

SCALING UP NUTRITION (SUN) MOVEMENT MULTI-PARTNER TRUST FUND (MPTF)

MPTF OFFICE GENERIC ANNUAL PROGRAMME¹ REPORT

FINAL REPORT

<p>Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: A Coordinated and Mobilized Civil Society Platform in Sierra Leone in Support of Scaling Up Nutrition movement Programme Number SC 140161 MPTF Office Project Reference Number:³ 00089470 	<p>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results²</p> <p><i>Country/Region:</i> Sierra Leone, West and Central Africa Region</p> <p><i>Priority area/ strategic results</i> 2.4.1 Support the SUN secretariat, MDAs and other development partners to develop and implement a coordination mechanism for food and nutrition security including the development of common results framework</p>																		
<p>Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme: United Nations Children’s Fund – UNICEF 	<p>Implementing Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National counterparts (government, private, NGOs & others) and other international organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus 1000 (direct implementing partner) Civil Society Platform Helen Keller International, SUN Secretariat (office of the Vice President), Directorate of Food And Nutrition (DFN) 																		
<p>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Total approved budget as per project document: MPTF /JP Contribution⁴ by Agency (if applicable)</td> <td>USD 299,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Agency Contribution by Agency</td> <td>Not applicable</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Government Contribution</td> <td>Not applicable</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Contributions (donors)</td> <td>Not applicable</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL:</td> <td>299,600</td> </tr> </table>	Total approved budget as per project document: MPTF /JP Contribution ⁴ by Agency (if applicable)	USD 299,600	Agency Contribution by Agency	Not applicable	Government Contribution	Not applicable	Other Contributions (donors)	Not applicable	TOTAL:	299,600	<p>Programme Duration</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Overall Duration (months)</td> <td>29 months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start Date⁵</td> <td>21 February 2014</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Original End Date⁶</td> <td>30 June 2016</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current End date⁷</td> <td>30 June 2016</td> </tr> </table>	Overall Duration (months)	29 months	Start Date ⁵	21 February 2014	Original End Date ⁶	30 June 2016	Current End date ⁷	30 June 2016
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<p>Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p> <p>Assessment/Review - if applicable <i>please attach</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report – <i>if applicable please attach</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p>	<p>Report Submitted By</p> <p>Name: Kajali Paintal Title: Nutrition Manager Participating Organization (lead): UNICEF Email address: kpaintal@unicef.org</p>																		

¹ The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

² Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;

³ The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁴ The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁵ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁶ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

⁷ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.

Executive Summary

This report documents the progress of the civil society platform project for Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) funded by the Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) since February 2014 to project completion in June 2016. The aim of the MPTF grant was to establish a coordinated civil society platform in Sierra Leone to support the SUN movement. The civil society platform was founded in 2014 and worked to reinforce the efforts by civil society organizations (CSOs), community based organizations and UN agencies to advocate for nutrition issues and support the government to improve nutrition and health outcomes for children and women. The civil society platform has made large strides within the first two years of its existence. Its presence has expanded from the national to the district level in 2015, and since 2016, the platform has percolated to the chiefdom level. The role of the platform and its members has expanded too from a district level coordination to advocacy and policy influencing. They now partner with: government ministries, departments and agencies, including the Directorate of Food and Nutrition (DFN), the Directorate of Immunization and the SUN secretariat; UNICEF, FAO, WHO, WFP; as well as other international and national development partners, on a range of direct nutrition and nutrition sensitive issues. Their community based networks too have expanded to include market women associations and religious leaders so that they are able to reach every community across the country.

As of June 2016, the civil society platform has a country wide presence across the 14 districts and has over 200 members at the national and sub-national level. These members are a part of the national and district coordinating bodies and play a key role in advocacy and policy influencing, capacity development, awareness generation, community engagement, communication, emergency response, information and knowledge management.

Under advocacy and policy action, the civil society platform is instrumental in advocating for reduction in child undernutrition, enhancing food security, and increasing access to adequate healthcare, education, WASH and other nutrition-sensitive interventions that impact nutrition and health outcomes. The platform advocated for the inclusion of *Right to Food* as a basic human right within the national constitution to accelerate the government's response to meet the global commitments to 'end hunger and malnutrition'. To ensure that SUN civil society platform is fully aligned with other global efforts, the platform supported the establishment of a national chapter for the Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA) to address food security, poverty and climate change. Another advocacy drive was to harness a high level of commitment and support by bringing on board the First Lady as a champion for nutrition and immunization. In collaboration with UNICEF, DFN and Action Contre la Faim (ACF), the civil society platform produced a short documentary on progress made to combat malnutrition.

Capacity building to increase the knowledge and capacity of platform member like the market women, religious leaders and media personnel was carried out, with a focus on nutrition advocacy and the mobilization of communities for the scaling up of nutrition, along with community engagement and mobilization in the form of events like the National Polio campaign, Global Handwashing Day, World Water day, World Aids Day and World Food Day. During these events, the civil society platform engaged over 460 religious leaders, market women, traditional healers and district coordinating body representatives to reach vulnerable communities and encourage them to have their children immunized during the biannual Mother and Child Health Weeks (MCHW) and national polio campaigns. In the area of communication, the civil society platform engaged with the mass media including print media and radio, and also created a databank of existing nutrition and food security communication materials. A Health and Nutrition Sierra Leone Civil

Society Platform (HaNSL-CSP) website <http://www.han-sl.org> was also created. This resource library includes materials and articles on nutrition, immunization and health.

