



Experiences of the UNN-REACH Facilitators: Knowledge Brokering for Multisectoral Nutrition

- Preliminary Analysis -

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
KB	Knowledge Brokers
KI3	Knowledge for Implementation and Impact Initiative
MNO	Multisectoral Nutrition Overview
MSN	Multisectoral Nutrition
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition
SISN	Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition
SMS	Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Secretariat
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNN	UN [Nutrition] Network
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

“Knowledge brokers” (KB) are people or organizations specifically tasked with facilitating the access, interpretation, adaptation and utilization of information to meet the needs of implementers or policy makers. KB have been used in many sectors, notably the health sector, but are not yet widely or systematically used in the implementation of nutrition policies and programs. The present report seeks to address this gap as part of the Knowledge for Implementation and Impact Initiative (KI3).

The Knowledge for Implementation and Impact Initiative (KI3) was launched at the end of 2016 through a collaboration among the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Society for Implementation Science in Nutrition (SISN), with pilot funding from Sight and Life and the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food in Germany. Its overall aim is to strengthen the availability, access and utilization of implementation knowledge to accelerate progress in scaling up implementation and impact on nutrition, with a focus on SUN countries. KI3 has articulated five strategies for achieving this:

1. Strengthening of a Global Implementation knowledge Network, consisting of organizations capable of making implementation knowledge and experience available to SUN countries
2. Strengthening or creation of National Implementation knowledge Networks, for the same purpose
3. Creation of a tools matrix to simplify access to already existing implementation tools produced by various organizations
4. Strengthening the capacity, support and funding for practical implementation research at country and programmatic levels
5. Strengthening the capacity and support for knowledge brokering at national and sub-national levels

This report focuses on objective #5 although there are inherent links to objectives #1 and #2. It presents the preliminary analysis of interviews carried out with key actors who play knowledge brokering roles at country level. This report focuses on the United Nations Nutrition Network (UNN)-REACH facilitators, as part of a larger study that will include interviews with SUN focal points and other key actors who currently or potentially could play important knowledge brokering roles.

Objective

The objective of this study is to explore the extent to which the concept of knowledge brokering provides a useful frame for documenting and strengthening the current mandates, capacities and practices of the UNN-REACH facilitators (and, in the future, other strategically-placed actors). This is critically important because much of the day-to-day work of UNN-REACH facilitators involves intensive communication with and support of other actors in the system, such that the many valuable contributions of these facilitators remains largely invisible. Indeed, their success often requires that it remain invisible, by not taking credit for the work of these other actors. This has been documented in the literature on knowledge brokering in other sectors but is not yet widely recognized in the present context.

METHODOLOGY

The Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition (REACH) approach has been or is being carried out in over 20 SUN countries to date. It assists governments in low and middle-income countries to accelerate the scale-up of cost-effective interventions to improve nutrition. The approach involves deploying REACH facilitators in those countries (most often, an international facilitator and a national facilitator) to assist a wide range of planning, knowledge-generating and decision processes for improved coordination of multisectoral nutrition (MSN) (REACH, 2018). There are five United Nations (UN) agencies that are part of the UNN-REACH approach: WFP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO and IFAD. With that said, UNN-REACH facilitates efforts to engage other UN agencies in the greater UN Network, whose work contributes to nutrition outcomes.

A total of seven REACH facilitators were interviewed for this study (global-HQ, international and national). They were working in Burkina Faso, Chad, Lesotho, Mali, Myanmar, Zimbabwe at the time of the interview. They had previous experience as UNN-REACH facilitators in Mauritania and Mozambique and one had also served the UN Network/REACH Secretariat. **Annex I** presents interview guide. Several documents were also collected from those facilitators to provide background information on MSN in their respective countries (e.g. Multisectoral Nutrition Overview, National Nutrition Strategy) and to better understand their official role *vis-à-vis* their terms of reference (ToR) and/or workplan. The UNN-REACH Secretariat also shared background documents.

Coding and analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded with N-vivo. Coding was carried out by one member of the research team (MG) with frequent discussion with another member (IML), and sporadic discussion with the other member (DLP). The analysis was done inductively to code emergent themes, but also deductively to explore elements of existing KB frameworks. The first set of codes applied was for the following categories: five role domains of KB, strategies and challenges. The five role domains were based on a recent scientific paper and were: information manager, linking agent, capacity builder, facilitator and evaluator (Glegg & Hoens, 2016). To facilitate coding, we have created our own definition of knowledge brokering, with a facilitator lens directly relevant to UNN-REACH facilitators, in order to adapt the five role domains recognized in the literature to the specific context of MSN. This has taken the form of a logic model on knowledge brokering that is presented in **Annex II**. During the writing of this preliminary report the role domain called “facilitator” was changed to “backstopping agent” to avoid confusion with the term “REACH facilitator.” This new name came from a quote from the data and better describes the work involved in this particular domain.

