a secretariat based in Rome with eight full-time staff and consultants, and 18 international and national country-based facilitators.⁸ The secretariat provides technical facilitation to REACH countries and liaises with partners globally. REACH country-level facilitators support multi-sector, multi-stakeholder processes for implementing change and achieving the four REACH outcomes listed in Figure 1.

Figure 2: REACH global and country-level structures



Source: REACH.

⁸ As of March 2015.

9. The REACH secretariat and facilitators work with specified tools and guidance materials to support analytical work in the four outcome areas. Structures vary by country, with facilitators being based within either a United Nations agency or a government institution responsible for nutrition. Country-level efforts are guided by country implementation plans (CIPs) and annual work plans. Decisions about REACH country activities are made by REACH coordinating committees made up of the country-level heads of the four partner United Nations agencies. Day-to-day implementation is supported by United Nations nutrition focal points. Each country was allocated USD 1,475,000 for REACH activities for a three-year period. Table 2 indicates the main funding sources.

Funding source	Amount (USD)	Funding period	Target countries
Canada*	11 800 000	2011–2016	Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania
Canada*	3 933 333	2014–2016	Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Senegal
European Union	3 934 735	2012–2016	The Niger
WFP	1 350 000	2013–2015	REACH secretariat support, including the global coordinator position

*Canadian support was provided by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.
Source: REACH

10. REACH's responsibility for supporting SUN processes at the country level was not explicitly stated until the March 2015 Memorandum of Understanding.

FINDINGS

Relevance and Appropriateness of REACH's Design

11. *Alignment with the international nutrition agenda and priorities of participating countries.* The design of REACH fits well with the priorities of the international nutrition agenda, especially given its focus on prioritizing country-specific and country-led responses, multi-sector action and the need to scale up funding. CIP processes were useful in setting country-level priorities for all stakeholders and responding to nationally recognized needs and gaps. However, they were not always sufficiently thorough or participatory to be completely owned by the countries, and gaps between CIP design and implementation reduced their relevance.
12. *Coherence with the mandates and capacities of the four United Nations agencies.* REACH's objectives were in line with the nutrition priorities of the four participating agencies, including their gender and equity objectives. However, REACH did not always make sufficient use of existing United Nations tools – guidance and manuals – or effectively leverage the agencies' nutrition capacity to improve coordination and scale up national nutrition responses. At the country level, competition for funding among the four agencies and with REACH affected the initiative's level of coherence.
13. *Coherence, alignment and complementarity between REACH and other global/national nutrition initiatives.* In a crowded nutrition environment, which includes the related SUN movement and the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition, the establishment of REACH as another initiative was contested and continues to be questioned by some global stakeholders. There is little understanding of REACH beyond the people directly involved. The evaluation found various contributory factors for this, including lack of operational

buy-in, REACH's low-profile facilitating role and focus on the country level, and its limited range of global-level partnerships. At the country level, the evaluation found that REACH complemented and facilitated SUN activities and was considered by all stakeholders to be well aligned and coherent with the nutrition work of governments, donors and civil society.

14. *Alignment with and contribution to equity, including gender equality.* REACH was designed to align with and contribute to equity, including gender equality. However, CIPs were uneven in clarifying the extent to which these issues would be addressed through improved planning, advocacy and monitoring.
15. *Validity of REACH's theory of change.* The validity of the REACH theory of change is challenged by major assumptions from the outcome to the impact levels.⁹ The evaluation found relatively strong evidence that multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches have brought about increased awareness of nutrition issues and improved priority setting in the eight countries evaluated, and that REACH played a role in this. However, the evaluation found only limited evidence that stakeholders' commitment was a direct result of this increased awareness of and consensus on nutrition problems. In particular, collaboration among United Nations agencies at the levels required for bringing about the envisioned changes was consistently weak, in part because of an absence of incentives for collaboration. The evaluation also found only limited evidence to support the assumption that REACH can influence power relations through country facilitators and United Nations focal points so that national governments and other important stakeholders – including United Nations agencies – put nutrition at the top of their agendas.

Country-Level Performance

16. The evaluation assessed performance against targets set in CIPs and annual plans, drawing on REACH monitoring data and the evaluation case studies. REACH activities are designed to produce multi-sector outputs. Table 3 lists the most common outputs observed in CIPs.

TABLE 3: SELECTED REACH OUTPUTS
Stakeholder and activity maps
Core nutrition actions
Investment cases
Joint nutrition communication and advocacy strategies
Integration of nutrition into national and United Nations development strategies
National nutrition policies/action plans
Multi-sector nutrition coordination mechanisms
Institutional and human capacity for nutrition in government
Accountability matrix for food and nutrition security at the national and district levels
Nutrition monitoring system
Establishment of nutrition as a focus area for the United Nations Delivering as One

⁹ These outcome-to-impact assumptions include: i) REACH can enhance governance – decision-making and power relations – in addition to structure; ii) its outcomes will be accompanied by political will and resources to deliver at scale; iii) its interventions, policies, plans and programmes are technically sound and appropriate to country contexts; and iv) stakeholders' commitment to supporting nutrition actions is a direct result of increased awareness of and consensus on nutrition problems and how to address them.