The civil society platform was also represented at regional and global annual conferences. An experience sharing visit with SUN secretariat representatives from Liberia was organized in 2015. The opportunity was used to showcase progress, and initiate the cross learning. Sierra Leone was represented through a delegation at the SUN Global gathering in Milan, Italy. In the area of knowledge management, the platform has conducted a knowledge, attitude and practice study on Ebola Virus Disease, joint assessments and a research project on nutrition and gender. The aim of these research activities was to provide evidence that would inform the platform’s areas for advocacy and policy influencing, field level implementation and capacity strengthening.

I. PURPOSE

The objective of this grant from the SUN Movement MPTF is to support the Government of Sierra Leone’s efforts to address the complex causes of malnutrition and prepare a road map to improve and expand multi-sectoral nutrition-sensitive strategies. The focus of the grant is to mobilize ‘civil societies’ in support of the SUN by creating ‘civil society platforms’ across the country and district coordinating bodies as an interface of government and SUN secretariat efforts. The civil society platform is considered one of the five pillars of SUN movement.

FOCUS 1000 (a local NGO of Sierra Leone), along with Helen Keller International (HKI- co chair), submitted the ‘project document’ to the SUN Movement Secretariat in late 2013 for the Multi-Country Proposal Framework under Multiple Donor Support. The proposal was approved under the overall leadership of UNICEF Sierra Leone. As donor convener, funds were transferred to UNICEF Sierra Leone to ensure proper utilization, in line with the MPTF framework of action. Quarterly financial statements are provided by FOCUS 1000. UNICEF has been accountable for providing technical support to FOCUS 1000 to create, strengthen and mainstream civil society platforms within the overall SUN movement.

This grant was managed by the nutrition section of UNICEF Sierra Leone and linked to the following:

UN Vision Output	Providing equitable and affordable health services through national health system that is able to provide more equitable and accessible health care across the country.
CPAP Outcome	Nutrition
Expected Output	Strengthened political commitment, accountability and national capacity to surveys, surveillance, research, legislation, planning and budgeting for scaling-up nutrition interventions for children and women of child bearing age by 2018.
Activity	Support the SUN secretariat, government and other development partners to develop and implements coordination mechanism for food and nutrition security including development of common results framework.

II. RESULTS

i) Narrative reporting on results:

- **Outcomes:**

The main purpose of creating the civil society platform is to align strategies, efforts and resources of civil society organizations with the governments’ efforts for scaling up nutrition. In 2014-15, Focus 1000

accelerated their efforts to create the civil society platform at the national and sub-national level and enhance their visibility and involvement in scaling up nutrition. The project worked towards strengthening the capacity development of the members, expanding linkages with other networks, enhancing coordination, platform efficiency and effectiveness.

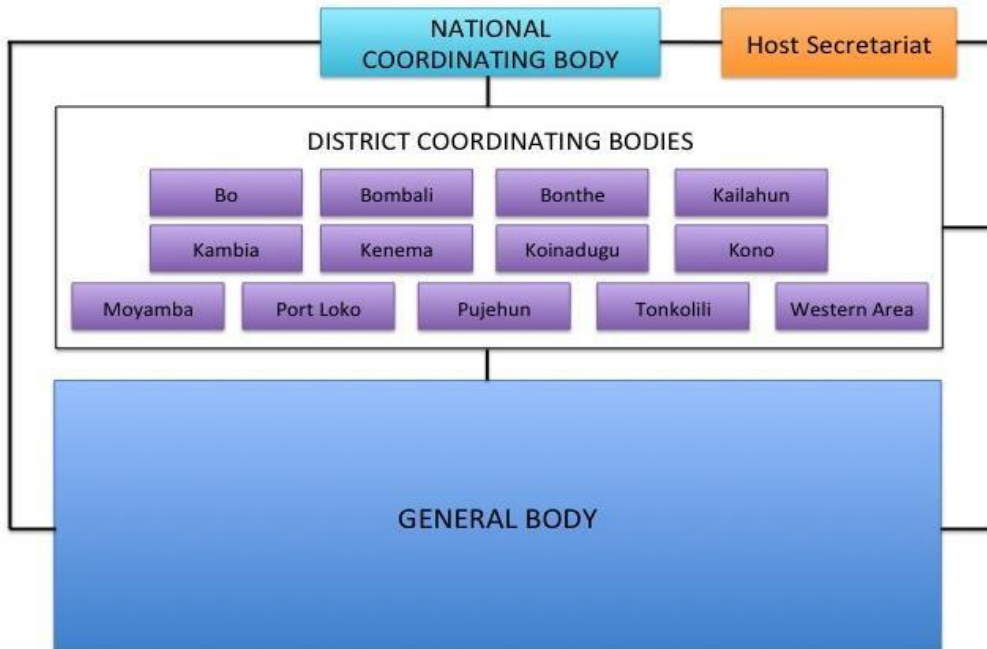
The focus of the project in 2014-2015 was to establish coordination structures i.e., from national, to district and chiefdom/community level. In this period, nearly 180 members of civil society organizations, non-governmental and community-based organization, trades unions, media, faith-based organizations, market women associations and other informal groups were mobilized, joined the platform and were oriented on their roles and responsibilities. At this time, the district coordinating bodies were also established nationwide. By 2016, civil society platform expanded to over 200 members (178 CSO and CBOs, 52 media) making it one of the largest platforms in the global civil society network. It has been effective in building partnerships with various groups and has engaged and collaborated with the government at national, district and community levels to meet the global commitments for nutrition. The platform works closely with various lines ministries, namely the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), to influence policies for better nutrition, health and development outcomes, and have a strong partnership with the SUN Secretariat (under the auspices of the Vice President).

