



Review of  
the DSM-WFP  
Partnership  
2016-18

**Summary  
Report**

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# Background

Some 2 billion people worldwide are deficient in one or more micronutrients – an astounding statistic. Eliminating this ‘Hidden Hunger’ has been the focus of a Partnership between Royal DSM (DSM) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) since the Partnership began in 2007.

These two organizations are well matched, with complementary competencies and a shared goal to end malnutrition. Their cooperation is considered a model example of Private-Public Partnership (PPP). DSM has advanced technical and financial resources, while WFP has extensive delivery mechanisms in countries where vitamin and mineral deficiencies are most prevalent. The third partner, *Sight and Life* Foundation (SAL), formerly a humanitarian initiative of DSM and now an independent think tank, strengthens the Partnership through its expertise in research and advocacy.

In September 2018, as one phase of the Partnership was concluding and a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was being signed (2019–2021), the partners commissioned a joint review to:

- **document progress towards the Partnership’s goals of increasing WFP’s capacity to implement quality nutrition programming, improving access to affordable nutrition for their beneficiaries, and increasing consumer demand for safe, nutritious food;**
- **describe how the Partnership was adding value to both organizations and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnering process; and**
- **document lessons learned for the Partnership’s future planning, as well as to inform other organizations engaging in Public-Private Partnerships.**

The review methodology included document review, 32 in-depth-interviews with international personnel, and an online survey completed by 44 respondents. Case studies were conducted in Bangladesh and Zambia – countries where the Partnership has matured and has demonstrated great progress. Fifty-nine key informant interviews were conducted, along with a focus group discussion to better understand outputs and field realities. The external review team possessed expertise in both nutrition program delivery and Partnership process management.

The review examined the Partnership through both programmatic and Partnership lenses. The review findings describe the Partnership’s major achievements. They identify critical success factors as well as bottlenecks, noting lessons learned and offering consequent recommendations.

# Evolution of the Partnership

From its inception in 2007 through 2015, the Partnership made significant contributions to ending malnutrition. This included improved formulations for products such as Micronutrient Powders (MNPs), Ready-to-Use Supplemental or Therapeutic foods (RUSF/RUTF), High-Energy Biscuits (HEBs), fortified date bars, and – perhaps most impactfully – Super Cereal (SC) & Super Cereal Plus (SC+.) Many of these revised formulations are now industry standards for treating Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and preventing stunting in children aged 6–24 months. They are also given to malnourished pregnant and lactating women. During this period, the partners also established management principles and processes that encouraged nimble and flexible operations based on good personal relationships and engaged leadership.

As WFP adopted its new strategic plan (2017–2021), and nutrition policy (2017–2021) the Partnership evolved with the organization. Under the fourth DSM–WFP agreement (2016–2018), the partners sought to broaden their scope and agreed on the establishment of four Work Streams to utilize the organizations’ complementary competencies and reach. These included:

1. **Product Innovation, Use and Reach** – including the improvement of existing nutritional products and the development and testing of new products. The majority of the effort here was devoted to product development.
2. **Scale-up of Rice Fortification** – with the overall objective that fortified rice should become the standard for national social safety nets and WFP interventions, and should be widely available on commercial markets.
3. **Demand Creation for Nutritious Foods and Healthy Diets** – including support of national SUN Business Networks (SBNs) and increasing knowledge of good nutrition, along with translating that knowledge into increased consumption of nutritious foods.
4. **Knowledge Management & Learning** – to support the implementation of the WFP Nutrition Policy (2017–21) and WFP’s Nutrition Learning Academy. The object of this Work Stream was to enhance the nutrition knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed by WFP staff and its partners to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to nutrition.

# Summary of the Partnership's Achievements

As at the end of 2017, the Partnership had reached 39.4 million people with nutritionally improved products. This figure increased steadily from 20.7 million individuals in 2013 to 39.4 million in 2017. The Partnership has demonstrated a remarkably effective model for disseminating innovation. Partners invested in innovative products and approaches, developed a 'proof of concept' or evidence base for it, and then seeded the innovation at the country, regional and global level through advocacy and capacity-building.

The best example of this has been the rapid spread of Rice Fortification (RF), but the Partnership has applied this model also to development of national SBNs and, to a lesser extent, food-labelling programs. A related achievement is the efficiency of the investment strategy and wide geographic footprint of Partnership activities. Last but not least is the considerable amount of joint advocacy and research undertaken under the Partnership at country, regional and global levels. This has helped to advance global understanding of the scope and impact of micronutrient deficiencies and of interventions to prevent and treat them.