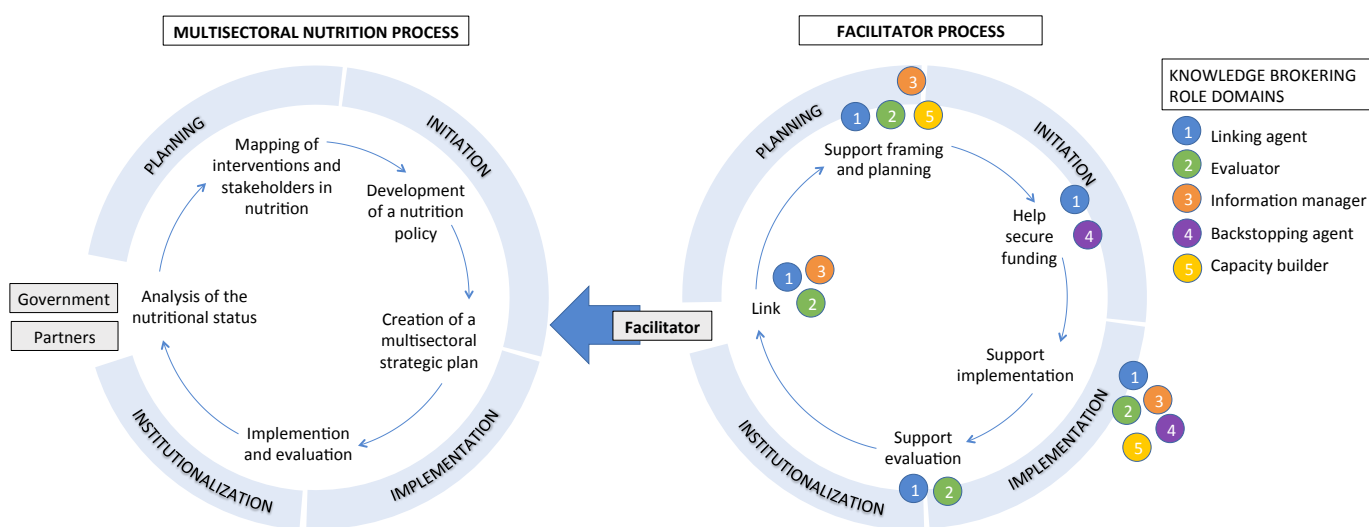
Another document used in this analysis is that by Maag et al., who created a set of indicators to assess the varied but often invisible contributions of knowledge brokers. These authors identified a broad spectrum of processes carried out by KB, including: identify knowledge needs and gaps; integrate relevant knowledge from various sources and from different knowledge holders; create common ground; enable mutual learning among the actors; facilitate the development of products

and their dissemination; organize various types of events; and support evidence-based policy and practice (Maag, Alexander, Kase, & Hoffmann, 2018) (p.2). Their knowledge brokering processes arranged along the stage of a generic program cycle inspired us to develop our own cycles, for MSN and for the work of the UNN-REACH facilitator.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

The preliminary analysis allowed us to propose a framework of knowledge brokering to advance MSN (Figure 1). It is composed of two processes (a MSN process and a facilitator process) and two different systems (the government and development partners). The work involved in those different processes and systems is described in Parts I-III below, followed by a description of the day-to-day work carried out by the facilitator (Part IV).

Figure 1: Emerging framework of knowledge brokering to advance multisectoral nutrition



Source: adapted from Glegg et al., 2016, & Maag et al., 2018

Part I: Multisectoral nutrition process

The analysis revealed that progress in the MSN cycle often starts with an analysis of the nutritional situation in the country. A mapping of the stakeholders and current interventions served to identify gaps and redundancies and potential priorities and provided a solid foundation for the subsequent work. Often this evidence was used to assist the development of a nutrition policy and implementation plan, and in other cases it helped advance such a policy or plan, with a focus on engaging all relevant parties.

Most of the countries have made significant progress in these stages, but less progress was noted at the implementation stage. As one UNN-REACH facilitator mentioned: *“there is no typical model that says: this is how the system can work together.”* The uncertainties and lack of guidance on how to carry out MSN seems to be responsible for parts of this challenge. Several reasons that hinder MSN were mentioned and are discussed below.

Lack of funding: Despite some countries having what was considered a good strategic plan, an actor said that there was no funding for implementation. Sometimes budget allocations did not reflect nutrition as a priority even with prior commitments having been made. UNN-REACH has a limited budget that is for nutrition governance and it cannot compensate for the lack of funding from government or other partners for implementation, and often has to leverage funding from other sources. For instance, one UNN-REACH facilitator mentioned having to be innovative and link with the emergency community to help them see that the work in emergency nutrition can contribute to development. At a more decentralized level, there is also a lack of funding that impedes communities to implement interventions. In certain circumstances, donors also come with funding and turn things upside down by having different priorities, which is a challenge for implementation. The frequent competition between agencies for resources (regional or national levels) was also mentioned as a difficulty.

Lack of capacity: There are very limited capacities to implement the multisectoral plans, both at the national and decentralized levels. A weak coordinating capacity and a lack of leadership makes activities donor-driven instead of being aligned with the government plan and among actors. There also are cases in which resources were not available to implement recommendations from a nutrition capacity assessment conducted in the country.

Decentralization: As many countries have experienced a decentralization process, there is a need to integrate nutrition in their plan and build their capacity to coordinate at lower administrative levels. The funding at this level can be a challenge. Advocacy skills are now required for partners to get funding because limited or no funding is available from the central level. One person reflected on a past experience playing the role of a UNN-REACH facilitator and shared her thoughts on the importance of decentralized levels for implementation:

“ ... if I ever had a chance to do REACH over again, or have a REACH phase two, I would very strongly done a couple of things. One is really decentralized as well really provide more support (at lower levels). I know we're doing this now in Chad and at some point REACH was doing it in Niger as well, is really to decentralize the whole strengthening nutrition governance. I mean that's where the activities are. And often there, I often sensed [...] there's even more of a willingness to work together at those decentralized levels. So I think there's real opportunities to bring nutrition governance down to those levels and strengthen there. And to really help them build the blocks of how now to operationalize these plans. [...] One (other) thing I would do differently or in a second phase is to have REACH facilitators in 1-2 key sectors such as health to ensure nutrition coordination and governance at that level.”

Government ownership and the commitment of the authorities: There is a disconnect between high-level commitment and the implementation level down to the grassroots. For a long time, the nutrition community emphasized the importance of getting political commitment in nutrition in order to make sure that it becomes a priority and that it leads to action on the ground. However, the experience shared by the UNN-REACH facilitators has been that it is not sufficient. Even if this

country got commitment from the highest authority of the country, challenges remain:

"...He is very proactive in setting that stage for - he is proactive in motivating investment in nutrition and all that - those efforts. So he launched it (the nutrition plan), the problem is that there is a gap on the implementation aspect. We are not going at the same pace as it should be. [...] So in terms of nutrition investment, and even the implementation capacity of both the strategy and all this that we have in place, we haven't reached where we need to address the problem..."

