

**Revised Working Paper GSO-SUN-5**

**Second Consultation on Conflict of Interest  
in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement**

**20 August 2013**

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## Introduction

The Global Social Observatory (GSO) is facilitating a multi-stakeholder dialogue for the development of a Guidance Note on Conflict of interest (COI) in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. This country-led movement brings together countries burdened by under-nutrition; a broad range of

stakeholders from multiple sectors in-country; and a global coalition of networks to contribute to significant and sustained reductions in undernutrition and improvements in the health of current and future generations. Based on a recognized need to develop a guidance note on COI for the SUN Movement in a neutral and interactive setting, the SUN Movement Secretariat is supporting this project, and the GSO has been working closely with the Secretariat and the facilitators of the SUN Networks to bring together a diverse group of participants. The GSO has invited participants associated with all five of the SUN Networks – governments that have affiliated themselves as members of the SUN Movement; as well as the networks representing civil society, business, donors and the United Nations system. In addition, the GSO has reached out to the global health professionals' associations.

The process for developing a guidance note on COI in the SUN Movement includes a series of three consultation events. The first consultation event was held in Geneva on 13 June 2013 to establish the way forward for the development of a guidance note. Distinctions were made between different types of COI and the broader arena of divergent policy interests, as well as the linkages to the SUN Movement's Principles of Engagement. Participants then reviewed the possible elements to include in a guidance note and tasked the GSO with preparing a draft outline for consideration at the next consultation event. The agenda, list of participants and meeting report from this first consultation event are posted on the GSO website at [www.gsogeneva.ch](http://www.gsogeneva.ch).

The second consultation event was held in Geneva on Thursday, 25 July 2013. Participants received a draft outline and a matrix of illustrative codes of conduct and COI policies in other organizations prior to the event. The purpose of this second event was to consider the draft outline and provide guidance for the GSO on what to include in drafting the actual guidance note. What follows is the meeting report for this event. As with the first event, the report is presented under the Chatham House rules. Only those individuals who are listed as presenters or responders on the agenda are identified with their remarks. All other summaries of the interactive dialogues are without attribution to any particular individual.

There will be a third consultation event on 16 October 2013, with the objective of finalizing the guidance note. Prior to that time, the GSO will prepare a draft of the guidance note, based on the building blocks identified by participants at the second consultation event, as well as the preliminary guidance from participants at the first event. This draft will be posted on the GSO website with opportunities for further comments and inputs. It will also be presented in a progress report from the GSO to the Lead Group in New York in September. An updated draft will then be presented to the participants of the third consultation event for final adoption. However, even then, the guidance note will be treated as a work in progress, to be used in a series of "enhanced learning events" that will be carried out by the GSO in 2014. A final report encompassing the guidance note and the learning exercises will be presented to the Lead Group in early 2015.

## The Opening Plenary

The second consultation event was held at the International Environment House in Geneva. Katherine Hagen, the GSO SUN Project Director opened the meeting with thanks for the arrangements made by the GSO President Deborah Vorhies, who is also the Managing Director of the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development. Ms. Vorhies welcomed the participants and explained that the role of the GSO is to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue in a neutral setting and to mobilize awareness and resources for collaboration among stakeholders in initiatives like the SUN Movement. The GSO appreciates the grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support this initiative with a consultation process for the development of a guidance note on COI.

During the opening plenary, participants heard remarks on behalf of two organizations participating in the SUN Movement's networks. Remarks were made by Sandra Aviles from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – which is part of the UN network - and Claire Blanchard from the Civil Society Network.

Sandra Aviles highlighted that the FAO seeks to maximize opportunities for improving nutrition throughout the food system by promoting and facilitating an enabling food and agricultural policy environment which can have a better impact on nutrition. This includes empowering local populations, focusing on policies that promote sustainability, fostering respect for the local environment and culture, and promoting an inclusive, rights-based and multi-stakeholder approach. For FAO, policy decisions regarding food and nutrition security are centred on the interests of consumers and food-insecure stakeholders involved in the agriculture value chain and food systems at risk from food insecurity and malnutrition. The challenges are to reconcile these interests with other objectives and interests such as those related to trade or national revenue generation. FAO's role is to assist Member States in navigating these types of complex situations and help them find appropriate solutions.