## Work Stream Achievements, Critical Success Factors, and Bottlenecks

### 1. Product Innovation

Through the efforts of the Partnership, WFP's food basket was transformed through diversification and improved formulations. Specifications were developed with a view to increasing nutrient bioavailability and product stability / shelf-life, considering the difficult environments and emergency settings in which they are distributed. Harmonization of the quality standards, formulation and color-coded packaging for RUTF, RUSF and LNS-MQ with other large global buyers, including USAID, UNICEF and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) allowed for greater efficiencies in the global production and supply chain for these products and ultimately facilitated the delivery of higher-quality products at cheaper prices. It is important to note that as the Partnership has evolved, this Work Stream – once the primary focus of the Partnership – has become less prominent. This demonstrates how the Partnership adapted to the evolution of WFP's Nutrition Policy, and to DSM's own strategic evolution.

**Table 1: Product Innovation: Critical success factors and bottlenecks**

Critical success factors	Challenges or bottlenecks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DSM's technical expertise</li> <li>Organization alignment and collaboration</li> <li>Global harmonization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adaptation to the organization and the evolution of nutrition sector</li> </ul>

### 2. Rice Fortification

By the end of 2018, the Partnership was supporting activities in 16 countries, laying the foundation for expanding the production and consumption of fortified rice. Activities have included conducting landscape analyses, trials and WFP- or government-run pilot programs; supporting the establishment of national partnership platforms to facilitate collaboration; creating a regulatory framework (i.e. drafting standards and policies); supporting the training of governmental and industry partners; exchange visits; and, importantly, adoption of RF by governments for their social safety net (SSN) programs. This has been achieved in four countries so far (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Peru), thereby guaranteeing consumption of RF by millions of these countries' most vulnerable populations and encouraging industry to invest in the necessary inputs.

**Table 2: Critical success factors and bottlenecks for fortified rice**

Critical success factors	Challenges or bottlenecks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Technical expertise:</b> Right time – right place (<i>long-term placements, DSM TA, dedicated country/regional teams</i>)</li> <li><b>Evidence-building and dissemination</b> (<i>research plus Sight and Life supplements</i>)</li> <li><b>Stable supply chain:</b> No changes to price, availability, or organoleptic properties.</li> <li><b>Learning/evidence dissemination</b> (<i>Regional and South/South learning</i>)</li> <li><b>Established networks</b> (<i>WFP/ DSM, government, millers</i>)</li> <li><b>Co-funding</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delays in staffing key positions</li> <li>Inconsistent supply chain, making it hard to meet increased demand</li> <li>Weak monitoring of quality in national systems</li> <li>Limited focus on commercialization</li> <li>Limited procurement of fortified rice by WFP</li> </ul>

## Summary of the Partnership's Achievements

### 3. Demand Creation

This being the newest Work Stream in the Partnership's portfolio, various activities were included as the strategy evolved. The Work Stream supported establishment of SUN Business Networks in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The interest and demand for SBNs in other countries demonstrates the catalytic nature of the Partnership. The Work Stream also supported the development of a national-level nutritious food-labelling program, known as the 'Good Food Logo' (GFL) in Zambia, and a voucher program to promote SNFs containing a quality logo in Ghana. In Latin America, the Partnership supported activities to increase consumer awareness of, and knowledge about, food quality and nutrient requirements at different stages in life and supported demand creation for fortified rice.

**Table 3: Demand creation success factors and bottlenecks**

Critical success factors	Challenges or bottlenecks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-term technical assistance provided by DSM – Right time, right place</li> <li>Dedicated focal point on board in country</li> <li>Co-funding leveraged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of coherent unifying strategy across the Work Stream</li> <li>Time required to reach consensus among diverse partners</li> <li>Potential loss of momentum in view of the longer time frames required to achieve concrete outputs</li> </ul>

### 4. Knowledge Management & Learning

The Partnership supported the building of WFP's 'Nutrition Academy', which includes e-learning and face-to-face platforms for both internal WFP personnel and external partners. As at the end of 2018, the internal WeLearn platform contained a total of 52 materials, including videos and e-modules on the Nutrition Learning channel covering a wide range of topics and resources in four languages. These included online journeys, case studies, 10-minutes-to-learn series, brown bag talks, and an online certificate foundation course. In late 2018, the team additionally launched an external learning platform (called nut<sup>x</sup>), containing approximately 80 resources such as printed publications, videos and e-modules.