Commitment is required in the whole system (Pelletier et al., 2013), as emphasized above and as also recognized in the literature, but it appears unclear how it can be obtained.

Numerous actors with competing interests: There are multiple actors that come with money and many times there are multiple councils that deal with nutrition. This complicates the implementation because each has its own priorities and method or model. Things can be started one way and be turned upside down when a new actor with funds arrives. In a country where there are several consultative entities that exist and work with nutrition (e.g. in Burkina with nutrition, food security, social protection), there must be good synergy and UNN-REACH must work with all of them to be able to coordinate well. Otherwise it can be a challenge if UNN-REACH only has a relationship with one of them and one that appears less powerful. It is also a challenge as several ministries are related to each entity. In the same line, engaging a sector does not mean to engage one person of the sector, because you have to engage all the key departments related to the sector. It is also difficult for the UN agencies to come together and work as one because they are big agencies often isolated by themselves. Competition for funding can also arise, and then *"people tend to get secretive, and then they have their own channels of communication with their own connection, in their regional and global organizations."* Not acting "as one" can also impede work with the government, as mentioned by this facilitator:

"We are convincing government in this one - we come with so many faces, with our particular mandate and interest, and that slogan of "UN as one" is not really working." " We are not assisting government to see things collectively due to that competition."

Box 1: Dual identity for two systems

The UNN-REACH facilitators operate in the UN and the government systems, and at the interplay of those two. They described their role as a *"catalyst job between government and UN," "a strategic position whereby we act as a conduit between government and its UN and other partners,"* or *" a bridge between government and the network that is existing - UN network."* This facilitator draws an interesting picture to illustrate furthermore:

"I wear two heads when it's convenient, become a UN agent but not attached to any particular UN agency, but at the same time I'm seen as part of government to assist UN to reach its mandate as far as nutrition-related matters are concerned."

The MSN process is the result of demanding work done by the government in collaboration with partners. The UNN-REACH facilitators try to foster cohesion among all actors, and ensure progress within the MSN process. Their time is divided between the government and the partners as described below.

Part II: Facilitator work with the UN Network for Nutrition

For the UN nutrition network (UNN) to work efficiently with the government, the work of all the agencies needs to be well coordinated. The facilitator's role with the UNN thus consists of facilitating the coordination of UN agencies in nutrition. This involves a wide range of activities:

- Acting as an informal linking agent among the various UN agencies;
- Help to expand UNN membership to other UN agencies and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office;
- Identifying areas of convergence where all agencies can work together with target populations, in the same geographical area, and therefore with complementarity;
- Help develop the ToR for the UNN network for nutrition at the country level and help them become validated by the heads of agencies;
- Clarify the role of REACH within the UNN (e.g. convening meetings, facilitating contacts and coordination among agencies) to ensure it is well understood by all actors of the UNN;
- Clarify the comparative advantages for agencies working together;
- The facilitators have helped the UNN to develop an annual work plan, but it took different shapes in different countries. Typically, such plan is nominally evaluated and updated annually. The facilitators also helped the UN Network to develop a common strategy. To do so, they based themselves on an inventory of the actions of the UN agencies and on the comparative advantage of each agency. Then the facilitators elaborated a common agenda/strategy and sometimes even facilitated the formulation of UN Joint Programs on nutrition. This work was useful in the development of a common narrative for the UNN, validated by the chair of the Network; later, it served as a communication advocacy.

Another activity done by the facilitators was the setting up of meetings to bring people together around the table on a regular basis. This required the facilitators to check on the actor's schedule, to follow-up with them, and plan carefully so that the meetings were useful and actors agreed to invest time. It also involved preparing background materials and making sure that they are circulated to the relevant parties in advance of meetings, including those of the multi-stakeholder platforms. Those meetings were occasions to develop trust, to exchange information and as mentioned by this facilitator:

“to look out for opportunities to see what [actors] can do to complement each other's work as well as bring [themselves] in unison to help and support the country's efforts.” Periodically, an extended UN network meeting was organized, which included the SUN Civil Society Network as well as the SUN Donor Network.

As facilitators, UNN-REACH also tried to put the UN Network in contact with the other networks (civil society, parliamentarians, journalists etc). They found the points of contact, made them realize they had the same goals, and made them realize that it would be more impactful if they worked with more networks (e.g. inter-networking activity). Finally, the facilitators helped minimize the competition over resources/align the support to various ministries, by helping the UN agencies share information.

Part III: Facilitator work with the Government

A large part of the facilitators' work consists of assisting the government.

First, facilitators first and foremost often had to clarify the overall SUN architecture to governments and the role of REACH in supporting SUN. The facilitators also often presented the various networks, particularly the UN Network, and the role of UNN-REACH to the government. This helped to understand how various initiatives and actors linked together. They also presented the UNN joint work plan to the government.

Second, the facilitators brought support for special studies while ensuring ownership by all actors (e.g. analysis of the nutritional status, mapping of the interventions, UNN analytics and other studies such as the Cost of Hunger studies). To do so, UNN-REACH facilitated interactions for data collection and analysis or facilitated interviews when there was a lack of capacity. UNN-REACH also sat down bilaterally with the necessary ministries, agencies or organizations to bridge the gap where certain information was missing. It also helped finalize reports going in between the different stakeholders and consultations at national, district and community levels.

Third, the facilitators provided solid data to help others convince the government to act or help for the launch of big events for the presentation of data. In some cases, it also involved repackaging existing data (e.g. Multi-sectoral Nutrition Overview (MNO), MNO dashboard).