⇒ *Effectiveness*

17. *Outcome 1 – Increased awareness of the problem and potential solutions.* REACH effectively contributed to increased awareness of nutrition problems and potential solutions, and helped to build national commitment. However, stakeholder and activity mapping – the most prominent activity – was considered over complex and difficult to update. Over the period reviewed, REACH made significant but in most cases incomplete progress on joint communications and advocacy strategies. Less progress was made on investment cases, and this planned output was removed from the priorities in view of other initiatives such as cost-of-hunger profiles. This implied missed opportunities to leverage resources for nutrition priorities as originally envisaged.
18. *Outcome 2 – Strengthening national nutrition policies and programmes.* As countries' baselines differed, progress varied considerably. In most countries, REACH contributed to advancing national or subnational plans by drafting or contributing to processes that ensured their approval. In Ghana and Mozambique, engagement through REACH inspired a new intensity of nutrition planning at subnational levels. However, plans in all eight cases remained unimplemented because funding was lacking. In two countries, institutional limitations precluded progress towards this outcome.
19. *Outcome 3 – Increased capacity at all levels.* The complexities of capacity development processes meant that there were limits to what REACH could achieve in three years. Along with other partners, the initiative contributed to significant enhancements in institutional capacity, although sustainability cannot be guaranteed. However, there was no clear agreement among global stakeholders regarding whether REACH should focus purely on mobilizing partners to provide technical inputs or play a direct role in addressing capacity gaps. REACH's role in supporting United Nations coordination was contested by global and country-level informants – especially the extent to which donors should provide funds.
20. *Outcome 4 – Increasing effectiveness and accountability.* This outcome saw limited progress: work was done to develop multi-sector monitoring systems and partial nationally led systems are now in place in some countries.
21. REACH's achievements in breaking down barriers among United Nations agencies were also limited. Good technical relationships were built, but there was little joint programming other than that occurring through One United Nations. Country-level stakeholders had differing opinions as to whether REACH should or could have a coordinating function among United Nations agencies. Progress was strongly affected by the willingness of United Nations agencies to collaborate at the country level. Progress towards this outcome was uneven and depended on local institutional factors and the personalities of country heads of United Nations agencies. REACH's limited performance in this area highlights the flawed assumption in the theory of change that relatively short-term facilitators at the country level could influence long-standing institutional incentives and political economy factors.

⇒ *Equity and gender*

22. REACH's tools and analytical work highlighted equity and gender issues. However, across all countries and stakeholder groups REACH was not strongly associated with having specifically advocated for equity and gender, or with having progressed on the agenda in this area.

⇒ *Efficiency*

23. Across REACH countries, results were achieved with lower budgets than planned, allowing timelines to be extended appropriately beyond the overly ambitious ones factored into REACH's original design. There was some loss in programming efficiency because of delays in the placement of REACH facilitators in all countries. As a result, preliminary data were often out of date and in Bangladesh, Ghana, Mozambique, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, some of the people involved in formulating CIPs had moved on.
24. REACH's flexibility at the country level allowed it to be agile and opportunistic, and in various countries cost savings were often realized when funds allocated by organizations outside the United Nations allowed REACH to extend the contracts of facilitators in all countries. The country case studies revealed significant underspending in all countries, partly because other donors or agencies funded activities that REACH had planned, as in Ghana, Mozambique, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
25. While country-level respondents considered that the REACH model was not expensive, global-level respondents saw it as expensive. In neither case was there a specific cost analysis to address these perceptions.

Explanatory Factors Affecting Performance and Results

26. Through its country-level facilitators, REACH has been the field-level implementer of the SUN movement's activities. REACH facilitators were consistently complimented for their hard work and excellent technical capacity. The quality and engagement of REACH staff, and REACH's flexibility and local decision-making structures, enabled progress in spite of challenges. REACH tools were highly regarded by many stakeholders; however there were reservations about exacerbating the proliferation of tools alongside the tools of other agencies, and about the complexity of some REACH tools, which are difficult for local technical staff to update.
27. Major external factors influencing REACH performance in each country included the degree to which nutrition was already a priority in each country; and – at the level of REACH's internal governance – the support provided by the technical group¹⁰ and the REACH coordinating committee.¹¹
28. The support provided to countries by the REACH secretariat was considered to have improved over the evaluation period. However, informants indicated that further improvements could be made through better alignment with field- and Headquarters-level priorities, staffing to meet countries' needs and increasing links to regional United Nations offices. Also noted were the need for a more strategic and cross-sectoral REACH steering committee, stronger induction and support to facilitators during start-up, and clarity with regard to country-level processes.
29. REACH did not excel in forming diverse and strategic partnerships at either the country or the global level. Most global stakeholders knew little about REACH. This limited approach to partnership reduced REACH's overall influence.