**Table 4: Knowledge Management & Learning: Critical success factors and bottlenecks**

Critical success factors	Challenges or bottlenecks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technical expertise, dedicated team</li> <li>Cross-functional approaches within HR and supply chain management</li> <li>South-South learning</li> <li>Cross-stream work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient field uptake of learning materials</li> <li>Inadequate monitoring/reporting system</li> <li>Lengthy delays in organizing placements</li> </ul>

### Partnership Lens: Findings

The Partnership's success is rooted in a common goal and complementary capacities, combined with the relevant resources and expertise drawn from all three partner organizations. These factors have made it possible to achieve together what could not have been achieved alone. The relationship has added value to all partners, including building the knowledge and capacity of personnel and sharing cross-sector experiences and perspectives. A driving force for the success and sustainability of the Partnership has been committed and engaged leadership and relationships of trust at every level.

The Partnership has also faced challenges, including high turnover of personnel along with communication gaps, both internally and externally. The Partnership has also needed to respond to evolving organizational priorities.

The in-kind technical assistance/secondment program has had a significant positive impact on the quality of the Partnership's work. It has improved employee engagement within DSM and provided highly skilled technical assistance for WFP. The short-term assignments with clearly articulated deliverables have generally worked better and been easier to fill than longer-term assignments.

Perceptions about conflicts of interest were often mentioned as a challenge to the Partnership. The term 'conflict of interest' was used as a catch-all phrase by respondents to voice a variety of concerns about potentially negative perceptions stemming from the partners' close relationships with one another.

Other bottlenecks identified from the Partnership perspective include:

- lack of an overarching monitoring and evaluation framework, and insufficient documentation of successes and lessons learned;**
- short-term planning and annual budgeting, which prevents longer-term vision and goal-setting; and**
- insufficient communication both within the Partnership and externally with stakeholders about the Partnership itself.**

# Framing the Future: Summary of Recommendations Moving Forward

Given the Partnership's shared goal, its many past achievements, and the complementary competencies and strong relationships described in previous chapters, the future of the Partnership looks bright. The important administrative shift to a three-year planning cycle for MOU 5 is also a positive development. It sets the Partnership up to address past challenges and expand into new areas. The following recommendations are made both from the Partnership and from the program perspective. Responses to each recommendation are also included.

## Partnership Lens Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Continue to let the Partnership evolve to meet changing needs, with a view to supporting innovation

Throughout the course of the relationship to date, the partners have focused on using their complementary capacities to pursue a shared goal in innovative ways that maximize the relationship's unique and flexible nature. Early opportunities, such as development of new nutritional products and fortified rice, were the low-hanging innovative fruits for the Partnership. For MOU 5, the partners will have to think harder about how their relationship can best be used to continue to drive change and have an impact. This will likely be related to improved delivery systems for making nutritious foods and products more available and aspirational to consumers.

#### Response to Recommendation 1

The Partnership will continue to invest in the scale-up of rice fortification, while introducing an innovative retail strategy to make nutritious foods available and affordable. This will further the aims of commercializing fortified rice. In addition, the Partnership will continue to rely on leveraging the technical expertise of both organizations.

### Recommendation 2: Improve communication about the Partnership internally and externally

The Partnership has done some communication very well in the past, especially in terms of advocacy. However, room for improvement exists, especially regarding communication both within and between the partner organizations and communication about the Partnership itself. The partners may want to apply more imaginative attention and thought to the question of what gets communicated, to whom, and how. Concerning the Partnership itself, revision of the on-boarding package is proposed. Some additional, less formal, periodic communication may also be appropriate, targeting COs and RBs especially. In terms of routine communication about program progress, new reporting templates have the potential to streamline and simplify reporting results, thereby freeing up time to discuss more substantive or debatable issues during monthly and quarterly conference calls. For some issues, more formal, top-down communication may be in order (e.g. do's and don'ts related to CoI), and in other cases, a more bottom-up approach could be encouraged, for example using WhatsApp or Slack (App) groups to share experiences across countries. Management must pay more attention to communication in the future as the Partnership continues to grow in reach as well as complexity.

#### Response to Recommendation 2

The Partnership is committed to improving documentation procedures, ensuring that the story of the Partnership is widely disseminated internally and externally, and developing an on-boarding package for those who are new to the Partnership.