When a policy was developed, they supported the government to develop a multisectoral plan (what each sector can do) in line with recommendations. As an example, a multisectoral food and nutrition strategy was developed through multisectoral and multi-stakeholder cohesion and coordination. For that purpose, it is important to highlight an important relationship between the UNN-REACH facilitator and the SUN focal point. The latter is usually the UNN-REACH facilitator's primary counterpart and facilitators act as their advisors, supporting them in their role. The experiences varied greatly because SUN focal points vary from one country to the next in terms of seniority, capacity, convening power, resources, etc. Therefore, UNN-REACH facilitators had to adapt accordingly.

The difficult task of implementation comes next. The facilitators brought different sectors in the loop (e.g. bringing the Ministry of Planning and Finance because they are in charge of the budget, so to help them mobilize internal resources). They also helped translate the overall nutrition plan into more specific project plans, to assist in mobilizing funds and enabling costing.

Facilitators also assisted in the creation of a structure for coordinating the multisectoral approach in nutrition. They helped the development of a multisectoral platform to facilitate the exchanges between networks and the understanding of each other's role and activities.

As facilitators, UNN-REACH also participated in capacity assessment, using the UNN-developed tool, and the day-to-day capacity building. This involved capacities for advocacy, as well as coordination and efforts to mainstream nutrition into relevant sectors.

The facilitators also translated/shared the plan and helped integrating the plan at the decentralized level. This was done through the creation of a document for capacity building/a guide, and the sharing of the experience of pilot communes.

Finally, the facilitators helped the government to evaluate and report about the implementation of the multisectoral plan at a variety of venues and forums. The creation of a common result framework and of a monitoring and evaluation system helped actors doing so.

Part IV: Knowledge Brokering

Throughout all these activities, and as illustrated in **Figure 1**, the facilitators wear various forms of a KB hat. Glegg et al. developed a framework to better classify the functions of the KB. They have identified and described 5 role domains: i) linking agent, ii) evaluator, iii) information manager, iv) facilitator, and v) capacity builder. We took a UNN-REACH facilitator lens to describe the functions adapted to the MSN context, and based on the data collected (see **Table 1**). Thus, to avoid any confusion, we replace the term "facilitator" used by Glegg et al. by the term "backstopping agent". Various quotes are also presented to illustrate how the facilitators are fulfilling knowledge brokering roles through their work.

The Diverse Forms of Knowledge Brokered by UNN-REACH facilitators

One important type of knowledge used by the UNN-REACH facilitators is related to the landscape in nutrition. Considering that it has become quite complex, many actors have difficulties to understand the big pictures and the links between various organizations, strategies and actors; thus, UNN-REACH facilitators helped to shed light on this information. For example, in Burkina Faso, at first, the government had "*a hard time understanding who does what, REACH, SUN, and what was the role of REACH, what was the difference between REACH and UN?*" Terms of reference helped make it clear even for the UN agencies. In Zimbabwe, some actors had misconceptions about each other so the national facilitator helped deconstruct and explain it. In Mozambique, with the early stages of UNN-REACH expansion, UN agencies did not understand clearly the role of UNN-REACH as a linking agent. When the role of UNN-REACH is not well understood, the facilitator can have difficulties to access some actors (UN leaders, government, donors), or the expectations of the actors about UNN-REACH work can be very high.

A second form of knowledge results from various UNN-REACH exercises (using the UNN-REACH tools) to create documents that other actors could use as advocacy documents. Those include

among others: i) analysis of the nutritional situation; ii) mapping of the nutrition activities – stakeholder analysis; and iii) dashboard. These various forms of knowledge allowed other actors to: i) advocate on how important it is to bring down the stunting rates [for example], how high the rates are; ii) advocate at the sector level so that, at the time of revisions of their policies, nutritional objectives are taken into account; iii) sensitize the sector level when they begin the development of the strategic plan, so that they can participate and bring their contribution; and iv) advocate for funding (e.g. with the donor platform in Zimbabwe).

Advocating for the UNN-REACH approach itself also is required on a regular basis, and "*often facilitators find that they have to even on a yearly basis, sometimes, start all over again and explaining the value of the work and what they're doing and trying to get that buy in [from the government].*"

A third type of knowledge used is experiential. Facilitators shared the experience of other countries to help avoid challenges. For example in Mali, when actors began the mapping exercise, the facilitator shared the Burkina Faso experience with this exercise, allowing them to anticipate all the challenges related to the various steps. International documentation was also shared with in-country actors. The UNN-REACH approach involves formalizing the exchange through monthly facilitator calls and annual UNN-REACH facilitator meetings. Finally, a fourth form of knowledge is functional, meaning knowledge of how to coordinate and advance MSN in general.

Table 1: The Five Role Domains

Role domains	Examples of function	Quotes from facilitators
1) Linking agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Connect and foster trust and relationships between people and organizations with overlapping interests (e.g. gvt implementers, policy makers, dev. partners, researchers) -Identify/engage partners -Coordinate interactions among stakeholders to cultivate “shared agendas” and information sharing -Strengthen and sustain engagement in the process -Elaborate/revise plans 	<p>"Before doing this joint strategy, REACH supported stocktaking of the actions of UN agencies. So what is each agency doing in the context of nutrition at the country level? Are there redundancies of activities with agencies? Are they concentrated in the same areas? Are they scattered? And now the retreat activity will allow us to say how we can intervene in a complementary way and synergy, put the efforts together. "</p> <p>“We try to put the UN network in contact with the other SUN networks, to find out which are the points of contact. Because we realized that often the UN network has its work plan, the civil society network has its work plan, and when we look for ... especially in advocacy, they have the same goals. So we try to say, "You have the same goal, try to work together."</p>

