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MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUMMARY REPORT OF THE JOINT EVALUATION OF THE REACH INITIATIVE (2011–2015)

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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.

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BACKGROUND

1. This document presents the management response from the REACH partnership to the recommendations of the joint evaluation of the REACH Initiative (2011–2015). The REACH partnership is a collaborative platform of United Nations agencies engaged in nutrition. The evaluation analyses the role of the REACH Secretariat and REACH's work in Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, assesses REACH's: i) relevance and appropriateness, ii) performance, iii) factors that explain results, and iv) sustainability.
2. REACH fits with international nutrition priorities and those of REACH partner agencies. REACH has also complemented the work of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The evaluation recognizes REACH's facilitating and catalytic functions and the progress achieved, particularly in outcome areas 1 and 2.
3. REACH's timeframes were overly ambitious and the REACH theory of change must be redesigned. Additional investments can help sustain REACH's results.
4. The REACH partnership agrees with the evaluation's recommendations, which will be incorporated into the next phase of REACH. The matrix sets out the planned actions and implementation timelines.

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Recommendations	Action by	Management response and action taken	Implementation deadline
<p>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.</p> <p>Continued support at the country level to strengthen facilitation in the SUN countries¹ 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.</p>	REACH	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>A REACH facility to provide coordination and support will be retained. REACH will safeguard its neutrality and impartiality under the United Nations Network for SUN. Stakeholders will decide on the criteria for country engagement in the REACH 2.0 strategy. The demand for REACH and interventions in SUN countries will be assessed in country implementation plans (CIPs).</p>	April 2016
<p>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.</p>	REACH	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>REACH will develop a medium-term vision, strategy and operation plan for the second five-year phase. The REACH 2.0 strategy will be developed with global, regional and country stakeholders. The Reach 2.0 strategy will be aligned with the revised SUN Movement strategy and roadmap (SUN 2.0).</p>	April 2016



¹ SUN covers 55 countries (<http://scalingupnutrition.org/sun-countries>).

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<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	REACH	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The arrangements between REACH and the United Nations Network for SUN will be detailed in the REACH 2.0 strategy. The partnership will be aligned with the SUN strategy and roadmaps. REACH will be offered to countries to enhance the United Nations’ contribution to a coherent, coordinated and effective country-level nutrition response.</p>	April 2016
<p>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.</p>	REACH	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>In the REACH 2.0 strategy, a revised theory of change will be elaborated. In reviewing the theory of change, REACH will consult with global, regional, and country partners. The revised theory of change will be aligned with the SUN strategy and roadmaps, and the SUN Common Results Framework.</p>	April 2016



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<p>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.</p>			
<p>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).</p>	<p>REACH</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>United Nations technical assistance will be coordinated in the United Nations network for SUN's future work. The SUN Movement Secretariat, in collaboration with its networks, conducted a survey on streamlining technical assistance support in SUN countries.</p> <p>REACH, as part of the United Nations Network for SUN, is a partner for technical assistance for scaling up nutrition. Partners met in June 2015 in Geneva to review preliminary findings from the survey, which will shape the technical assistance agenda within the SUN strategy and roadmap (2.0). The survey results will also help define roles and responsibilities of technical assistance providers in the SUN Movement and in support of its Communities of Practice. REACH will contribute to this global effort and utilize outputs to shape its REACH 2.0 strategy. This will include fostering global, regional and country strategic partnerships.</p>	<p>April 2015</p>



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<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	REACH/ United Nations partners	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>After REACH 2.0 has been created, a new MOU will be developed to include specific provisions to ensure accountability.</p>	Mid-2016
<p>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.</p>	REACH	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>To encourage financial allocations, meetings will be held with donors, United Nations partners, and governments. REACH will seek partnerships for resource mobilization. REACH 2.0 will have a resource strategy and funding options to respond to country demand for REACH.</p>	April 2016



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<p>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.</p>	REACH	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The CIP development process will be reviewed to improve leadership and buy-in from all parties. In REACH 2.0, strategic actions on gender and equity will harmonize with the global gender and equity agenda. REACH will foster global, regional and country partnerships in support of equity and gender agenda and actions.</p>	April 2016



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CIP	country implementation plan
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition