

Experience in hosting the Uganda Civil society Coalition on Scaling Up Nutrition (UCCO-SUN) secretariat

Background:

The Uganda Civil Society Coalition on Scaling Up Nutrition (UCCO-SUN) is a platform for nutrition and Nutrition sensitive Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Uganda. The coalition contributes to the Global SUN initiative through advocacy and monitoring for accountability. UCCO-SUN was started in March 2011 as a follow-up to the Global Scaling Up of Nutrition (SUN) initiative under the Task Force C now Civil Society Network. It is a partnership of over twenty active national and international non-governmental organizations, the media, academia, professional bodies and other alliances relevant to nutrition. The coalition is supported by the global scaling Up Nutrition Multi Partner Trust Fund and managed by the steering committee. .

UCCO-SUN uses three strategic objectives in meeting its aims: Capacity strengthening for CSOs in policy development, monitoring and accountability; Policy engagement and campaigns at international, national and district levels; and engagement and involvement of communities in advocacy, planning, implementation, monitoring and accountability.

Coordination of UCCO-SUN activities

The Uganda CS coalition has participated in joint CS nutrition advocacy events since inception. Many of the activities are jointly planned by coalition member organisations. Coordination of the alliance was under an interim arrangement done by the Uganda Action for Nutrition (UGAN)-a registered professional body of nutrition professionals in Uganda. When the coalition held its first AGM, UGAN was elected to chair the coalition.

Experiences in coordinating UCCO-SUN

The UGAN experience in coordinating the country CS alliance is a tale of hard work and resilience. The following have been noted in the period UGAN has been coordinating activities of the Uganda CS coalition.

- Coordinating CS alliances needs an organisation that is neutral so as to be able to bring together all member interests and guiding coalition members to consensus
- Progress of coalition activities is often delayed by consensus building; often building consensus is time consuming and yet desirable to generate ownership
- Maintaining member interest in joining the coalition is dependent on how vibrant the coalition can be
- Sometimes, members wait upon the coordinating institution to do all the planning and only come to participate in activities

- Vibrancy of the coalition can sometimes be left to the coordinating institution, should it keep silent, members too become silent
- The coordinating institution has to be willing to invest more time than all other coalition members in day to day activities of the coalition. For small organisations, this often may compromise mainstream organisational activities in instances of low staffing
- When financial and administrative structures for leading the coalition are not clearly streamlined, coordinating coalition activities can be taxing for the coordinating agency.
- Whereas institutional membership is most desired, participation of organisations in coalition activities is majorly dependent in interest of particular members within the given organisation. When these leave, getting a suitable replacement is sometimes challenging.
- The coordinating agency has in-return, increased visibility
- Generally, coordinating CS alliances as much as possible necessitates open communication with all members and member involvement in joint planning. Else, some members may not feel ownership of coalition activities