Role domains	Examples of function	Quotes from facilitators
2) Evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess the local context (political, economic, regulatory) -Evaluate linkage and exchange networks -Continuously assess the status of implementation in all sectors and at all levels, through formal and informal means 	<p>"The first step of our activities is to better understand the context. The context especially of nutrition, including all determinants etc. For this, REACH has developed tools. We have tools for analyzing the nutritional situation and we try to analyze what are all the causes, the determinants of malnutrition, especially in the area."</p> <p>"What I understand is that the mapping and all this, the analysis of the context, the situation, or what has been done, and what needs to be done in the country, this exercise that uses the current REACH tools is done comprehensively in the country."</p>
3) Information manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strengthen the availability, access and utilization of global and context-specific knowledge (platform) -Collect, review knowledge and identify gaps -Tailor knowledge to needs/contexts of target audience -Share the knowledge on broad or specific progress, and challenges, through formal and informal means in order to accelerate and sustain progress -Document and publish lessons learned 	<p>"As REACH facilitators, we receive a lot of information from the international level and therefore we regularly share with members of the network to update them, be it conferences at international level, documentation etc."</p> <p>"I know the experience [in this country] and I also I know the experience [in a neighboring country]. So when one has an initiative, I can talk to the other about it with the others. And it helps a lot. The fact that we have already done the exercise in another country, it allows us to go very quickly"</p> <p>When [this country] decided to do the mapping exercise, we tried to summarize the different stages of mapping, and also try to describe all the challenges encountered at each stage. So that allowed [the other country] to anticipate these challenges. Instead of experiencing them they anticipated and we could avoid a lot of errors, especially in relation to the quality of the data collected. So I think sharing experience in many countries is a very good thing."</p> <p>"Well, there is no funding to go to all the [districts]. It's a bit difficult, it's not possible. How can it be done? So we developed a document, a very simple module, easy to understand, which</p>

Role domains	Examples of function	Quotes from facilitators
		shows the priority interventions and how to integrate them in the plan, etc."
4) Backstopping agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advocate for greater funding or secure funding -Guide or support evidence-informed practice processes to assist knowledge users to integrate research, contextual and experimental knowledge into decision making or research processes -Address barriers to change -Address challenges and bottlenecks at individual, organizational and system levels 	<p>"We provide feedback, we make variations of the work plan, and if there is a blockage, a bottleneck, we present it to the network president (chair). So he can make the decision right away to unlock."</p> <p>"We really just support the government and the government goes to the front line of implementation. We follow the government and provide some backstopping. We just need to continue with the backstopping, and then facilitation, and coordination, and see if there are stumbling blocks. We identify those blocks and then the capacity assessment work that's going on we'll pick up those challenges and then hopefully we'll be able to address. "</p>
5) Capacity builder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enable communication across sectors and levels through the development of common language -Organize with others to build the knowledge and skills in all sectors and at all levels -Increase capacity for addressing challenges by leveraging network connections, and sharing experiences -Create opportunities for learning 	<p>"As we go along with all these exercises, confidence is gained within [the coordinating body] to see themselves as coordinators. They have the skills, slowly, to do all this, and hopefully, for example, mapping will be carried on for self-assessment in the near future by themselves without their consultants"</p> <p>"With all these competing demands, we were actually talking maybe we need to find ways of capacitating the district committees to be able to advocate for food and nutrition, to find space, to have a budget line. It means negotiating skills, advocacy, how to present the problem such that it's so compelling that it was just, "Oh, we must give them \$10,000 or whatever."</p>

REACH Facilitators through the lens of Knowledge Brokering

Before undertaking the interviews, a set of qualities for KB had been identified from a selected literature and a list of key attributes had been built. A comparison was done between the qualities of KB identified in the literature with the ones that the UNN-REACH facilitators themselves mentioned were essential to be a good UNN-REACH facilitator. Although the UNN-REACH facilitators used more varied and specific terms to illustrate what it takes to be a good facilitator, both sets of qualities are surprisingly similar. **Table 2** presents the similarities and **Table 3** presents the main differences and some noteworthy points are discussed below.

Table 2: Similarities in qualities of KB and of UNN-REACH facilitators

Qualities of KB*	Qualities of REACH facilitator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respect (seniority, reputation, authority) - Credibility (research, government) - Reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust between government actors and facilitator, and UN agencies and facilitator - Being a senior - Being accepted by all the actors - Knowing the language, the country context, the cultural sensitivity - Having a strategic position: "comes from the country, comes from the government, knows how to open the doors, how to communicate with the government"
Accessibility, responsiveness and flexibility for KB roles and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible - Open
Tact, diplomatic and mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being a great diplomat, being patient - Having a methodology to approach the actors - Moderate, modest way of acting that does not hurt people
Oral and written communication skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication skills - Having advocacy and communication techniques
Self-confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defending his vision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Networking skills and an existing network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having skills that can lead to consensus, acceptance, getting things done
Change management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowing all the people around the table - Having transparency
Problem-solving skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being able to analyse

* List of key attributes inspired from various sources: (Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, 2003; Catallo, 2015; Dagenais, Somé, Boileau-Falardeau, McSween-Cadieux, & Ridde, 2015; Dobbins et al., 2009; Hoens, 2018; Kislov, Wilson, & Boaden, 2017; Olejniczak, Kupiec, & Widawski, 2016; Phipps & Morton, 2013)

Importance of obtaining trust: In the work of KB and of UNN-REACH facilitators, trust is key and can be developed in different ways with different actors. Regarding the UNN-REACH approach, the actors must have trust in the facilitator so that the facilitator can bring them to work together and they can adhere to the whole process that he will try to implement. A trust is created more quickly between the government actors and the UNN-REACH facilitator, especially when this person sits within the government. In the early experience of REACH, the facilitators were often hosted by a UN agency, although this was not always the case. Nonetheless, a lesson learned has been to have the UNN-REACH facilitators sitting within the government. A trust is also easily created with the UN agencies, as mentioned by this facilitator:

"They have much more trust in the REACH facilitator to facilitate, coordinate activities. And better than if it is an agency that play the role of the chair or the focal point, so they always see a part taken [meaning that the others have their own interests, but not the REACH facilitator]. But if it's the facilitator, they have a lot more trust."