Claire Blanchard, recently appointed Coordinator for the SUN Civil Society Network, spoke about her role in reaching out to civil society groups and building a stronger network, with support from the global level but with an emphasis on the capacities and potential for civil society groups at the national and community levels to contribute to the Movement. Highlighting the co-benefits for all groups participating in the Movement, she discussed the importance of being inclusive, mutually accountable, and creating and fostering a culture of transparency. She noted that civil society is also at risk of COI, and also needs processes to manage COI. Transparency is key to this, to facilitate open communication and exchange of experiences within the civil society network as well as beyond. Partnerships will be one cornerstone of this Movement, although it is important to ensure that the process remains flexible and adaptable.

Katherine Hagen thanked Sandra Aviles and Claire Blanchard for their presentations and noted that they represent important parts of the SUN Movement. Representatives from the World Health

Organization spoke at the first consultation event, and it is useful for SUN stakeholders to get to know each of the participating organizations better. All stakeholders in the SUN Movement seek to work together, in synergy, and the GSO is committed to facilitating the engagement (and the sharing of perspectives) among all stakeholder groups. Following participant introductions, Ms. Hagen welcomed everyone, encouraging them to be active in the *café politique* exercises that are planned for the day.

David Nabarro was then invited to share his insights on the role of this consultation process for the SUN Movement. He described how the SUN Movement had emerged out of the growing interest in raising the political awareness about the continuing problem of malnutrition, starting with the important Lancet series in 2008 and development of the SUN Framework for Action in 2009. The SUN Movement was launched in 2010 and has taken off as a voluntary and open community of stakeholders working in support of SUN Movement countries. It now has 41 governments who are committed to scaling up nutrition – all of whom are voluntary members of the Movement. The basic concept of the Movement is a recognition that chronic malnutrition or stunting has multiple causes. SUN country governments are committed to leading the way through the development of multi-stakeholder platforms, which bring people together from across sectors and stakeholder groups (civil society, the private sector, UN agencies and donors) in support of aligned and coordinated action to address undernutrition. In so doing, governments are looking to the Movement for clarity and transparency to facilitate the alignment of these diverse interests. The SUN Movement Secretariat is pleased that the GSO has taken on the task of developing a guidance note that can be used by SUN countries to encourage harmonious working of different stakeholders, and to prevent (and if necessary manage) conflicts of interest among them wherever they might arise. The first consultation event laid out the way forward, and this second consultation event is intended to identify what guidelines to include.

Katherine Hagen then gave a summary of what had been agreed upon at the first consultation event including definitions of COI and on linkages to the SUN Movement's Principles of Engagement. The basic COI definitions distinguish between individual and organizational COI, while participants also recognized the complexities of dealing with the differences between real, potential and perceived COI. Ms. Hagen described the learning process during this first event on linking COI to the SUN Principles of Engagement and to every stakeholder group in the SUN Movement. With regard to the SUN Principles, participants focused their discussions in particular on building on the principles of inclusiveness and transparency. She also described an additional principle regarding integrity that participants had discussed as an important foundation for any COI policy.

Ms. Hagen explained that in preparation for this second event, the GSO worked with the SUN Project Steering Committee to prepare a draft outline for a guidance note and matrix that was sent out to participants prior to this event. She then presented a basic framework for the draft outline encompassing Prevention, Identification, Resolving and Monitoring (PIRM) to serve as the basis for the *café politique* discussions. The first *café politique* exercise was to focus on policies and measures to prevent COI; the second, on identifying and resolving COI; and the final exercise on monitoring mechanisms for COI.

Plenary participants explored some of these points. One participant highlighted the need to frame the guidance note in a way that recognizes the importance of jointly working within the SUN Movement: managing COI is part of the process of building the relationships on which the Movement depends. Indeed, managing COI is part of a broader issue of establishing trusting and transparent working among stakeholders: the guidance note will play an important role in helping this to happen. The outcome of the first consultation event needed to be fully understood by the participants at this second event in order to appreciate the usefulness of the process to the SUN Movement. One participant questioned whether the consultation process was representative enough to be seen to be valid by all stakeholders. On a specific point with regard to the outcome of the first event as summarized in the draft outline, participants also expressed concern that the definitions of COI may be too complicated and too formal for the guidance note and that the outline itself, too academic and conceptual. They suggested that the guidance note needed to be practical and realistic, designed to serve as a reference document to be used at country level. Another participant praised the strategy of building on the SUN Movement's Principles of Engagement but suggested that the Principles did not address the concept of "mutuality" of commitments among stakeholders and that this should also be added to the mix, along with the addition of a specific principle on integrity.