¹⁰ The technical group included nutrition focal points from United Nations agencies in REACH countries.

¹¹ Heads of the four United Nations partner agencies in REACH countries.

Sustainability

30. The intended two- to three-year catalytic phase of REACH was insufficient. While government ownership has increased to varying degrees and the capacity of nutrition coordination structures has been expanded in a few, including their staffing at the decentralized level, there is need to consolidate emerging gains.
31. REACH's transition plans – which focus on effective multi-sector, multi-stakeholder facilitation and support at the country level and which would allow the initiative to exit from countries – were developed late, sometimes requiring additional resources to continue the facilitator position beyond the envisaged three years. Across REACH countries, continuing progress in nutrition governance was considered likely to require full-time staff in the future rather than a reduced workforce or phase-out as envisaged by the REACH model. Despite government stakeholders' positive views of REACH's contribution, there was little commitment to assuming the costs of these positions, other than in Mozambique and possibly Rwanda.
32. Given the support that REACH has provided to SUN at the country level, strong concerns were expressed that SUN will likely be affected by the transitioning of REACH to new modalities, especially if facilitator positions are discontinued.

CONCLUSIONS

33. Across the eight countries, REACH made most progress towards its outcomes 1 and 2, and less or no progress on outcomes 3 and 4. This was partly related to the initiative's limited timeframes and the sequential nature of these outcomes.
34. Progress was significantly influenced by the performance of the secretariat in Rome. While the process of the initiative's launch was slow, and disjointed and confused in some respects, the secretariat has gradually introduced standardized programmes of work across REACH countries.
35. The initiative fits well within the international nutrition agenda and with the priorities of its convening United Nations agencies, and is broadly relevant to country policies and priorities. However, there are limitations to applying a standard model that is not sufficiently attuned to local realities, under tight timeframes.
36. REACH has provided relevant, timely and well-prioritized facilitation and support, enhancing nutrition responses in the countries where it has been present. The initiative has contributed to greater stakeholder engagement, progress in national commitment to nutrition, more effective setting of priorities and capacity development. REACH has also contributed to monitoring and accountability with varying degrees of success.
37. The achievements and weaknesses of REACH reflect the quality of its design and implementation. Positive features include flexible procedures and implementation arrangements, field presence, quality tools and instruments, strong dialogue, neutrality, and a focus on processes as well as results. REACH has also supported SUN effectively in advancing on the nutrition agenda. However, there has been an element of overshadowing by the SUN movement, which has contributed to REACH being relatively less known and understood.
38. The challenges that REACH has faced reflect its weak theory of change; the ambitious nature of its plans and timeframes; the sequential nature of its outcomes, which required more time for implementation; the varying levels of government ownership; and the lack of a partnership strategy, which caused low levels of buy-in and support from its partner

agencies. The REACH theory of change did not take sufficient account of factors from outcome to impact level, such as the importance of high-level political commitment from governments, the political economy of the United Nations, and the lack of clear accountability and incentives for support within the United Nations. The latter was undermined by the absence of: i) sustained commitment from the highest level of the convening United Nations agencies; ii) a clear mandate for collaboration from the United Nations; and iii) strong and enforced accountability mechanisms.

39. In practice, the commitments of governments and United Nations agencies were not always strong and clear enough to enable progress. Regarding internal governance, the variable – and in some cases low – commitment and buy-in of the technical group and the REACH coordinating committees were key factors affecting performance. In a crowded global landscape, the existence of REACH continues to be questioned by some nutrition actors.
40. Overall, the results and achievements of REACH are unlikely to be sustainable unless additional investments and efforts are made. There has been insufficient attention to the effects on the SUN movement when REACH ends. In addition, country exit strategies were premature in relation to progress, and were developed late in the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