A trust is also created between international and national facilitators, and in a certain manner, this allows to link the two systems together because the national facilitator appears to be more closely operating in the government system when the international facilitator appears to be more closely linked to the UN system. It does not mean that there is a kind of exclusivity, but there seems to be an overall trend for some important work. It is also important to note that UNN-REACH does not just build relationships with government and the UN system, but it also involves working closely with donors and civil society.

The differences in qualities were not numerous but they are very important to better understand the role and perspectives of the UNN-REACH facilitators.

Table 3: Differences in qualities of KB and of REACH facilitators

Qualities of KB*	Qualities of UNN-REACH facilitator
- Credibility (expert on a topic)	- Being an expert on a process - Having basic knowledge about nutrition, to try to understand nutrition, but not necessarily being a nutritionist
	- Being neutral
	- Knowing to take the back seat
	- Mastering the tools (of the REACH approach)
	- Bringing to the finish line ("be prepared to pick up things, where your partners are not able to complete")

Expert on a topic vs expert on a process: KB typically must possess an expertise on a topic or at least be very skillful at understanding research. This is due to the obvious reason that their role involves understanding research and making it more easily accessible to a certain group of people. In comparison, UNN-REACH facilitators specifically need skills on process. Potentially, the UNN-REACH facilitators do not require so much an expertise on a topic (like if there were nutritionist), but rather on various processes, especially for facilitating MSN. Nonetheless, the UNN-REACH facilitators need to have a minimum of understanding of nutrition issues.

Neutrality: The perception of neutrality of UNN-REACH facilitators was particularly important considering the dynamics that already exist in the countries. One of the challenges mentioned was the competition that is present among certain organizations because of the lack of funding, which explains why such neutrality is so important to gain the trust of the other actors. The fact that UNN-REACH is not attached to one particular UN agency also helps to have this neutrality. However, the downside is that sometimes the lead agencies see UNN-REACH activities as an add-on to their own work in nutrition governance and policy support in some countries, especially at the beginning of the process because of a lack of understanding.

Taking the back seat: One theme that came out strongly is that the UNN-REACH facilitators are not the ones 'doing', they are supporting others to do. For example, they are not the ones doing the coordination, but instead they support government actors in preparing the meetings, in doing follow-up with actors between meetings, and in using minutes. They do not want to be the face of MSN in the country, government actors need to play this role, as illustrated by this facilitator:

"I get very conscious of my role as one to facilitate not to do, yes behind the scenes, yes I can help you with some things but people must remember a face, though not of the sheep that's passing through the light which I am, which may go away in few months or few years. You as the person who is the focal person for the nutrition in for your sector must begin to be the face that the other departments... you're the go-to person."

Many actions of REACH facilitators could be considered as working "*behind the scene*" and they brought this as a challenge because it is difficult for their contributions to be recognized and measured, for those not directly involved in the work, to see the value of the UNN-REACH approach in-country:

"The KB role isn't recognize when seeking for funding: "I don't think it's perhaps sufficiently valued. You know, so when you're trying to get resources for someone to fund REACH, the knowledge brokering, I don't think it's ... It sounds something quite vague something that should be done and people assume it's done [by others] when in fact it isn't always."

This characteristic of the facilitator work also brings an important challenge to consider: loneliness. Although the UNN-REACH facilitators are working in close partnership with multiple actors, their work often feels lonely because they do not always have the network or small group of actors to strategize around their work. They are often operating behind the scenes and filling gaps. They are

in touch with many actors but cannot get too close to any one or any subset, for reasons of maintaining neutrality. This may not be the case with KB whose job is to provide and interpret scientific and technical evidence to specific stakeholders. Thus, the various networks proposed by KI3 could help address that.

"I think often the REACH job I think often is also a lonely job. You know? You're sitting there. It's all about building relationships but it's not always easy and I think often, I mean at least with [the REACH national facilitator], we used to joke, "It's good we at least have each other." We're each other's sound board and you share ideas and you brainstorm. You think, "How do we negotiate this? This is complex. How do I manage this?" And you know I think for the facilitators that are now on their own, it's not easy. And at least, when I was in Rome, we often would have Skype calls and I know when Person X was in the secretariat also supporting countries, it was the same. You regularly have Skype calls. It's just to speak to people, support them, walk them through some issues that they're having, because it isn't easy and it's quite a lonely job. So I think it's a nice package to have those two, but it's really important that they complement each other."

Mastering the tools (used in the UNN-REACH approach): A topic that was often discussed was the tools used by UNN-REACH facilitators. KB can certainly use different tools but their toolbox varies depending on the context. The UNN-REACH tools seem to have generated different types of knowledge that helped to move different aspects of MSN. They appear to have been particularly helpful for advocacy purposes and more, as expressed by this person:

"I think actually it really served to bring people together and to give visibility to what everyone is doing in country and then identify opportunities of where are the gaps and link that to your planning. So really do your planning based on what are you already doing in country, who are the players in country, and where are the entry points."

The UNN-REACH tools were good to assess the situation and help develop relationships among stakeholders, and the information generated helped raise awareness on the important issues.

