

November 27th 2012

Dear Patti,

I thank you for your email of November 25th and the attached discussion paper. I have shared it with Anthony Lake, Chair of the SUN Lead Group, and I am writing on behalf of both of us.

It seems to us that the members of both IBFAN and the SUN Movement have a common motivation: to ensure that mothers and their children have what they need to ensure a healthy and productive future for themselves, their families and their communities. We read the discussion paper with care and interest. We believe that further progress can and must be made in addressing malnutrition. We also believe that the progress that already has been made at scale in various countries must be valued and built on. And we certainly believe that we agree on the central importance of breastfeeding.

All of the principal documents of the SUN Movement emphasise the central importance of exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of a child's life. The 2010 Roadmap is explicit about continued breastfeeding, together with appropriate complementary feeding, as an indicator of a minimum acceptable diet for children between 06 and 23 months. Members of the SUN Lead Group have repeatedly highlighted the need to focus on the empowerment of women so that they are in a position to ensure optimal feeding of their infants and children at least until their second birthday. This is central to the SUN Strategy. There is a consistent emphasis on monitoring and evaluation throughout the movement – including on rates of breastfeeding. We will continue to emphasize the importance of continued breastfeeding for children older than 6 months.

The SUN Movement emerged from the work of a broad range of actors with an interest in nutrition. The 2009 Framework had over 100 endorsements from across the spectrum of organisations involved in nutrition. They are from governments, civil society, UN agencies, donors, academics and business. The Framework firmly puts SUN countries at the centre of the Movement. During the first year 19 countries joined: now there are 33.

The SUN Movement's Lead Group was established in April this year. The 27 members include: 9 leaders from developing countries (a First Lady, Presidents, present or former Prime Ministers, Ministers and a Deputy Minister); 5 leaders from civil society and non-governmental organisations, 4 from donor countries, 4 from the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank (including ourselves), 2 from foundations (including a former High Commissioner for Human Rights), 2 leaders from business and the Chair of the Board of the Global Alliance to Improve Nutrition (who has had a variety of positions both in business and in social movements). The UN does not lead but rather works to facilitate the linkages between SUN countries and those who seek to support them.

All the principal documents of the Movement indicate the value of Government-led multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together all actors engaged in nutrition. This is to encourage coordinated implementation of action in support of national policies – expressed as aligning around a single set of results, where possible in line with the 2012 World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets. The Movement's documents reflect the importance of all people being able to realise their right to adequate nutritious food. The position of the SUN Movement is that nutrition policies should be set by government – and with the interests of their populations paramount.

One focus of the SUN Framework, Strategy and Road Maps is on ensuring optimum nutrition in the first 1000 days between the start of pregnancy and a child's second birthday. There is ample evidence that stunting prevention will reduce the incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases in later life. Furthermore, several SUN countries are pursuing more specific strategies that address the double-burden of malnutrition. Stakeholders in the Movement will support the implementation of strategies for Scaling-Up Nutrition at the request of national governments.

Another focus is on ensuring that all people can access the food they need to obtain adequate nutrients at all ages, all year round. In this regard, the documents of the SUN Movement indicate the importance of considering access to nutrients as well as access to food. Governments decide the mix of policies that they believe are best suited to achieving their goals for nutrient consumption.

As we see it, the term "Movement" describes a collective action designed to result in political, social or cultural change. SUN is made up of a wide range of actors working together with a shared goal of enabling people and their societies to live without hunger and malnutrition. This collective effort, which excludes Code violators, is referred to as a Movement because it is one.

Over the last two years we have seen an explosion of constructive and creative energy within and around the SUN Movement. This has led to an upsurge in transparent actions in response to underlying causes of people's malnutrition. This is happening in an atmosphere of trust and respect, where all involved are mutually accountable and chart the way forward together.

The SUN Movement is broad: a wide range of actors participate and it is important that their voices are heard. Not everyone involved in the Movement agrees on how best to help Governments of SUN countries achieve their nutritional goals. The Governments themselves seek to prevent, manage or resolve conflicts on strategy and implementation: the Movement seeks to support them as they do this.

Members of the SUN Movement have committed to be bound by a common purpose. In order to encourage an environment of mutual respect and understanding, the SUN Movement has developed its Principles of Engagement which will apply to all within the Movement. The Lead Group will keep these under review and has requested the Secretariat to establish a neutral and independent process for resolving conflicts of interest that may arise for any participants within the Movement.

We would value continued dialogue with IBFAN on ways in which the Movement can increase opportunities for women to enjoy good nutrition, to breastfeed their children exclusively for six months, and to continue doing so while their children receive appropriate and adequate complementary food once they are in the age range of 6 to 24 months.

We hope that these reflections show our appreciation of the values, intentions and commitment of the thousands of people active within the SUN Movement. It is a privilege to be working with them all.

With my personal best wishes


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