In response to these discussion points, Katherine Hagen emphasized that the SUN Movement itself is a coalition of stakeholders working together for common goals in a flexible, inclusive and open manner, held together by common principles of engagement. In the same spirit, the consultations are styled as an informal process designed to produce a useful reference document which can serve as a resource for stakeholders: it will not be a formal policy statement. It will serve its purpose if it is helpful for SUN governments and other participating stakeholders. It will not be a legally binding document. Nonetheless, even in this informal setting, Katherine explained that the GSO is working closely with the SUN Networks in bringing a representative mix of people to the consultation events. The GSO is consulting with a representative Steering Committee drawn from all of the SUN Networks and also directly with the co-facilitators of each Network to ensure diversity of participation from all groups. With the governments, too, the invitation has been extended to all participating Governments. The GSO also supports an inclusive process and welcomes others to participate in the exercise, such as representatives of global health professional associations. There will be further opportunities for others to participate, both through the posting of progress reports on the GSO website and through a progress report to the SUN Lead Group in September. And finally, the guidance note itself, which she said would be finalized at the third consultation event in October, will serve as the basis for a continuing series of "enhanced learning exercises".

At the conclusion of these helpful discussions on the background for this consultation event and the purpose of the overall project, participants were briefed on the "*café politique*" methodology of informal brainstorming at tables in short segments of 20 minutes each, with a facilitator and note-taker at each table, and rotating among three tables with different topics. The cycle was to be repeated three times on different topics as reflected in the agenda, one cycle before an informal buffet lunch and two cycles following the lunch. A wrap-up plenary session was to follow.

## Cycle One on Prevention and Mitigation of Conflicts of Interest

In Session One of the *café politique*, participants were asked to consider potential elements of COI prevention for the guidance note based on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and integrity. These were the three principles that had been identified as most important for a COI guidance note at the first consultation event.

There were a number of common elements that were brought forward, starting with the importance of the need for clear and simple definitions of COI as well as further clarification on the meaning and application of the Principles of Engagement and any additional “Guiding Principles”. It was also suggested that there should be a process within each SUN Network for current and potential stakeholders to communicate the relevance of the Principles of Engagement to situations involving COI, as well as any other Guiding Principles that the consultation process might identify as relevant for COI purposes within the SUN Movement. Recognizing, furthermore, the links of prevention to monitoring, participants observed that monitoring should be implemented from the beginning and continue throughout the process of managing COI, since good monitoring processes are a major part of prevention. Overall, however, the groups recognized that just being transparent, inclusive, acting with integrity or abiding by the other SUN Principles of Engagement doesn’t necessarily solve the issue of COI.

### Transparency

At the *café politique* table addressing the principle of transparency, participants reiterated its importance as a means of bringing trust, accountability and inclusivity to the Movement. Many participants noted that transparency should be continuous and engaging and that there should be a process for defining what transparency means in relation to COI in the SUN Movement and who/how/when one should be transparent. Several suggestions were made about defining transparency in terms of stakeholders’ interests to distinguish where they converge in SUN Movement activities, where their interests overlap and where divergence of interests might contribute to real, potential or perceived COI. Certainly, said many of the participants, project-specific transparency is important.

Participants discussed the point that transparency also operates in the other direction – with governments communicating a clear vision and providing information to participating stakeholders about what is expected of them, as well as transmitting information about budgets and resource allocations. This includes, said some participants, transparency about the scientific basis for evidence-based interventions. The point was also made that ALL stakeholders should be held to account, with full disclosure of the criteria used for gathering and evaluating data when claims are being made about the impact of particular nutrition-specific interventions.