During the project period, strong partnerships have been built with government and other implementing partners at national and district levels. The platform now works in close collaboration with the SUN Secretariat, DFN and other civil society members such as HKI, ACF and has brought on board influential community networks such as market women and religious leaders and traditional healers. They are trusted and have presence in all communities and have played a great role in mobilizing communities for the eradication of Ebola transmission during the outbreak, systems strengthening, as well as on nutrition issues. The platform is a member of the National Anaemia Technical Working group and the Nutrition Technical Committee. At district level the platform holds monthly stakeholder meetings, engages with government i.e., district council, district health management team, and are also members of the Food and Nutrition Security Network. By bringing them on board, the platform is assured that scaling up of nutrition, especially in the most vulnerable communities, is possible.

- **Outputs:**

Establishing governance structures for nutrition: The civil society platform functions through established structures of national and district coordinating bodies to improve governance for nutrition. The governance structure indicating roles and responsibilities at each level is indicated in Figure 1. At the national level the *National Coordinating Body/National Steering Committee* also commonly known as the SUN taskforce was formed in 2014 This body consists of all members of the civil society platform, which includes registered organizations such as non-governmental organizations, community-based bodies, as well as non-registered civil society groups that can play a significant role in scaling up nutrition. The national coordinating body represents the voice of all platform members in national discussions around nutrition and health and provides oversight in the governance, management and coordination of the platform. At the district level, there is a *district coordinating body* that coordinates the civil society platform activities and mobilizes community efforts for nutrition and health outcomes as well as works on systems strengthening. They are accountable to the national body and are responsible for providing regular updates.

Figure 1: Platform governance structure



The civil society platform also conducts review meetings. In December 2015, the platform held its annual review meeting. This meeting was attended by over 95 platform members from all the districts including media representatives, market women, religious leaders and other stakeholders in nutrition including the DFN. This two-day meeting provided platform members with an opportunity to review progress and plan activities for 2016 as well as get an update on platform progress. At the end of the meeting, districts and national plans for 2016 were developed and shared with the government for approval. National and district levels plans were developed to bring together the partners on the same platform and plan for scaling up of nutrition activities which include advocacy for nutrition across different sectors, social mobilization and organizing major events like the World Breastfeeding Week, Global Handwashing Day, World Food Day and World Toilet Day. Support is provided to the district coordinating bodies to implement nutrition activities in alignment with district plans for nutrition (including food security). As a result civil societies have contributed to the government’s work in scaling up nutrition alongside their emergency efforts to eradicate Ebola.

The governance structure for the platform is continuing to grow and since the beginning of 2016 chiefdom level coordinating bodies have been established. In a total of 6 out of 13 districts, i.e. in Bo, Kono, Moyamba, Kambia, Bonthe and Pujehun, chiefdom level bodies or committees were set up. These committees are responsible for overseeing food and nutrition security activities at chiefdom level and providing monitoring and support to ensure that nutrition activities are implemented within the communities. In some districts, these structures work closely with the community health workers (Kono and Bo) to ensure partnerships between NGOs and other stakeholders in order to provide better nutrition services. With the establishment of these structures to chiefdom level, it is envisaged that the linkages and coordination with various networks such as religious leaders, market women and traditional healers will be strengthened.

The civil society platform also engages with the government stakeholders with an aim to support government efforts in scaling up nutrition to end hunger and malnutrition. In a recent engagement process in June this year with stakeholders in the Western Area, the platform met with the district health management team and the MSWGCA and signed a Memorandum of Understanding which includes the list

of activities that the platform would work together on with the government in the district. The case study on governance structures of the civil society platform is below.



Building platform capacity for a sustainable future: A sustainable and effective platform is necessary for civil society to contribute towards social change. This can only be done if the members of the civil society platform have increased knowledge and skills to advocate for nutrition and mobilize communities. The civil society platform at the national level, with support from UNICEF, has been strengthening the capacity of the district and chiefdom level co-coordinating bodies through training and supportive supervision. One such training that was conducted in June 2015. This was a media and advocacy training organized for 35 district coordinating bodies to accelerate advocacy efforts for scaling up nutrition. Members of the civil society platform were trained on how to advocate effectively. The different sessions organized in the training include:

- Hunger and malnutrition and its impact on developmental outcomes
- Scaling up nutrition, its concept and the role of civil society
- Community engagement and ownership
- Role of community in advocacy for nutrition
- Practical steps for effective advocacy and communication
- Communication action planning

The training aimed at building members' confidence to reach out and engage with communities to enhance their awareness on key nutrition issues like food security and nutrition sensitive interventions like WASH, education and social protection, with particular reference to women and children. Recommendations from the post training assessment include the need to organize refresher training courses, have supportive supervision, include similar training at the chiefdom level, have sharing of district experiences and organize inter-district visits to facilitate cross learning.

