

**REPORT ON CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM ENHANCED LEARNING EXERCISE
FOR THE CONSULTATION PROCESS ON ENGAGING IN THE SUN MOVEMENT
FOR SCALING UP NUTRITION: PREVENTING AND MANAGING CONFLICT OF
INTEREST HELD IN ACCRA ON 1-2 APRIL 2014**

1. Introduction

This report highlights some of the major conclusions drawn from a workshop on Enhanced Learning Exercises for the Prevention and Management of Conflict of Interest in support of the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, which was held in Accra from 1-2 April 2014. It covers the participants, methodology, working documents and conclusions drawn.

2, Participants

The participants mainly came from Ghana while there were two and three from Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire respectively. They were diverse and consisted of representatives from the UN system, donor, civil society, business, academic and research networks, nutrition champions, government, focal points, SUN Secretariat and Global Social Observatory.

3. Methodology

There was a power-point presentation of the phases or stages of the policy framework on conflict of interest as contained in the Reference Note and Toolkit, which was followed by a panel discussion. Thereafter, participants worked in small groups to which they were divided on the first day of the workshop. There were four groups (A, B, C & D) with each group containing a mix of representation for balanced discussion. The groups reported back to the plenary sessions. The discussions at both the plenary and group sessions were vibrant, frank and productive.

4. Working Documents

There were three working documents as follows:

- i. Global Social Observatory: Engaging in the SUN Movement: Preventing and Managing Conflicts of Interest – Reference Note (March 2014);
- ii. Global Social Observatory: Reference Note: Engaging in the SUN Movement: Preventing and Managing Conflicts of Interest – Executive Summary (March 2014); and
- iii. Global Social Observatory: The SUN Movement Toolkit for Preventing and Managing Conflicts of Interest (March 2014)

5. Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be gleaned from the workshop. They are categorized as follows:

5.1 Conclusions on the scope of the Reference Note and Toolkit

The Reference Note and Toolkit were found to be very useful and important in preventing, identifying, managing and monitoring conflict of interest. Of particular importance are the 10 SUN Principles of Engagement, which have been emphasized in the literature on good governance and ethics. Their internalization by all stakeholders is crucial. However, the Reference Note and Toolkit are not to replace existing national and international laws, codes and tools; rather they are to complement and strengthen them.

5.2 Conclusions on revising the Reference Note and Toolkit

The Reference Note and Toolkit have not taken into account issues on financial auditing and management oversight guidance as well as the protection of whistleblowers which are key in dealing with conflict of interest. Furthermore, the policy framework as it now stands, does not make capacity development a cross-cutting issue in the four phases or stages, namely, (a) prevention; (b) identification; (c) management; (d) monitor conflict of interest. Accordingly, in the revision of the Reference Note and Toolkit, there is the need to include financial auditing and management and the protection of whistleblowers. In addition, the framework should become a policy cycle and not a framework, which will make conflict of interest a continuous and never ending process. This will also make capacity development cross cutting in the four phases of conflict of interest. Another area of revision is to distinguish conflict from conflict of interest. Conflict is a product of social interaction and is about disagreement and differences. In some cases, conflict is beneficial. However, conflict is not an ethical issue while conflict of interest is, because it involves compromising primary interests with secondary interests and therefore not promoting the public, group or organizational interests.

5.3 Conclusions on implementing the Reference Note and Toolkit

The implementation of the Reference Note and Toolkit is dependent on the context of each country, political system, economic and socio-cultural factors given the diversity of each country. They should not be a “one-size-fits-all” but rather adapted to suit the peculiar circumstances of each country. Knowledge and awareness creation of the issues involved in conflict of interest are also important for all stakeholders at the local, regional and national levels. These are important especially given that the implementation of issues around conflict of interest largely happen at the local level, where alas, knowledge and awareness are either lacking or inadequate. Educational materials and a vigorous and coordinated public education programme will develop and promote a culture of dealing with conflict of interest in African countries.

5.4 Conclusions on Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest must be seen as an ethical issue. It is a wrong and detrimental phenomenon that undermines efforts to reduce malnutrition by governments in Africa. Participants saw conflict of

interest as the incompatibility between primary and secondary interests which does not inure public, group or institutional interest and action. For effective prevention, identification, management and monitor of conflict of interest, efforts must be continuous and not one time. There must be a multi-stakeholder approach to fighting conflict of interest, which will promote a system of checks and balances. For achieving good results in preventing, identifying, managing and monitoring conflict of interest, ethical and effective leadership is needed at all levels including among civil society organizations. The enforcement of code of ethics or conduct, consistency in the application of rules and sanctions and insistence on transparency, accountability and disclosures (financial) are important in preventing and dealing with the incidence of conflict of interest. Apart from the formal ways of dealing with conflict of interest, it is possible to use alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADRM), which are being used in some African countries.

5.5 Conclusions on Nutrition

There are several stakeholders, public, private and international organizations which are involved in promoting nutrition. However, most of the times, the interests of these organizations are different and sometimes in conflict with each other. However, the common thing which has brought them together is the interest to promote nutrition but this is sometimes forgotten or lost as the institutions decide to fight “turf wars” and work in silos. In addition, governments in Africa do not seem to have taken nutrition seriously as the incidence of malnutrition is still high. These notwithstanding, the fact that governments, development partners and civil society organizations are discussing nutrition shows that there is some commitment and will to deal with the problem of malnutrition and therefore has become part of the policy agenda in Africa and other developing countries.

5.6 Other Conclusions

The case study was seen as “imaginary” and therefore not situated in a real life experience. Accordingly, some participants found it difficult to relate the case study to the Reference Note and Toolkit. It was therefore suggested that in future, scenarios must be presented.

6. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the workshop on Enhanced Learning Exercise for the prevention and management of conflict of interest has brought to the fore issues on nutrition and conflict of interest. They will therefore go a long way to deepen the understanding of participants and also contribute to ongoing efforts and interventions in both nutrition and conflict of interest.

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