The following are some mechanisms that participants suggested in preventing COI through transparency:

- Electronic tools such as a public register of activities and stakeholders on country websites
- A transparency checklist (e.g. adapting one from Transparency International)
- Power and process mapping for decision-making
- Develop government capacity to have effective leadership mechanisms to promote and implement transparency
- Clear and current data, particularly on nutrition, as evidence for activities and recommendations so that the public knows there is no hidden agenda. Evidence will help determine priorities for investment and policy.
- Training and capacity building on current data/evidence on nutrition and improved communication on issues surrounding the Movement and stakeholder interests.

## Inclusiveness

The discussions in all three cycles of the table addressing “Inclusiveness” expressed a strong preference for stakeholders in the SUN Movement to have a positive approach to partnerships starting with an assumption of inclusiveness rather than defining exclusions. This led to discussing an important first step of defining the common interests of the Movement among all stakeholders. These may be overlapping interests with a common intersection. Highlights in the discussions included the point that all stakeholders should think strategically, and plan from the beginning to be receptive to the inclusion of other stakeholders. In particular, each stakeholder should proceed with an open mind to listen to and learn from the various perspectives of others in the Movement. An additional message raised by many of the participants was that there is an important collective added value of partnerships. Nonetheless, the discussions also included concerns about balancing the value of inclusiveness with the rightful expectation of adherence to the Principles of Engagement and any other Guiding Principles. For this to work, participants observed that there should be strategies for engagement in place to help guide countries, including appropriate rules and processes on how to achieve a balance of principles with interests.

Because participants noted that the SUN Movement is a dynamic process, another important point of discussion was that specific objectives can vary from activity to activity and can change over time. While the SUN Principles of Engagement support inclusivity, partners themselves may have very different objectives and roles within the various parts or initiatives of the Movement. Therefore, any guidance on COI should recognize that there may be a need for different combinations of stakeholders on different projects and for procedures to be available for stakeholders to excuse themselves from deciding about or participating in specific projects if their objectives are not in line with those of the SUN Movement. Ideas for facilitating this kind of varied partnering included flexibility about the timing for stakeholders to join the Movement and about including some groups but not all groups in different activities. On the other hand, participants also urged attentiveness to avoiding setting up too many barriers to joining or participating in the Movement. Another interesting but very different issue raised during the discussions had to do with the deterrent effect of activities being dominated by one particular organization.

## Integrity

When discussing prevention of COI based on the principle of integrity, participants stated that it was first important to have a clearer understanding of what integrity means. Based on a general understanding of the concept, participants observed that integrity relates to the quality of being honest, having strong moral principles, and acting in ways that uphold high standards of behavior. Many participants appreciated that the SUN Movement should include an affirmation of the importance of integrity as one of the guiding principles for addressing potential conflicts of interest. This also means that the SUN Movement itself should have a clear set of objectives that everyone can understand and commit to. To ensure that integrity is maintained, decisions should be made through a transparent process, be justified, and able to stand up to the highest level of scrutiny.

The discussions on integrity also touched on the importance of honest and open communication as an important way through which stakeholders can exhibit their integrity within the SUN Movement and that communication is a key to building trust. Participants in the discussion noted that all stakeholders should be clear and transparent about their commitments within the Movement and should be able to rely on this from others in the Movement. They also noted the importance of self-assessment within and across stakeholder groups, although this was certainly not seen to be all that is required to ensure integrity. Beyond this, there needs to be a space for open and balanced dialogue (informal as well as formal) among the stakeholders in the countries and even within the Networks. In fact, the suggestion was made that the SUN Networks can play an essential role in adopting the processes for identifying how stakeholders are expected to act with integrity, including keeping the commitments they have made to the SUN Movement.

The discussions at this table on integrity tended to recognize that disclosure of information about financial or professional interests that may lead to COI is an important component of both transparency and integrity and can serve a key role in preventing COI. Participants expressed concerns about the complexity of disclosure, including questions of who should disclose interests to whom, when it is appropriate to disclose, and how disclosure should be conducted. Some participants believed that transparency/disclosure needs to be balanced with costs and issues of privacy and that it should not be subject to pressures from external bodies. Some participants also proposed that it is important to ensure that disclosure should be limited to only the degree that is required and relevant to the project. Participants also suggested having a checklist, tool-kit or menu of options with some core elements for disclosure to help guide countries as they themselves determine what kinds of disclosure may be appropriate.