The civil society platform has a media wing for reporting on nutrition issues. In July 2015, a training was organized for the media representatives on ethical reporting. This training was conducted in joint collaboration with the civil society platform and ACF for 52 media practitioners selected across the country and was facilitated by leading communication practitioners in Sierra Leone. The main purpose was to bring the attention of journalists to critical nutrition, health and development issues and improve the quality of media reporting on nutrition, and immunization. The training used a mixture of approaches. These include presentations and group work to increase knowledge followed by fieldwork aimed at "gaining experience through practice". At the end of the training, media practitioners made a commitment to report regularly on nutrition and developed activity plans.

Advocating for nutrition for policy change. Advocacy to influence nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive policies is one of the key tenets for the civil society platform in order to bring about social change. Civil society in partnership with various groups have advocated for issues on hunger and malnutrition as a key area in the political agenda. The different advocacy events carried out during the project period include:

- (i) **First Lady champions the Scaling up of Nutrition and Immunization:** In an advocacy meeting with Her Excellency the First Lady Mrs. Sia Nyama Koroma, representatives from the civil society platform, FOCUS 1000, HKI and Catholic Relief Services appraised her on the role of civil society in scaling up of nutrition services with equity. She gave representatives a warm welcome, and expressed her "commitment to champion nutrition and immunization" in Sierra Leone and work

with civil societies on issues concerning women and children.

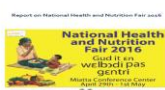
- (ii) **Platform support to Nutrition and Food Security:** In the second half of 2015, the civil society members in partnership with the government and other key implementers at district and national level provided inputs into the National Food and Implementation plan (2013-2017) and presented two position papers on the Right to Food. These position papers included key messages to be included in the revised national constitution.



Figure 2: Platform representatives meet with the First Lady for nutrition and immunization

- (iii) **National Food and Nutrition Implementation Plan 2013-2017:** In July 2015, the Vice President launched the National Food and Nutrition Implementation plan 2013-2017. The main reason for the delayed launch was the Ebola outbreak. Developed in partnership with civil society, the UN family and donor agencies, the plan highlights the priority areas on eradication of hunger and malnutrition. These include (a) advocacy, promotion and facilitation of adequate national and household food security, (b) adoption of appropriate feeding practices of vulnerable groups, (c) preventive measures against nutritional and other related infectious diseases, (d) provision of curative services to malnourished individuals, (e) strengthening national surveillance systems and coordinating activities of relevant agencies involved in food and nutrition. Through this plan the civil society platform is committed to ensure that children under five, pregnant and lactating mothers have access to nutrition services, improved water and sanitation and free health care.
- (iv) **Right to Food in Sierra Leone Constitution:** In June 2015, the platform embarked on advocacy for the Right to Food in Sierra Leone to remind the government of their commitment towards citizens. With the review of the national constitution in progress, the platform considered this a timely opportunity to have Right to Food included in the National Constitution. Between August and October 2015, two position papers were developed by civil society and validated by government and UN Agencies, and messages to be included in the National Constitution were proposed. In February 2016, the key messages proposed by the platform were revised and included under two sections: “Human rights and freedom of the individual” and “Protection of socio-economic rights”. The platform is seeking legal advice to determine the next steps for advocacy.
- (v) **High level dialogue for nutrition.** On the second anniversary of the Nutrition for Growth Initiative (N4G), the civil society platform collaborated with ACF to organize a roundtable discussion in June 2015. A total of 30 key stakeholders that included government representatives, international development partners, donor agencies and civil society platform discussed the progress made towards scaling up nutrition and identified the actions needed to accelerate progress. Civil society was instrumental in providing insights from the field and provided recommendations to government and donors on the actions that need to be undertaken.
- (vi) **National Health and Nutrition Fair: An advocacy event to raise awareness on multi-sectoral approaches to address undernutrition.** The first National Health and Nutrition Fair was held in Freetown from 29 April to 1 May 2016. This was the first event of its kind to enhance awareness on the multi-sectoral approaches to address child undernutrition and highlight national efforts

to end hunger and malnutrition. The event was launched by the Vice President Dr Victor Bockarie Foh and organised by a total of 50 stakeholders and partners from all sectors, including the government, UN family, business community and civil society. A total of 500 participants from the government, civil society, community-based organizations and school children attended this event. An exhibition was organised around safe motherhood, complementary feeding practices, including diet diversity and use of locally available nutritious foods and good hygiene practices. The fair was a mix of message dissemination, information sharing, cooking demonstrations and health screening. The key messages on nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions were disseminated through drama, skits and school quiz and drawing competitions. Other side attractions included entertainment, music, comedy and videos. Its success has been recognized as a key milestone in the country's efforts to and partners from all sectors have proposed that the fair becomes an annual calendar event at the national and district level. (A more detailed report on the Health and Nutrition Fair is attached here)



Engaging media to promote scaling up nutrition. In March 2013, the Kombra Media Network (KMN), the media wing of the platform, established a national taskforce dedicated to media reporting on health and nutrition. In March 2015, KMN registered as a legal body with the Office of the Registrar General and affiliated with Sierra Leone Association of Journalists. With over 50 members they have been instrumental in promoting awareness on the civil society platform and reporting on nutrition and health related activities at national and district level. KMN has continued to support the platform to raise the profile of SUN by developing jingles on SUN and providing free airtime for key calendar and national events such as World Breastfeeding Week in 2015. KMN members have also supported with free airtime to include discussions on nutrition and share findings of nutrition research conducted by FOCUS 1000, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) and other activities undertaken by the platform.