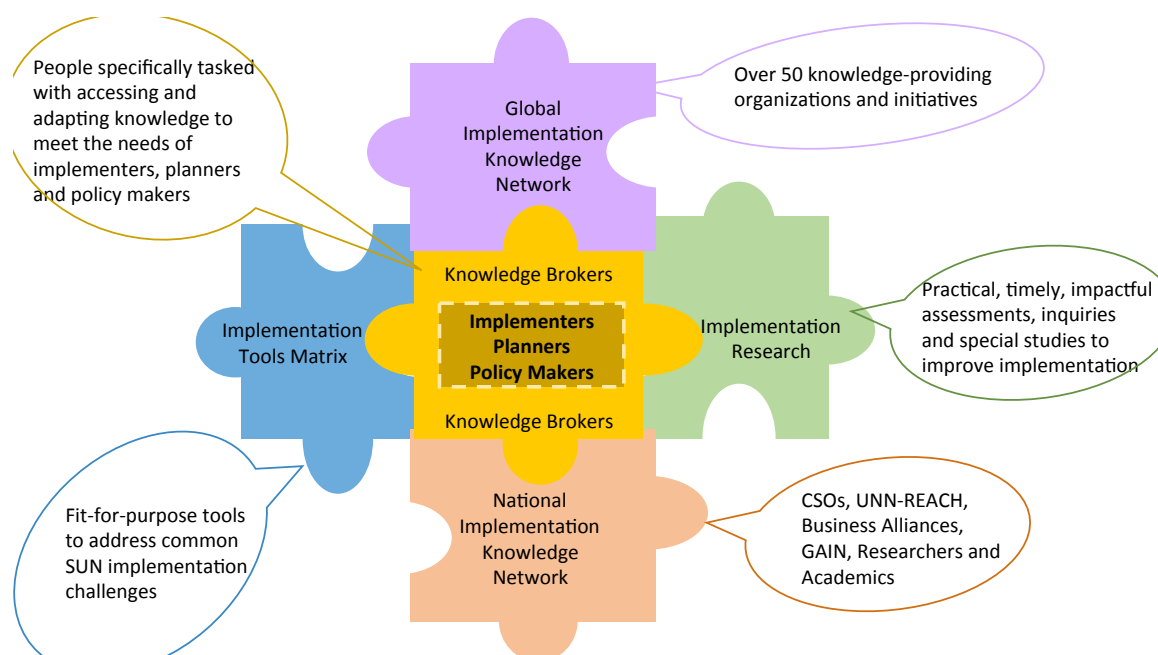
Bringing to the finish line (be prepared to pick up things, where your partners are not able to complete): The work of the UNN-REACH facilitators takes place in a national system in which many units are involved with numerous actors. On many occasions, the UNN-REACH facilitators discussed how they try to fill in the gaps when certain challenges have been identified. This 'behind the scene' work raises one different point, which is the importance of having someone who has the flexibility to insert this into their work. Often, people are already overloaded and cannot take on additional tasks that do not appear to fall under their job description.

CONCLUSION

This preliminary analysis examined the extent to which the concept of knowledge brokering applies to the work of the UNN-REACH facilitators. Several aspects of knowledge brokering were explored and it was confirmed that these facilitators do play a variety of knowledge brokering roles. A framework of knowledge brokering to advance MSN emerged and was described in four parts. The facilitators support the government and partners to implement a multisectoral approach. By linking the various actors and assisting them to frame the issues, secure funding and elaborate a multisectoral action plan, they play vital behind the scenes roles in some of the “upstream” aspects of MSN.

When applying the concept of knowledge brokering to look at UNN-REACH facilitators, we saw that they broker many types of knowledge, some of which emanate from the various exercises UNN-REACH leads with country actors. They also broker existing knowledge that came from international experiences, from their own, or other actors. Most commonly this involved knowledge or experience that can assist with advocacy, coordination, or the concept of multisectorality. However, the on-the-ground implementation of the multisectoral plan at sub-national levels seems to remain a challenge for most countries. In principle this is the role for other actors in the system, such as government ministries, UN agencies and various CSOs. Coordination and various forms of knowledge sharing and brokering are needed in these downstream and sub-national processes as well, but these are roles that go well beyond the capacities of UNN-REACH facilitators alone. There is a need to view this as a system-level challenge and put in place some system-level strategies to address it. Knowledge brokering is one of only five system-level strategies articulated by KI3 (Figure 2) and the present analysis underscores the need to link KB to these other strategies in order to more fully achieve the promise of MSN.

Figure 2: Knowledge Brokering Linked to other System-Level Knowledge Strategies to Implement Multisectoral Nutrition (Source: KI3)



While this report has focused on the KB roles that UNN-REACH facilitators play, this is not to imply that they alone could or should play these roles. To the contrary, small knowledge brokering teams of strategically positioned actors from different organizations represents a more promising strategy, because of the complementary knowledge, skills, networks and access they can provide. Such teams might include, for instance, NIPN staff¹ (who can mobilize knowledge from statistical analysis as per their mandate), academics (who might mobilize knowledge from the scientific literature), CSOs (who can mobilize knowledge from their implementation experiences) and SUN focal points (who are well-positioned to identify and help meet the knowledge needs of various SUN actors). Some teams in country already seem to be playing such role of knowledge brokering. However, to this stage, we have only explored the experiences and perspectives of the UNN-REACH facilitators. The perspectives and roles of other strategically positioned staff will be explored in subsequent phases of KI3's research on knowledge brokering.

¹ National Information Platforms for Nutrition

ANNEX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REACH FACILITATORS

This initiative seeks to better understand the current mandates, capacities and practices of strategically positioned staff (SPS) within MSN countries and initiatives and for suggesting ways in which these could be strengthened. As a REACH facilitator, we believe that you play the role of such SPS staff.

1. To begin with, could you give me a little bit of background of how long you have played the role (*REACH facilitator or SUN focal point*) in (*country X*)? and some of the previous experiences that you had prior to play this role.
2. What has been the most enjoyable while playing this role?
Tell them a bit about my own experience.