## Cycle Two on Identifying and Resolving Conflict of Interest

Session Two of the *café politique* focused on the tools and mechanisms that would be useful for Identifying and Resolving COI. Building upon the components that were outlined in the draft guidance note, participants discussed various mechanisms and approaches that might be taken to identify and resolve instances of COI. Specific issues were selected in the areas of food fortification,

breastfeeding and complementary foods, and nutrition-sensitive interventions to facilitate the discussion, but the issues were only selected to help identify possible elements for identifying and resolving COI in different settings. They were not intended to be debates on the issues themselves. Participants focused on what governments might consider as they identify and resolve COI in these areas. This included ideas about the mechanisms that may be needed to help distinguish between COI and diverging interests.

### **Food Fortification**

The participants at this table started with an appreciation for decision-makers to adopt and implement clear, technical guidelines for gathering and evaluating independent, scientific, evidence-based information on the positive and negative benefits of particular specific interventions in areas such as food fortification. In addition, participants suggested that governments needed to put in place mechanisms to establish the driving factors behind different positions on the benefits of particular interventions. Participants thought it would be useful to provide governments with risk assessment tools and examples within the guidance note to help them make informed decisions when confronted with potential COI in these kinds of situations. Some participants also suggested the possible benefits of providing balanced and impartial technical advice from third party agencies. The discussion highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacity and leadership of the governments, and the cooperation and collaboration of evidence-based knowledge sharing within and between the SUN Networks. Some in the group even discussed the creation of a continuous and dedicated capacity building team to give credibility to the processes for identifying and resolving COI within the SUN Movement

### **Breastfeeding and Complementary Foods**

The issue of breastfeeding and complementary foods in disaster contexts stimulated discussion on issues around conflict of interest in fragile contexts. Participants were asked to consider where COI may occur, who would be responsible for managing COI and what tools and mechanisms can be used to identify and resolve COI. Several participants pointed out the importance of having predictable and transparent systems in place in advance of emergencies. It was suggested that governments should ensure that existing national and international policies and standards on codes of conduct and best practice regarding nutrition interventions (in emergencies and elsewhere) are known, articulated and implemented. These policies should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Many participants observed that it would be helpful for governments to have guidance on identifying the kinds of situations where there may be different claims with potential COI implications regarding the benefits of different types of complementary foods. The establishment of a focal point representative or committee with expertise on the issues and codes/policies surrounding nutrition was mentioned. Several participants thought this representative or committee could serve as a point-of-reference for nutrition which could communicate or negotiate between stakeholders on these issues.

More generally, the discussion covered the topic of countries having clear objectives when working with stakeholders so as to eliminate any underlying potential or perceived COI in these kinds of situations. It was noted that Governments should ensure that stakeholders are committed to and actually adhere to the Principles of Engagement and any other Guiding Principles that may be appropriate – including compliance with the Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. One suggestion included engaging in a positive and promotional campaign in support of breast feeding. More broadly, other suggestions from participants included developing criteria for countries to assess the suitability of new partners; the need for the government to adopt and implement clear guidelines; to carry out transparent decision-making processes; to include strong nutrition management; and to anticipate future COI possibilities with needs assessment plans.

It was emphasized by many participants that countries should work in a way that put women and children at the center of their nutrition policies. Some participants raised the point that creating appropriate markets for complementary foods and an environment that is conducive to choice by the consumer should not be inherently seen as COI. This is an area where governments have a role in directing their interventions and regulatory policies. Another issue that was raised was the possibility of COI revolving around donor pressures. In both instances, there should be a greater focus on capacity enhancement at country level to prevent donors or others from unduly influencing any markets or agenda setting, which could lead to COI.

