



# NFP Bulletin

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## Challenges Under the SUN



### Editorial Note

*As the prevalence of malnutrition especially in children remains to be unacceptably high in many countries of the world, the search for effective strategies to control the problem continues. Launched in 2010 by concerned individuals from many disciplines, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement was conceived as a collective effort of government, civil society, business and other stakeholders to improve the nutrition of the population. This issue of the NFP Bulletin aims to further spread concept, principles, and strategies of the Movement as part of the effort of the Nutrition Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. to co-opt its members into meeting the challenges in promoting the SUN Movement for the improvement of nutrition of urban and rural communities.*

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**Malnutrition** is still a major health concern in the Philippines. There are types of malnutrition that the country is challenged with: stunting, wasting, overweight, obesity and micronutrient deficiency. Among the types of malnutrition, stunting registered the highest prevalence. According to the 8<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Survey that was updated in 2015, 1 out of 3 children aged 0-5 years old are stunted.

Stunting is the result of poor maternal nutrition and poor child feeding practices from birth up to less than 2 years old. Stunted children grew up too short for their age. Stunting exerts negative impact on the economic development of the country as well on the overall human development. Stunting can cause slow growth and development among children. Children who are stunted may suffer from delays in cognitive development which can affect their performance in school which later on can impact their economic productivity. Studies have shown that stunted adults earn 1.4% less average wage income compared with non-stunted individuals (WHO, 2015) ) If a stunted child was not given attention in his/her first two years of life, the impact of stunting will be irreversible.

Stunting is caused by many factors. A pregnant woman who is not well nourished and not able to gain the desired weight gain during pregnancy may deliver pre-term babies or give birth to offspring with low birth weight. Low birth weight babies have a higher chance in becoming stunted adults if not given attention during the critical window period of first 1000 days.

Other causes of stunting are poor child care due to closely spaced pregnancies, not exclusively breastfed from day zero until 6 months of life, poor quality of complementary foods given to the child from 6 months on, inadequate feeding practices, i.e not continuing to breastfeed, unsafe food and water, and infections.

The Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition or PPAN was developed to alleviate all forms of malnutrition in the country. The government has been developing and implementing nutrition programs based on the PPAN. But despite of all government efforts, stunting rate in the country is highly prevalent. While the stunting rate 20 years ago was as high as 40%, it was still highly prevalent in 2015. Although the number of stunted children has reduced as seen in the past years, there is a very slow decline in the stunting rate.

Evidently, this type of malnutrition along with other lingering nutritional problems require multisectoral approaches and concerted efforts and sincere commitment to address the problem.



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### *Challenges under the Sun cont.*

#### **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement**

The SUN Movement is a unique movement founded on the principle that all people have forms of malnutrition in the world. The SUN Movement empowers people to work collectively to help improve the nutrition situation in the country. It focuses on bringing together government, civil society, business, industry, academe, UN, and other stakeholders in carrying out evidence-based strategies that have been found effective in improving nutrition. Each member country is expected to support the Movement’s goal of decreasing the high incidence of undernutrition in the country.

#### **The PPAN and the SUN Movement in the Philippines**

In March 2014, Dr. Enrique T. Ona, the then Department of Health Secretary and Chair of the National Nutrition Council announced the intention of the Philippines to join the SUN Movement. In May 2014, the Philippines became the 51st country to become part of the SUN Movement. Following the SUN approach, the PPAN identified the following points to be done: a) strengthen the mobilization of the local government units; b) make explicit the specific contributions of key sectors to nutrition movement; and c) intensify and systematize the promotion of complementary feeding, management of acute malnutrition, behavior-change communication and advocacy. The strategy is anchored on leadership of both national and local governments following the multisectoral approach which encourages all stakeholders to actively contribute to the achievement of the goal of the Movement.

Another solution to malnutrition in the SUN Approach is ensuring optimal nutrition in the first 1000 days of life. It means, from the first day of pregnancy to 2 years of age. Nutrition interventions during the first 1000 days include providing adequate nutrition and care during pregnancy, supporting exclusive breastfeeding in the 6 months of life, promoting complementary food which is age- appropriate and safe, micronutrient supplementation, and timely and appropriate treatment of severe acute malnutrition.

The success of the SUN Movement in the Philippines will be indicated by the reduction in the rate of stunting and wasting in the country. The Philippines have committed to contribute to the global target of stunting reduction of 40% by 2025.

#### **Challenges of the SUN Movement in the Philippines**

The current policies in the Philippines already support the SUN Movement. Various stakeholders are called upon to revisit their past contributions in addressing malnutrition in the country and to have a firm commitment to continue the fight against this menace which are impinging on the future of the next generation. The challenge at the LGU level remains. The Philippines is still young in the SUN Movement, but policy makers and program planners are optimistic that in working together and with effective resource sharing, significant improvement in the country’s nutrition landscape will not be as elusive as in the past decades.

#### **References:**

- FNRI, 2015, 8th NNS
- UNICEF, 2015, First 1000 days of life Policy Brief.
- Images: [www.sunmovement.org](http://www.sunmovement.org)



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