



Consultation Process on Conflict of Interest in the SUN Movement

The Main Conclusions and Next Steps for Sustainability

April 2015

The Main Conclusions

The Global Social Observatory is pleased to submit this final report for the project entitled “Consultation Process on Conflict of Interest in the SUN Movement”. The purpose of this two-year effort has been to develop a transparent process to address how to prevent and manage conflicts of interest in the SUN Movement and to improve mutual understanding and willingness of stakeholders to collaborate through multi-stakeholder mechanisms for delivering better nutritional outcomes for mothers and children. Five main conclusions are presented here in summary form. They are more fully developed in the main body of this report.

- The GSO has delivered a *Reference Note and Toolkit on Engaging in the SUN Movement: Preventing and Managing Conflicts of Interest*; and a *Synthesis Report on Key Messages and Lessons Learned* that can help to lay the foundations for developing and strengthening SUN multi-stakeholder platforms at the country level.
- The project has reinforced the importance of addressing conflict of interest issues at the country level and thereby focusing on capacity-building at this level. This will necessarily result in national variations in applying the policy framework and tools to the national platforms – and also within stakeholder groups at the country level.
- Trust-building among *all* participating stakeholders is a necessary contributor to successful multi-stakeholder collaboration. The policy framework offered in the *Reference Note* sets the stage for identifying the positive interests that are needed for building trust and defining the parameters for collaboration.
- Platform development is at an early stage in most SUN member countries, and capacity-building is needed for building multi-stakeholder alignment generally. Integrating the GSO-produced tools for the prevention and management of conflict of interest into a comprehensive strategy for multi-stakeholder alignment can contribute significantly to the building of trust and to the development of active multi-stakeholder platforms.
- There is a fundamental inconsistency between the SUN Principles of Engagement and the varied national approaches to implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. Consistent, authoritative guidance is needed from those with the mandates at the global level. In the interim, the SUN Lead Group should identify what it can do to facilitate the harmonization of approaches with both the Code and the SUN Principles of Engagement.



Sustainability and Next Steps

The enthusiasm among participants from the 15 countries in the ELEs and others in the Global Conference for adapting the ideas from the *Reference Note* and *Toolkit* into their stakeholder and platform development should be followed up with:

- Support for national workshops, including the translation of documents into local/national languages, and other capacity-building activities at the national or local levels.
- Integrating the *Reference Note* and *Toolkit* into an emerging community of practice on multi-stakeholder alignment. Multi-stakeholder alignment needs to be more fully understood and developed, with the policy framework for prevention, identification, management and monitoring of COI integrated into the alignment process.
- Aligning stakeholders within stakeholder groups is also in need of development. The GSO has facilitated such stakeholder alignments in other projects, and similar principles of transparency, inclusiveness and classification of interests and roles will need to be implemented as in the multi-stakeholder setting for COI.
- The availability of a neutral third party to facilitate trust-building and multi-stakeholder alignment is to be encouraged as an option for addressing COI issues.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration may require attentiveness to COI policies between different networks as well as at the multi-stakeholder platform level.
- Additional stakeholder groups should be considered in the alignment process, including consumer groups, health professionals, academic groups (already present in some country platforms) and the media.
- Preparing an “in-practice brief” on what kinds of COI issues that participants in the SUN Movement have encountered and what they have done to address them. This should include a review of how other multi-stakeholder partnerships or platforms have addressed COI issues and what kinds of policies they have put into place. It should conclude with a review of how the *Reference Note* and *Toolkit* might be applied to develop a policy framework for COI.
- The accumulation of hypothetical case studies prepared by local authors in the four Enhanced Learning Exercises can serve as the beginning of a library of case studies. There should also be a review of where other case studies and scenarios should and can be developed.
- Capacity-building should be oriented to training materials on specific aspects of the *Reference Note* and *Toolkit*. The *Toolkit* has been strengthened with user-friendly materials that can be adapted for specific training materials, such as:
 - Putting disclosure forms into practice
 - Coping with power imbalances among stakeholders
 - Applying a risk-based approach to potential COI
 - Understanding what due diligence means
 - Criteria for applying different levels of remedial actions
 - Cost-effective monitoring tools



- An in-depth review of how the SUN Principles of Engagement are applicable to providing the ethical foundation for a policy framework on COI should be encouraged.
- Mentors or champions can help stimulate good COI policy development, and these could include the local ethics experts and others with an ethical perspective to provide guidance.
- Global forums and online resources should be developed to support success stories, information exchanges and learning routes on COI and its integral role in multi-stakeholder alignment.
- The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes triggers strong emotions, and an interim policy should be developed pending any strengthening of the international standard by those with the global mandates.

As an independent, neutral and impartial forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue, the GSO has welcomed the opportunity to work with participants in the SUN Movement to facilitate the building of trust for the effective prevention, identification, management and monitoring of conflict of interest in the SUN Movement. The GSO will continue to support the complex interactions required for effective platform development, multi-stakeholder alignment, policy formulation, and capacity building for the basic prevention, identification, management and monitoring conflict of interest.