### Nutrition-Sensitive Interventions

In the sessions devoted to the role of facilitating nutrition-sensitive interventions in sectors outside of the nutrition sector, participants emphasized that collaboration among sectors is paramount. While this is an area where government policies may legitimately differ from sector to sector, there are COI ramifications to consider as well. Many participants expressed the view that governments should have policy dialogues with all relevant sectors to encourage a better understanding of how they can and should integrate nutrition-sensitive policies and interventions in their programmes. Furthermore, many of the participants said that all sectors should be aware of the actual impact on nutrition that their policies and actions in these other sectors might have. Individual policies and actions should be viewed through a nutrition lens which focuses on how to increase the positive effects of nutrition, reduce the negatives and avoid harm. The impact of interventions should even be monitored to ensure correction takes place when necessary

The discussion on this topic also moved to the COI implications of choosing between food security and healthy nutrition. While participants did have a lively debate on what should take priority – food security at the household level or access to healthy nutrition – they agreed that poor households should be empowered to have both. This means a significant role for introducing nutrition-sensitive policies in agriculture and other sectors. Some participants said that governments should be encouraged to adopt and implement clear policies to address the determinants of malnutrition, preferably at the community level. Such policies should consider the comparative advantage that all stakeholders within the country can bring to the overall national effort, including civil society organisations and the private sector, and put in place appropriate regulatory frameworks to enable their participation. These kinds of strategies are opportunities for

trust-building about multi-stakeholder collaboration even as they also merit attention to identifying and resolving the possibilities of COI. Two additional messages of note are first, that advocates of improved nutrition should also be sensitive to the legitimate priorities of other sectors (i.e. the sensitivity lens should be applied in both directions) but second, that divergent policies among sectors might themselves constitute a conflict of interest.

## Cycle Three on Monitoring and Accountability of Conflict of Interest

In Session Three of the *café politique*, participants built upon ideas from the previous session as well as the draft Guidance Note to consider what tools and mechanisms would facilitate monitoring and accountability related to COI within the SUN Movement. The following points were raised:

### Monitoring

Participants in each group emphasized the significance of monitoring as a key component in all aspects of prevention, identification, resolution and managing COI. Participants underscored the importance of ensuring that monitoring occurs at every stage of COI management. It was noted that Governments prefer to rely on existing mechanisms rather than create new ones. These can include such mechanisms as integrating COI monitoring into regular audit mechanisms, internal review processes and regular reporting within each of the SUN Networks or government updates through the regular country calls with the SUN secretariat. Several participants also suggested having continuous dialogues between stakeholders. It was also mentioned by many that external review is a critical tool in managing COI that can lead to faster and more efficient COI management than internal review.

### Accountability

Many participants felt it was important to have guiding principles to ensure accountability. It was mentioned by several that the guiding principle of “Do no harm” should be visible in all actions. Participants also brought forward the concept of evidence-based practices and partnerships. It was suggested that data should serve as the underpinnings of national policies on nutrition as well as the criterion for establishing accountability measures in partnerships. Greater coordination and dialogue between health ministers and statisticians was one idea for delivering impartial and accurate data. Participants also pointed out that sometimes the issue is not the lack of data but rather delivery and analysis of data. Thus, there needs to be greater coordination and synergy between evidence-based practices and information management systems delivering the data.

As for accountability among the stakeholders, participants discussed the importance of disclosure as a means of ensuring accountability. Several options were mentioned. National ethics committees might be encouraged to include oversight on accountability. Some participants observed that using disclosure forms with annual reporting and appraisals may be necessary to safeguard accountability within the SUN Movement. Another alternative suggested in the discussions was for an

“Accountability Framework” listing stakeholder commitments and public reporting with consequences if stakeholders deviate from their commitments. Finally, it was mentioned that budget evaluation and costing of national plans was important in ensuring accountability. This is especially true of donor funding where there is a common pool of money. Proper and transparent budget plans are important in reducing bias, and stakeholders should be encouraged to cost their specific actions within the nutrition action plan. In this regard, some of the participants further remarked that surveys about impact of specific interventions and other evidence-based information might not be reliably impartial unless there are mechanisms in place to monitor the data and investigate possible biases in the sources.

### Global and National Structures

Participants discussed the importance of ensuring and enhancing global and national governance and coordination among partners. Many participants suggested that stronger management of COI should be a priority at all levels of the SUN Movement, from local to international. One representative mentioned using mediation processes to resolve conflict of interest as it arises. Another participant suggested that national ethics committees should be strengthened, or established if not present.