To support platform efforts to promote scaling up nutrition messages, KMN made a commitment to engage communities and stakeholders through radio and print media in order to disseminate nutrition messages. In June 2015, the civil society media platform members trained over 52 media practitioners selected from various print and electronic media houses across the country to improve quality reporting on nutrition and other health related issues by journalists to bring attention to issues impacting on health and development. The training used a mix of approaches; presentations, group work and fieldwork to engage participants and ensure increased knowledge through practice. At the end of the training, media practitioners made a commitment to report regularly on nutrition and health with plans developed in line with platform activity plan for 2015 and 2016. The frequency and quality of reporting on emerging issues from their respective districts via 'WhatsApp group' and on Radio has shown an improvement.

The civil society platform is engaged in various media activities. These include

- (i) **Website and social media:** The Health and Nutrition Sierra Leone Civil Society Platform (HANSL-CSP), has a website designed to include dedicated sections on nutrition and health. The address of the website is www.han-sl.org. The website also has a news and articles section, a repository for news stories and a resource centre, which holds relevant national and international documents on nutrition specific and sensitive areas. The website is also linked to the host website FOCUS 1000 for additional information on other civil society activities. The platform has a Facebook page for easy access to news and stories.

- (ii) **Platform Newsletters:** The platform has produced four newsletters; a comprehensive tool used to update platform progress at national and district levels as well as share information and link members across the country. The first newsletter was produced in October 2014 followed by the second issue in December 2014. Newsletters were disseminated to key stakeholders and posted on the website for access to other national and global partners on www.han-sl.org and www.focus1000.org.
- (iii) **Partnership with radio:** The platform believes in the power of radio not only for advocacy but also to inform communities and engage them on issues around nutrition and health. During the peak of the Ebola outbreak, the civil society platform collaborated with DFN (MoHS), HKI and ACF to raise awareness and dialogue with communities on infant and young child feeding in the context of Ebola. Discussion programmes by FOCUS 1000 promoted key messages on health and immunization and the importance of maintaining other positive behaviours such as handwashing with soap at regular intervals. On the behalf of the government, the civil society platform advocated on exclusive breastfeeding for working mothers, increasing the duration of maternity leave from 3 to 6 months and for World Breastfeeding Week in 2015. The platform has also brought attention to other issues like the inclusion of a Right to Food in the National Constitution and advocating for the implementation of the Code for Breast Milk Substitute.

Focus 1000 with involvement of the civil society platform and district coordinating bodies have ensured that appropriate nutrition messages are disseminated across all sectors. In this regard, nutrition specific and sensitive messages (e.g. exclusive breastfeeding for six months, regular hand washing with soap more so in the context of maintaining zero Ebola cases and routine immunization) were regularly shared with platform members for dissemination in communities and through radio.

In August 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with a popular radio station, Universal Radio for a weekly programme called “Leh We Tok” which aired every Friday from September to December. This interactive programme engaged the public/communities on various topics related to nutrition, health and community ownership of health services, promoting access and utilization of nutrition and health services by the most vulnerable members. Leh we Tok had programmes on exclusive breastfeeding, infant and young child feeding, malnutrition, the Polio campaign and Global Health Day. Reports from various districts across the country were used to inform the public on issues requiring community action.



Figure 3: Western Area urban district coordinating body engages children to talk about nutrition and health

Supporting nutrition in emergencies: Described by World Health Organization (WHO) as one of the most

challenging outbreaks to date, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) ravaged communities across the country. The government and development partners disseminated key messages on the disease which included prevention of transmission, seeking prompt medical care on experiencing signs and symptoms of the disease. Resistance to the shifting of traditional funeral/burial practices and wide-spreading misconceptions put a strain on efforts to fight the disease.

An Ebola knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) study conducted in August to September 2014 found that 17 per cent of children missed the scheduled vaccination during the past three months and 38 per cent of mothers did not attend clinic due to fears of contracting Ebola from health workers or facilities. This data highlighted the adverse effect that the epidemic had on the utilization of essential services such as routine immunization and antenatal care, prompting FOCUS 1000 – on behalf of civil society platform – to hold radio discussion programmes encouraging parents to take their children for vaccination and pregnant women to attend the four recommended antenatal care visits. In a follow-up KAP study in 2015, it was found that social mobilization efforts were effective and EVD knowledge increased from 39 per cent to 48 per cent at the community level. Stigma/discriminatory attitudes reduced from 95 per cent to below 50 per cent and self-reported protection behaviors improved. Data for both these studies were collected using the civil society platform at the national and district level.

In October 2014, the civil society platform supported the government to implement the emergency-related activities during the peak of the Ebola outbreak through:

- Rapid assessment of nutrition and immunization situations in quarantined households due to Ebola
- Engaging market women to rebuild community trust in the health system
- Engaging the media to promote key nutrition and health messages

In addition, in 2014 the district coordinating bodies under the leadership of the national body conducted rapid assessments of quarantined homes to identify and follow up on children in need of treatment for severe acute malnutrition and those who missed routine immunization. This was part of their contribution to rebuild community trust in local health facilities. With these efforts over 400 households were reached with information on nutrition for women and children.