### Recommendation 3: Dealing with the Conflict-of-Interest issue

The CoI issue is complex, nuanced and sensitive, but the strong relationships and goodwill that exist between the partners provide the tools to deal with it. The following are some specific recommendations for dealing with the CoI issue:

- **Communicate more clearly and concretely** about the focus and role of the Partnership – including being clearer about where it ends.
- Building on the Rules of Engagement and existing firewall arrangements, **develop a set of Operating Principles** for the Partnership that can be applied globally, regionally and at the country level, serving as a practical guide of do's and don'ts for both DSM and WFP staff.
- **Include CoI issues as part of an on-boarding package** for WFP, DSM and SAL staff joining the Partnership – providing them with an opportunity to identify, learn about, raise and sort out potential CoI issues.
- **Provide a forum or mechanism for addressing CoI issues** (whether real or perceived) should they arise or be reported. This should include personnel from both organizations and from different levels, including representation from COs and RBs.

#### Response to Recommendation 3

1. Put in place a clear internal and external communication plan that explains the Partnership and the roles of each organization.
2. Ensure the firewall between program implementation and procurement is maintained.
3. Ensure that DSM and WFP staff and partners engaged in the Partnership are well informed of, and able to articulate, how the Partnership contributes to DSM and WFP's shared vision of contributing to the achievement of SDG 2 – ending malnutrition.



## Nutrition Program Lens Recommendations

### Recommendation 4: De-silo activities under the Partnership

Rather than ‘bucketing’ activities by programmatic area, consider moving to a more functional approach that reflects how food markets operate. The three technical, cross-cutting areas of ‘supply’, ‘demand’ and ‘quality’ are a way of dividing tasks that aims to make nutritious foods more available/accessible, aspirational and safe. These interdependent functions play a vital role in almost all programmatic interventions included under MOU 4, including product innovation, FR, SBN and GFL, and will ensure that the right specialists are working to solve existing programmatic gaps and challenges.

#### Response to Recommendation 4

Work Streams have been redesigned to focus on a) the scale-up of rice fortification, and 2) retail strategy. Monitoring and evaluation as well as knowledge management & learning will be cross-cutting.

### Recommendation 5: Geographic spread

Reviewers admired the breadth of activities supported under the Partnership and recommend continuing the highly cost-efficient approach of investing “a little in a lot of places” and creative gap-filling. This approach has definitely helped to leverage co-funding and has contributed to a “snowballing effect”, whereby momentum for an initiative builds across and between regions where multiple countries are moving it forward simultaneously. This is especially important for RF, which is trying to attract larger regional suppliers to invest in the technology. These are more likely to do so when seeing a multi-country trend towards RF than when considering one or two country-specific ‘demonstration’ projects. However, at this point the Partnership may be a victim of its own success, and there may not be enough money to provide meaningful support to all the countries requesting funding. If that is the case, the partners will have to develop criteria for selecting countries for funding based on some agreed-upon principles.

#### Response to Recommendation 5

The Partnership is committed to deliberate selection and investment in countries in order to create the greatest opportunities for the scale-up of rice fortification.

### Recommendation 6: Improve Monitoring & Evaluation throughout

The Partnership should increase support for the monitoring, tracking and reporting of all its activities. The first step would be to develop a unifying framework for the MOU 5 program that specifies the overall objectives, outcomes and outputs (a log frame, theory of change, or monitoring framework).

#### Response to Recommendation 6

The Partnership is committed to the development of full M&E framework.

## Summary of Work Stream-Specific Recommendations

Table 5: Summary of Work Stream Recommendations and Partnership response

Recommendation	The Partnership's Response
<b>Product Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rely on DSM's technical expertise</li> <li>• Ensure optimal specifications moving forward</li> </ul>	<b>Product Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong Partnership maintained, based on DSM's technical expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Rice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop fortification toolkit</li> <li>• Commercialize fortified rice</li> <li>• Increase WFP's procurement of fortified rice</li> </ul>	<b>Rice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tool kit under development</li> <li>• Retail/commercialization strategy in place</li> <li>• Strengthening of WFP's commitment to procure fortified rice</li> </ul>
<b>Demand Creation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify strategy</li> <li>• Develop SBN toolkits</li> <li>• Continue to utilize DSM's expertise</li> </ul>	<b>Demand Creation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift to retail strategy, with continued efforts in respect of SBN</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen M&amp;E</li> <li>• Improve uptake</li> <li>• Finalize Foundation and CD essentials</li> <li>• Strengthen South-South collaboration</li> </ul>	<b>Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrition Academy strategy</li> <li>• South-South strategy</li> <li>• Targeted nutrition for leaders</li> <li>• Roll-out of field-driven SNF SC</li> </ul>







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