There were discussions on the need for greater and stronger efforts to align donor interests with national policies. Some participants added that there is a need for more coordination among all stakeholders, not just donors with governments. Additionally, many participants felt it was important for the SUN Movement to provide governments with technical assistance and resources when there is a need for it. One such possibility would be for the SUN Movement Secretariat to receive inquiries about COI and to establish a referral mechanism for a neutral third party to review such inquiries.

### Capacity Building

Many participants emphasized the importance of capacity building at the national level. These participants felt that it was important to develop strategies and strengthen government capacity to deal with the varying degrees of COI urgencies. As resource limitations pose a major problem for countries, several participants felt that it is important not to create more processes than necessary but rather to build on existing structures, processes, and policies. The importance of facilitating cross-learning between SUN countries based on successful experience and best practiced was underlined. It is important to keep the process simple and easy for countries.

Additionally, it was mentioned that guidelines should be clarified and available on how to identify COI, either through examples or establishing criteria for COI. One example that was mentioned was the option of establishing an online forum or learning platform to serve as a continuous reference tool which would be accessible to all stakeholders of the SUN

Movement. This “reference tool” could be used as a means of sharing knowledge, best practices, advice and feedback. Occurrences of COI can also be shared on this platform/forum as a means of learning how countries are dealing with COI.

## Closing Plenary

At the closing plenary, the three facilitators gave summaries of the afternoon sessions on identifying, resolving and monitoring of COI. In response, David Nabarro gave some closing remarks which emphasized that the involvement of all SUN Networks is key for the success of this process. He commended the Networks for the considerable progress they have already made and noted that they are increasingly getting stronger in their ability to support the SUN Movement. He also complimented the participants coming from the governments with their responsibility as focal points, as well as those from civil society, business, donors and UN agencies who have all been so engaged in this exercise.

In terms of the results from the day’s interactive dialogues, the following summarizes Mr. Nabarro’s suggested key take away points:

- At the country level, it is the daily business of governments to align multiple interests and to prevent and manage COI that may arise. In multi-stakeholder ways of working there will always be a perception that divergent interests are damaging or constitute a COI, but it is important to be alert and to distinguish between the two. Therefore there is a considerable obligation on the SUN Movement Secretariat and this process to provide meaningful guidance and support to SUN Focal Points.
- It may be useful to consider changing the title of the outcome document from the “COI Guidance Note” to a “COI Reference Note” and to build a catalog of case studies to illustrate “good practices.” The aim should be a document that can be referred to in order to help resolve differences.
- This Reference Note should be written with the view that it would be a fluid document, to be updated on a regular basis as needed.
- The Reference Note/Guidance Note, whatever it is called, has to be clear, simple and accessible, taking complex issues and presenting them as simple principles.
- We need clear principles rather than instructions as principles are easier to apply to different situations. They can help practitioners find their way through the challenges. But principles need to be understandable. People should be at the centre and a problem exists if their interests are undermined.
- Definitions are useful when they have very clear meaning for managing COI. Full disclosure and transparency are key elements of what we mean by managing COI. However, establishing the levels of trust to achieve this goal is difficult.
- External capacity reviews to get neutral opinions from a neutral third party are useful. This can be done through an online mechanism.

- It is necessary to find better ways to easily explain the SUN Movement. We are building a circle of trust that continues to grow.

In the closing discussions, participants endorsed the idea that SUN is understood to be a process that encompasses the “we” and not just a gathering of individuals. All networks are indeed getting stronger. Participants noted the challenge of working with governments to raise the level of their commitments and the need for reinforcement of global interest to support higher-level commitments. There was also merit in adding a new network at the global level to include the health and social work professionals, with appreciation noted regarding the participation at this event of a representative from the International Council of Nurses.

In closing the meeting, Katherine Hagen expressed her thanks to all for their constructive participation and provided a quick overview of next steps. All participants would receive a meeting report, and all were encouraged to mark the next consultation event on 16 October 2013 in their diaries. Continuity and inclusiveness of participation are important for the consultation process. The GSO will also prepare a draft Guidance/Reference Note and will encourage participants and anyone else to submit comments to the GSO in the course of the following weeks. The draft note will be incorporated into a progress report to present to the Lead Group meeting in New York in September and will be further revised before being presented to participants at the third and final consultation event in October.