The civil society platform was represented in the National Nutrition Emergency Committee along with other partners which included DFN, UNICEF, WFP, donor agencies, the SUN Secretariat, and national and international non-governmental development partners working in nutrition to support EVD control and prevention. Between August and December 2014, the committee prepared a six-month response plan, standard operating procedure on food delivery to quarantine homes, screening for severe acute malnutrition and guidelines for breastfeeding during Ebola – all the joint efforts helped to curb EVD within the country.

Linking with others to expand and strengthen outreach. As part of civil society platform efforts to rebuild community trust in the health system, the district coordinating body in the Western Area engaged market women as they are key influencers in communities. In August 2015, the Sierra Leone Market Women's Association, a formidable force for social mobilization with over 100,000 members, partnered with the platform to conduct training for over 200 women across the country on advocacy for nutrition and mobilizing community action on nutrition. The market women were trained on exclusive breastfeeding and optimal infant and young child nutrition, immunization, calling 117 for the sick, safe dignified burials and promoting regular hand washing with soap. Equipped with these messages chairwomen and men disseminated these messages to their respective groups in their communities.

With the support from the market women, gaps in the community health service were identified and

messages on the uptake of health and nutrition services were disseminated. Interactions with the market women helped to identify that there was a demand for services but women in communities reported that there were no facilities close to their homes, or that the facilities were overcrowded. Radios were used as a channel to advocate the government and partners to increase the number of primary health clinics in underserved communities and improve the provision of services within these clinics.

Linking with religious leaders to disseminate important nutrition messages to existing networks: The platform has built a strong partnership with key networks such as the religious leaders and market women who have played a key role in health and policy change over the years. The EVD outbreak was yet another example of how important religious leaders are in mobilising communities for social change, where they used verses from the Bible and the Quran to reinforce key messages. At the same time, market women reached out to their customers and community members to end transmission. They continue to play a strong role in maintaining zero cases. Seeing the power of these networks, the platform has partnered with them to promote key messages on nutrition as part of their on-going community engagement activities.

Cross sharing and international representation: Activities of the civil society platform on cross-sharing of lessons learnt and experiences with other countries as well as representation in international forums include:

- (i) **Participation in SUN global meeting in Milan 2016.** In October 2015, civil society platform representatives had the opportunity to participate in the SUN global gathering with the government and business community in Milan. The gathering provided the Sierra Leone delegation a chance to showcase progress made in combating malnutrition as well as the outcome of multi-sectoral work done for scaling up nutrition, i.e. on food security, gender, budget tracking and civil society contribution to SUN. Providing a civil society perspective on deliberations at the gathering, the platform wrote a blog “Sunrise for Scaling Up Nutrition” which looked at the potential for civil society to contribute to the sustainable development goals. The blog has been published and is available on the Eldis website: http://www.eldis.org/go/blog/posts/sun-rise-for-scaling-up-nutrition#.Vh_dNSv5LP0.
- (ii) **Regional network meeting for civil society associations.** In October 2015, the civil society platform participated in the SUN global gathering in Milan and volunteered to host the first civil society associations’ regional meeting for West Africa in December 2015. Supported by UNICEF, this meeting was an opportunity to develop a strategy for regional networking, to facilitate learning opportunities between countries as well as to develop a work plan to meet the global nutrition commitments for the region. In 2016, the Sierra Leone civil society association will host the second meeting with support from ACF regional office and the global civil society association.
- (iii) **Joining Eco-system Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA).** This is a pan-African network that provides a platform for government stakeholders, civil society, academic and research institutions to collaborate in the development of policy solutions to upscale agriculture and ensure equitable and inclusive growth in Africa. It also seeks to combat food insecurity, climate change, ecosystems degradation and poverty. Given its relevance to SUN, the platform has supported the establishment of the country chapter in Sierra Leone. The EBAFOSA has two members (president and vice president) from the civil society. Other members are from the government and the UN family. Plans are underway to start advocacy for EBAFOSA in Sierra Leone and take forward the discussions on food security and climate change.
- (iv) **Cross-country visit from Liberia.** In November 2015, the Liberia civil society platform conducted a cross-country visit to Sierra Leone. This visit aimed to provide Liberia with examples of best

practices from the civil society platform in Sierra Leone to help them establish an effective platform in their own country. The four-day visit included meetings and discussions with key government counterparts, UN agencies, SUN secretariat, media and community based organizations such as market women. The meetings were succeeded by a field visit to Kono that has a well performing district coordinating body.

Knowledge sharing and evidence generation: The civil society platform is involved disseminating information through various means to improve awareness on scaling up nutrition. They are also involved in conducting operational researches that will guide their future course of work as well as generate evidence for nutrition sensitive programming. Some of the knowledge sharing and evidence generation activities include:

- (i) **Articles on Scaling up Nutrition.** To highlight efforts made by civil society in Sierra Leone to scale up nutrition, an article for SUN titled “A journey to End Malnutrition in Sierra Leone” www.suncivilsociety.net.wix.com was published by the SUN Civil Society Network (SUN CSN) in 2014. The article focuses on civil societies’ contribution to ending hunger and malnutrition in the country since 2013.
- (ii) **Google group.** To ensure that there is continuous information exchange, a google group was established to keep members abreast of platform activities and news from global platforms. However internet connection has been a challenge at the district level. Hence to ensure that these partners are reached, a WhatsApp group was created and phone calls were made for key updates.
- (iii) **Documentary film on Sierra Leone’s efforts to combat malnutrition.** In July 2015, the platform partnered with ACF and DFN (MoHS) to produce a short documentary on the country’s efforts to combat malnutrition. This is a strong advocacy tool which highlights strides made since the inception of the SUN Movement. The film was launched in October 2015, and aired on national television in order to advocate for enhanced commitment towards ending malnutrition in Sierra Leone. Recognized as a strong advocacy tool by SUN Movement it has been shared with the global movement for circulation on the global platform.
- (iv) **Knowledge, attitude and practice study on Ebola Virus Disease** was conducted by FOCUS 1000 in partnership with UNICEF, CDC and Catholic Relief Services in 2014-2015. This study helped to develop evidence-based messages and carry out social mobilization. These messages were disseminated through various channels like traditional healers, religious leaders and market women etc.
- (v) A small-scale **research on gender policy and nutrition** was conducted in 2016 to review the existing gender policies and to what extent do these policies address the impact of gender issues on nutrition, identify gaps that need to be addressed and ensure that the gender dimension of nutrition is reflected in national strategies to tackle hunger and malnutrition. This study was conducted in four districts, namely Kono, Port Loko, Moyamba and Western Area Urban and Rural. A total of 30 focus group discussions with three groups; men, women and youths (mixed group age 14-24) and in-depth interviews with government and other partners were conducted. The findings include:
 - Involvement of both genders is one an effective way to combat malnutrition by the Triple E Method which includes (i) engaging the men (ii) empowering the women (iii) educating both men and women
 - There is a need to revise gender policies and ensure that the gender inequities are addressed as they have a bearing on nutrition across the lifecycle

- Establish specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals for malnutrition
- Integrate Gender Equality Movement in Schools (GEMS) to encourage gender parity, break gender based social norms and de-feminize nutrition.

(vi) In 2015, a **joint assessment** was conducted by the SUN Secretariat and SUN taskforce to **assess the effectiveness of district coordinating bodies** that have been in existence since October 2014. This assessment was carried out in collaboration with MoHS, SUN Secretariat, and District level representatives from the district health management teams. The aim was to determine progress, gaps and the way forward. 11 out of the 13 district coordinating bodies (Kono, Kambia, Port Loko, Moyamba, Bonthe, Bombali, Tonkolili, Koinadugu, Kenema, Bo, Pujehun, Kailahun and Moyamba) were assessed using a comprehensive tool with seven key areas: 1) Governance structure, 2) Coordination with government and other partners, 3) Advocacy, 4) Engaging communities and other stakeholders, 5) Innovation, 6) Fundraising, and 7) Opportunities. Performance in these areas was analyzed and, based on feedback from the assessment team, traffic light color codes were used with narrative summary findings, where red means room for improvement; yellow, developing competence, and green, high level of competence shown. An action plan was prepared to address emerging issues related to opportunities for the platform for sustainability, partnership and innovation. This assessment will provide the civil society platform the necessary information on strengths and gaps for district co-ordination bodies and the areas for capacity building to be incorporated in exit strategy plans for the project.

Innovations: With the establishment of the district coordinating bodies, there have been a number of innovations that have shown promise, confirming the effectiveness of the platform. Some examples of innovation are listed below:

- **Kono:** Established a community assessment team (CAT) for Ebola comprising of 60 youths from vulnerable communities who were responsible for monitoring porous border communities.
- **Kambia:** Provided counselling support to quarantined homes and developed a registration form for SAM/MAM cases when there was a shortage of birth registration forms.
- **Port Loko:** To resume uptake of health care services, support groups were established in communities where relations had deteriorated between community members and health workers.
- **Tonkolili:** Influenced the Paramount chief in Tane chiefdom to create and implement byelaws in March 2015 to ensure that pregnant women and lactating mothers attend clinic and have their children immunized.
- **Kenema:** Embarked on the use of community drama to disseminate messages on nutrition, immunization and teenage pregnancy and engaged the Police's Family Support Unit to visit schools and conduct health talks on preventing teenage pregnancy.
- **Bo:** Established chiefdom level taskforces and worked closely with health workers in their operational chiefdoms.

III. **Delays in implementation, challenges, lessons learned, and best practices:**

- **Delays in implementation:** The project experienced delays in the initial implementation stages in 2014 due to the EVD outbreak in the country that coincided with the commencement of the project (May 2014). The backlog of actions were carried forwarded to the first half of 2015 due to CSOs' engagement in Ebola recovery plans. This resulted in a delay in (i) the creation of the civil society platform to support SUN Movement and in (ii) capacity building activities.
- **Communication** is a major issue that cuts across coordination of the platform, for many reasons.

First, poor internet and mobile communication access at the district level which hampers timely information flow. To try to overcome this issue, a WhatsApp Group was established for members with easy mobile access. However with this tool documents and publications could not be shared. For national level programme updates, regular phone calls are made to partners to share the key information. Second, a poor information sharing culture within the country and timely reporting remains a key challenge. Although trainings are organized at the district level, the situation can only be resolved if there was a specific budget line for communication for district platform structures.