41. The evaluation team formulated these recommendations at a time when various far-reaching decisions had recently been made, including on: i) REACH becoming the secretariat of the United Nations Network for SUN; and ii) in parallel, the roll-out of arrangements for funding REACH in additional countries. These decisions assume that there is a continued need for REACH and influence its future role, functioning, structure and scope.
42. **Recommendation 1:** The core function of REACH should continue to be facilitation and coordination of country-level nutrition responses, with a strong focus on maintaining and developing its reputation for neutrality. This function should be based on two modes of intervention: one should involve multi-year facilitation services, building on the approach adopted to date; and the other should involve specialized short-term facilitation and related services for countries meeting specific criteria.
43. Continued support at the country level to strengthen facilitation in the SUN countries¹² should recognize that it may be possible to continue multi-annual “REACH-like” engagements in selected countries – subject to full appraisals – but that in other countries the REACH contribution will have to be on a smaller scale, with specific criteria developed to ensure feasibility. REACH’s perceived neutrality has allowed it to be effective as a broker among different organizations and entities. To maintain this neutrality, clear limits should be placed on the time, type of engagement and resources that REACH dedicates to supporting the United Nations Network for SUN.
44. **Recommendation 2:** REACH should develop a medium-term vision, strategies and an operating plan for its second phase, which has a five-year timeframe to align effectively with SUN’s five-year timeframe and strategy.

¹² SUN covers 55 countries (<http://scalingupnutrition.org/sun-countries>).

45. This will require:
- extending the timeframe in existing REACH countries by two more years to consolidate gains and move towards sustainability (Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania); and
 - adopting a five-year timeframe in new countries from the outset.
46. **Recommendation 3:** As part of its key strategies for engagement, REACH should encourage the United Nations Network for SUN – which REACH now coordinates – to align its focus with REACH’s core function of facilitation and coordination. The network – and REACH’S support to it – would thus have a central mission in mobilizing the technical strength of the United Nations for facilitating scaled-up and effective country-level nutrition responses.
47. REACH’s new and additional responsibility as Secretariat of the United Nations Network for SUN provides the possibility of greater alignment between SUN and REACH. There is opportunity and potential risk in the new arrangement. The opportunity lies in the fact that the valuable resources and leveraging power of the United Nations can be used effectively in the nutrition response. The risk is that of side-tracking what REACH has done well and of REACH losing its valuable neutrality. To address this risk, there is a need for clarity on what the United Nations Network for SUN can achieve and for this to align with the focus and mandate of REACH.
48. **Recommendation 4:** The next phase of REACH – and further decisions on funding multi-year, country-level interventions – should be based on a thorough reappraisal of the REACH theory of change, which should recognize that the role of REACH is facilitation and related services, rather than technical assistance or support. The new theory of change should form both the role of REACH as the implementer of SUN in the field and its support to the United Nations Network for SUN. It should be broadly disseminated to contribute to better understanding of REACH’s role in the overall nutrition environment.
49. The design of any future REACH multi-year intervention should explicitly state and test the assumptions on which it is based and identify the conditions for receiving REACH support. The evaluation identified five conditions for implementation of REACH multi-year programming: i) a senior REACH facilitator should be in-country for a minimum of five years; ii) thorough consultative preparation by and commitment from all parties; iii) plans for supporting immediate start up; iv) financial commitments from United Nations partners to supporting the REACH approach; and v) early work on approaches to sustainability.
50. **Recommendation 5:** To inform the new theory of change, REACH should commission a study of the architecture of technical assistance for scaling up nutrition. The study should include facilitation and identify priority areas for REACH, taking into account the work of other technical-support partners. The study should be used to inform REACH’s medium-term plan of action and its strategies for engagement in the coming five years (see recommendations 1–4).
51. **Recommendation 6:** Participating United Nations agencies should sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with stronger provisions that include strategic decision-making and accountability mechanisms at the most senior level of United Nations agencies; commitment to contributing funding to country-level REACH activities; and commitment to better coordinating their planning, resourcing, implementation and advocacy efforts in the nutrition sector at the country level.

52. Future work to support country-level coordination of nutrition interventions through REACH should be contingent on serious and public commitment at all levels of United Nations agencies to better coordinate their planning, resourcing, implementation and advocacy efforts in this sector. To this end, high-level commitments from agencies need to be matched with commitments to collaboration at technical level, underscoring that this will entail a less agency-centred approach. In the absence of these commitments, there is the risk that REACH will lose focus, waste effort and ultimately fail.
53. **Recommendation 7:** The REACH partnership should proactively explore and develop funding options and sources for its second phase. Recognizing its recently augmented role regarding the United Nations Network for SUN, it should particularly encourage appropriate financial allocations from member agencies (see recommendation 6), donors and host countries. Funding from host governments should be encouraged as a means of ensuring sustainability in countries where multi-year engagement is foreseen.
54. **Recommendation 8:** Country-level implementation of REACH should continue to be guided by CIPs and annual plans. However, CIP processes should be revised to ensure maximum leadership and buy-in from all stakeholders. CIPs should also adopt an approach to ensuring that equity and gender issues are part of the country-level work and global advocacy on nutrition. Ensuring that REACH has expertise in gender and equity, establishing incentives for national actions on gender and equity in nutrition, and monitoring progress against indicators are all essential.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CIP	country implementation plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization