

Working Visit Report Sabine Lucassen & Daniel Mumuni

Duration: May 31 – June 5 2010

Background

SIGN has established a partnership with Partnership for Child Development (PCD). As such both Daniel Mumuni and Sabine Lucassen were invited to participate in an international conference, organised by both PCD and the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF). The theme for this annual forum was "The multi-sectoral approach: Linking School Health and Nutrition, School Feeding, and Local Agricultural Production". As the conference was held in Accra it gave us the opportunity to combine it with some SIGN meetings.

SIGN objectives working visit

- To acquire first hand knowledge and briefings on the status of the GSFP and to define next steps of action. In the beginning of the week we therefore had separate meetings with the Dutch Embassy, the focal person of the MLGRD, the GSFP National Secretariat and SNV. Later we also spoke to WFP, World Bank, NEPAD, PCD, GCNF, some Ghanaian contacts and members of Ghanecce.
- To be updated by CSO platform coordinator on ongoing activities and the plans for the future. We had a meeting with John Alhassan, who came down to Accra for one day.
- Discussion of proposal from GOAN to be forwarded to the ASN Foundation. We had a meeting with Samuel Adimado and Ivy Sampa.

2010 Global Child Nutrition Forum in Accra, 1-5 June

The key theme of the Forum was to strengthen the linkages between school feeding, agriculture and community development.

It was aimed at developing a common framework for action at both global and country levels for moving the HGSF agenda forward. This includes outlining what needs, bottlenecks and constraints there are and how the responses to these factors, including technical assistance interventions, will guide on-going development of effective and sustainable HGSF programmes.

More specific Forum objectives were to:

- Provide a common platform for high level advocacy on HGSF
- Strengthening the learning and knowledge exchange processes between HGSF stakeholders including national governments, development partners, private sector, NGOs and the research community
- Validation of country specific HGSF frameworks, assessments, and draft country technical assistance plans of action
- Strengthen coordination between school health and school feeding interventions.

Most participants were part of school feeding delegations of countries all over the world. Africa was well represented with Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Malawi in attendance. Beside country level presentations, there were other representations from WFP, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, World Bank, NEPAD, PCD, GCNF, some international NGO's and a few representatives from the business sector.

A communiqué was issued at the end of the forum for further national and global support for the HGSF. The forum was not only very educational but also served as a good podium to strengthen relationships with partners in Ghana and of the international aid community on school feeding.

Outcomes SIGN meetings and discussions: It is now or never

From our meetings with the Dutch Embassy and other talks we had with f.i. the MLGRD, PCD, SNV, SEND and some Ghanec members we understood that the recently dismissed National Coordinator brought the GSFP to a virtual standstill. A new

coordinator has since been appointed by the president but he again is accountable to the minister of LGRD. It is the hope of everyone we spoke that the new coordinator is competent enough to successfully implement such a big and complex multi-sectoral programme. Unfortunately what is crystal clear are the longstanding problems within the GSFP programme - weak management, weak accountability, poor monitoring & evaluation, poor inter-ministerial collaboration, irregular funding and an unfavourable local procurement system. These problems are known for quite some time but neither solved nor seriously addressed.

Actions need to be expedited to address these concerns if the GSFP is to progress. At the end of this year the first 5 year period of the GSFP will come to an end. Also the Dutch funding for the 4 year period 2007-2010 will end and the programme will be evaluated. Given the current situation of the programme, and given the large under spending of the Dutch during the funding period because of inadequate audits and reports, the Dutch government most probably will come to a conclusion to discontinue its invest in the GSFP. Whiles SIGN finds this possible outcome unfortunate, it is understandable considering the outstanding issues yet to be addressed within the GSFP and the apparent lack of commitment to transform the programme. Consequently, we are supportive of such an outcome for as long as the Government of Ghana fails to address issues with commitment. Under the Paris Declaration that means that no new donor can step in and support the GSFP the way it is currently being implemented. Thus, a major overhaul of the programme, its policy, structures, management and funding is needed and it is needed now! Luckily, technical support to create such a change is at the doorstep as provided by PCD. To embrace such support, Ghanaian government only has to open up, share the true challenges and persistent problems, prioritise them and accept outside capacity, technical and consultancy assistance.

This clear but urgent message was carried out by SIGN during the start of our working visit. There seemed to be big consensus about this message among the people we spoke to.

There has been a challenge by SNV to reach a partnership agreement with PCD. During a visit to SNV, they expressed their willingness to meet Lesley Drake to discuss possible partnership. Subsequently, SIGN managed to secure a meeting with SNV and Lesley. Daniel was present at the meeting.

Way forward: pull out all the stops

During the conference and the several one on one discussions, it also became clear that there are a lot of lessons to be learned from Ghana and from delegates from other countries as well as representatives from international organizations. There was a strong desire from all present that Ghana can continue and enter the next stage of the programme. Home grown school feeding is a complex and multi-sectoral concept that still needs to be studied and proven in Africa. For instance Chile and Brazil have national programmes that already exist for more than 25 years and fine-tuning and introducing improvements is an ongoing process. For that matter there was a general agreement that Ghana could still be the leading country but that visible urgent political and societal action is needed.

At the second part of the visit, SIGN had another meeting with the Dutch Embassy, World Bank and WFP. They agreed on more collaboration and both World Bank and WFP will look into possible funding of HGSF in the north of Ghana. Then SIGN, two board members of GCNF and Dr. Emmanuel Afoakwa held a discussion about the way forward and drew up a guiding proposal for the coming bridging period of 12 months.

Also the PCD team had a meeting with the Ghana team to assess the technical assistance plan to be forwarded to PCD. Daniel Mumuni of SIGN was present at this meeting. At this meeting Ghana presented its challenges including capacity at all levels and funding. The team also mentioned of an evaluation to be carried out by government which would advise and guide the planning of the phase II of the programme.

Furthermore, SIGN agreed with the CAADP representative that if needed CAADP could put pressure on the Ghanaian government to increase attention for the HGSF, especially in relation to the agricultural element.

Finally, SIGN again had a meeting at the Dutch Embassy on the social accountability programme that is to support the GSFP. As it appeared the implementation of it also came to a standstill under the last national coordinator. The MLGRD had just filed their activities plan 2010 to the Embassy. SIGN's communication support was mentioned in it. After this meeting we advised the MLGRD to step up the activities as an intensified implementation of this programme is now more important than ever. With the Embassy we discussed that when this social accountability programme will serve its cause we would advise the Dutch government to prolong it and possibly even extend it.

Commitment SIGN to GSFP till end of 2010

- invitation of Ghana team to upcoming SIGN platform meeting July 1
- As of August 1, Daniel Mumuni will start as PCD Ghana coordinator to the GSFP, that also means that he can coordinate and facilitate the above mentioned proposal and align all activities
- Pressure on Ghanaian government through relationship with Ghanaian ambassador in the Netherlands
- Communication support to the National Secretariat
- Support to the CSO platform and facilitate possible support from the Netherlands from 2011 onwards