- **Organization versus platform priorities:** During monitoring visits, some district coordination bodies admitted to being overburdened by the platform activities. Although most said it has been a positive experience, they also talked of having to juggle activities for the platform with those of their individual organizations. This needs serious consideration as the platform grows and the commitment increases. Over time, platform and other key stakeholders involved in supporting this process will need to determine ways of resolving this issue if the platform is to be sustained.

Conclusion

The civil society platform has made strides in advocating for policy change and mobilizing communities for scaling up nutrition. As a united umbrella body, speaking with one voice, there has been growing recognition of its work, mission and vision within the country. With the governance structures established by the platform at national and district levels in the form of coordinating bodies, the hard-to-reach communities have been reached with a package of essential services. At the national level, the platform has been able to intensify advocacy efforts to influence policy change(s), foster strong partnerships at all levels, engage communities by linking with other networks to ensure that there is a space for civil society. Their voice is now being heard and over time they are being empowered to become catalysts for social change.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

Using the **Programme Results Framework from the Project Document / AWP**s - provide details of the achievement of indicators at both the output and outcome level in the table below. Where it has not been possible to collect data on indicators, clear explanation should be given explaining why.

	Achieved Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<p>Outcome 1: To have a coordinated civil society platform in Sierra Leone composed of civil society organizations that are effective, inclusive, integrate nutrition actions into their programs and contribute to the national priorities on nutrition as part of the SUN Movement</p> <p>Indicator: Civil society platform created and functional across Sierra Leone with linkages to district coordinating body by December 2015</p> <p>Baseline: No civil society platform</p> <p>Planned Target: At least 150 covering all districts</p>	<p>Overachieved: Over 180 civil society organizations, community based organizations including faith-based organizations and media partners have partnered to create functional civil society platforms spread nationally and across all the districts of Sierra Leone.</p>	<p>In 2014, due to the Ebola outbreak, the creation of the civil society platform was delayed. The platforms were set up only in 5 out of 14 districts comprising of 50 members. In 2015, the process was accelerated and 180 member's civil society platforms have been established in all districts. However all of them are not functioning optimally. This is why a 'no cost extension' up to 30 June 2016 was requested to complete the planned actions. In addition, 14 district coordinating bodies were created and linked to the civil society platform.</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 (implementing agency) quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.1.1: Joint civil society platform strategy developed by 2014</p> <p>Baseline: No strategy</p> <p>Planned Target: Joint civil society platform strategy developed</p>	<p>Partially achieved: Draft civil society platform strategy developed and shared with SUN Secretariat and finalized in 2015</p>	<p>This process was delayed due to the Ebola outbreak.</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.1.2: Civil society platform members trained to support implementation of national food security plan</p> <p>Baseline: Not trained</p> <p>Planned Target: All civil society platform members trained</p>	<p>Achieved: A total of 180 civil society members, 52 media representatives and 251 market women associations were trained on nutrition and health issues.</p>	<p>Training was delayed till after the launch of the National Food and Nutrition Security Implementation plan (NFSIP 2013-2017) in the second semester of 2015.</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Output 1.2: Increased gender empowerment in food and nutrition security programmes by 2015.</p> <p>Indicator 1.2.1: Produce robust evidence in successful approaches for gender involvement in nutrition through research</p> <p>Baseline: No country specific evidence available on gender nutrition relationship</p> <p>Planned Target: Research conducted and results used for strengthening platform actions</p>	<p>Achieved: Gender study completed in June 2016</p>	<p>Not prioritized in early 2015 due to other pressing deadlines of creation of civil society platform and district co-ordination bodies. This process was completed in 2016 including a research on gender and nutrition.</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>

<p>Indicator 1.2.2: Civil society platform to undertake mass sensitization for women's empowerment and rights of women Baseline: Nil Planned Target: Mass sensitization conducted</p>	<p>Achieved: Training of 251 market association women conducted to advocate for health and nutrition.</p>	<p>Progress as planned</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.2.3: Conduct training WS for civil society platforms members on women empowerment and rights of women. Baseline: Nil Planned Target: training organized</p>	<p>Achieved: Representatives of 180 civil society members were trained</p>	<p>Progress as planned</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Output 1.3: Civil society coordination mechanism established at national level to scale up nutrition by 2014. Indicator 1.3.1: National coordinator appointed and national secretariat set up Baseline: Nil Planned Target: National coordinator appointed and national secretariat set up</p>	<p>Achieved: National coordinator engaged since 2014 and national secretariat is functional since 2014</p>	<p>Progress as planned</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.3.2: Mapping and data bank of civil society platforms engaged in nutrition specific and sensitive intervention developed. Baseline: Nil Planned Target: Mapping and data bank of civil society platform is available</p>	<p>Achieved: Mapping of the platforms engaged in nutrition specific and sensitive intervention completed and data bank available.</p>	<p>Progress as planned</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.3.3: Review, align and harmonize nutrition education materials. Baseline: Nil Planned Target: material organized and disseminated</p>	<p>Achieved: Material collection from different sources completed. Review completed</p>	<p>There were delays in the start-up, but the activities were completed in 2016.</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>
<p>Indicator 1.3.4: Dissemination of appropriate nutrition messages across all sectors. Baseline: Nil Planned Target: Harmonized messages are disseminated across all channels (including radio)</p>	<p>Achieved: Appropriate messages were disseminated through all sectors and radio.</p>	<p>Progress as planned</p>	<p>FOCUS 1000 quarterly reports.</p>