Q3: Regarding strategically positioned staff (SPS) in MSN countries and initiatives:

- a. How do you describe your current mandate?
 - a. [Also request copies of these]
- b. What strategies and activities (“practices”) do you use to fulfill this mandate?
 - a. [keep probing for more]
 - b. Can you give me an example? (ask for more examples depending on time available)
 - c. [request copies of annual or progress reports or other documentation]
- c. What challenges do you face in your efforts?
 - a. keep probing for more,
 - b. Ask for examples
- d. Which actors and institutions do you interact with most closely and for what purpose(s)?
 - a. (probe for other actors and other purposes,
 - b. Ask for examples)

(Note: 1) the examples above are important because they may reveal more factors than the SPS mentions explicitly; and 2) the above are open-ended questions, with no lists of the type used in Q2 and Q3 below, because it is important to learn their own perceptions of their work)

Q4: Regarding the overall MSN effort in the country or initiative:

- a. What are the key challenges facing MSN in your country or initiative?
 - a. Ask open-ended and keep probing for more
 - b. Rate our list of challenges with Likert scale
- b. Who are the key actors and institutions at present? Who else should be involved? Why are they not involved (or not sufficiently involved)?
 - a. respond to these questions in an open-ended way,
 - b. then have them review a list we prepare and re-answer in light of some they may have overlooked]
- c. What would the country or initiative need to do in order to better address the challenges?
 - a. get their initial responses,
 - b. probe for more by using their answers to Q2a above

- d. Who would need to do what, in order for these changes to occur? [probe] [This question is largely a reflection of their strategic and tactical thinking – and therefore an indication of their own capacity strengths and gaps; it also is of interest to see if they insert themselves in the answer or externalize it to others]

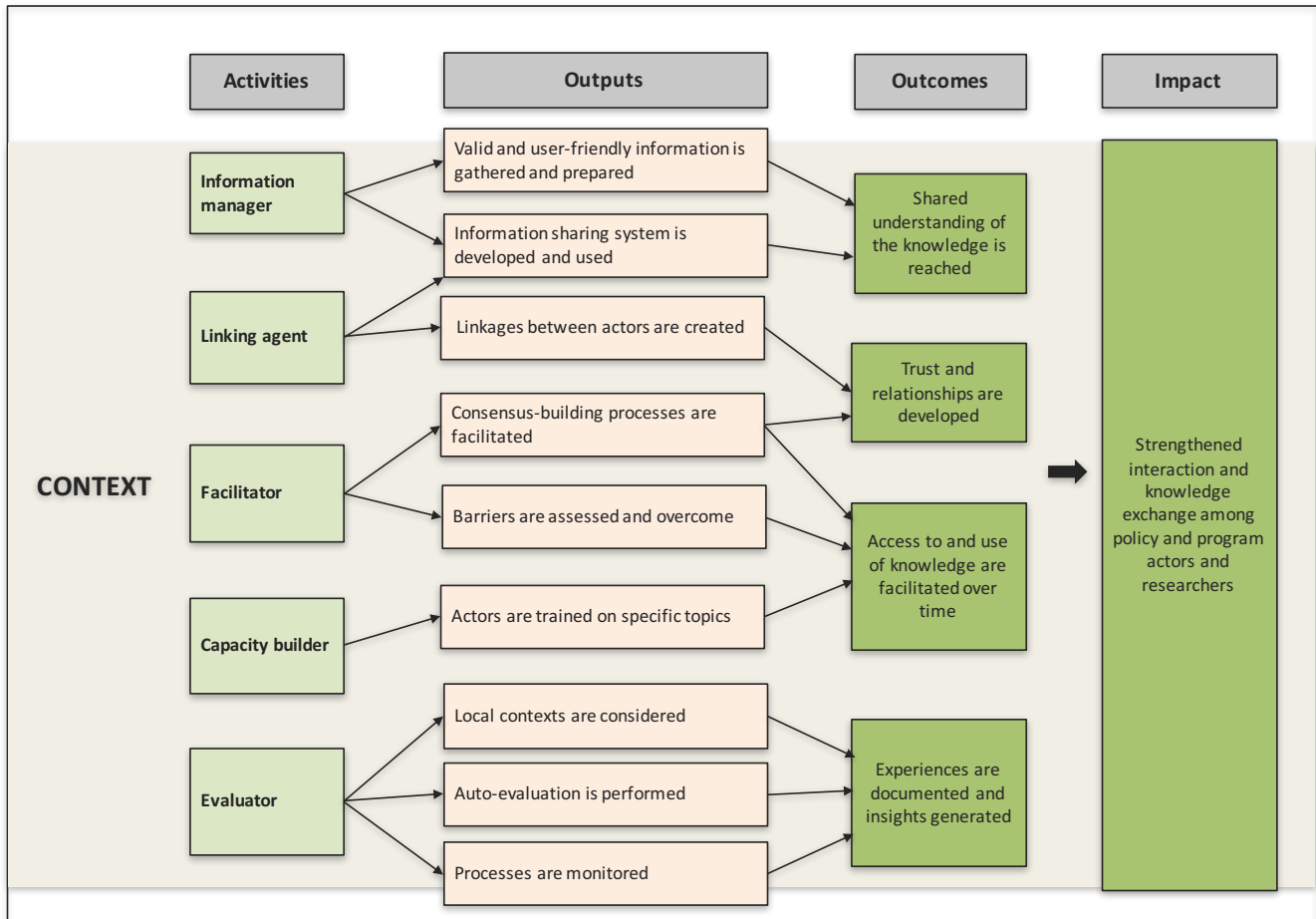
Q5: Regarding changes in mandates, practice and capacities of SPS:

- a. Given the answers to Q2 above, what changes or clarifications in mandates, practices or capacities of the SPS would enable them to help the country or initiative better address its challenges and advance the MSN effort? [This would be largely answered by us comparing the answers to Q2 with those in Q1. But we should also see what their own views are. This might be done as follows:

In your answers to the previous question (Q2d), you indicated that someone or some small group of people would need to do (X, Y and Z). These are things that you did not mention (or emphasize?) in the first part of our interview when I was asking you about your mandate and the strategies and practices you use to fulfill it. So I would like to know,

- a. for each of these things, if you were to get involved, would this require a change in your formal mandate, or just a change in some of your strategies and activities?
- b. And would you feel comfortable taking this on?
- c. What support do you think you would need to do so (if any)?

ANNEX II: LOGIC MODEL OF KNOWLEDGE BROKERING FOR CODING



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