

# Application of a gender lens in MQSUN+ technical assistance



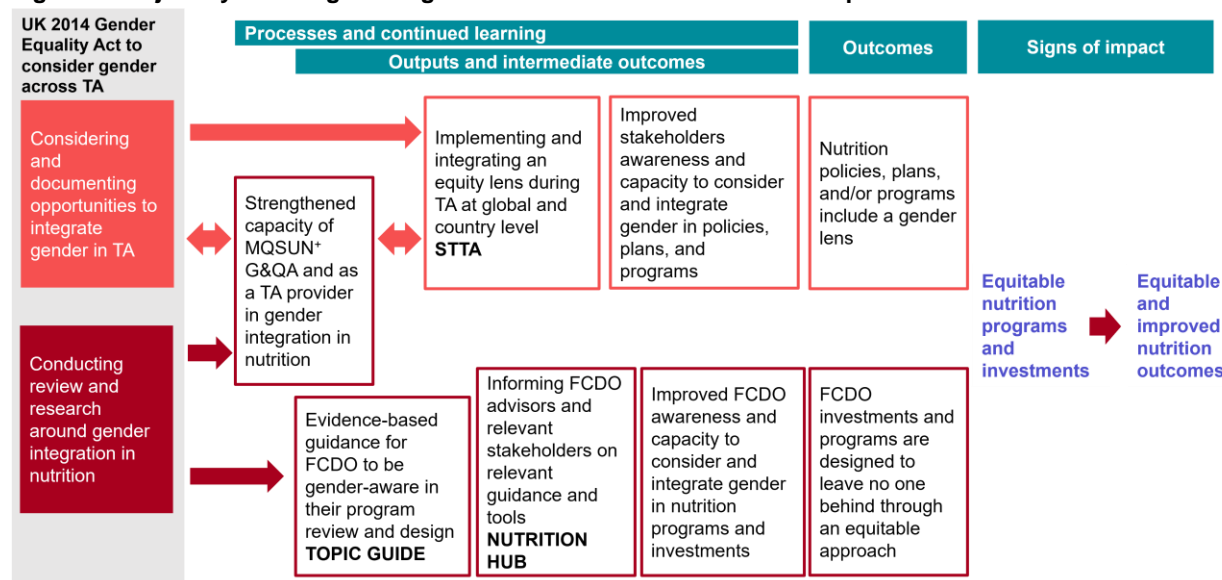
MQSUN+ retrospective case study (December 2018)



*This retrospective case study is part of a brief series on [Assumption maps to assess signs of impact of short-term technical assistance](#).*

Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+) responded to the UK Gender Equality Act of 2014, which requires meaningful, proportional consideration of gender in all Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) investments, by integrating equity considerations across global and country-specific technical assistance (TA). Specifically, in contribution to indicators on the 'proportion of TORs [terms of reference] that integrated a gender lens' measure, MQSUN+ implements and monitors the TA based on the following objectives: (1) to assess and demonstrate meaningful consideration of gender, (2) to seek opportunities that contribute to the generation of new or updated evidence to integrate gender, and (3) to consult with gender-experienced stakeholders. MQSUN+'s application of a gender lens, and more broadly equity, grew and evolved with the continued monitoring and learning in this area. Furthermore, the direct TA to FCDO to develop a gender and nutrition topic guide further contributed to MQSUN+'s growing capacity in this area and more broadly informed the TA. This case study illustrates the pathway from intentionally considering gender in the TA to the intended impact of equitable and improved nutrition outcomes (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. Trajectory of change from gender considerations to nutrition impact.**



Abbreviations: FCDO, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; G&QA, governance and quality assurance; MQSUN+, Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus; STTA, short-term technical assistance; TA, technical assistance.

### Assumption pathway to impact

During the planning phase, in the expression of interest (EOI), MQSUN+ specified ways that gender could be intentionally considered in the activities and outcomes of that TA. During the launch call, the core team prompted discussion of and monitored gender considerations throughout implementation, and instances of gender integration (gathered from periodic calls, monthly updates, and exit interviews) were documented. Opportunities to integrate gender informed future TA planning.

### Considering and documenting opportunities to integrate gender in nutrition-related TA

If gender considerations are prompted during TA design and implementation, then the activities and outputs better integrate a gender lens.

This can happen through various channels, such as (1) assessing and sharing evidence around gender in nutrition within the specific country/TA context, (2) prompting dialogue with key stakeholders to encourage gender considerations and support increased awareness of how this relates to the context, and (3) bringing diverse stakeholders, including gender-experienced stakeholders, to the table and encouraging them to use their voice to raise awareness and advocate for improved action. Through these and other channels, short-term TA has the potential to influence how inequities are addressed in nutrition programs, plans, and policies. Additionally, the openness of MQSUN+ to continued monitoring and learning supported capacity strengthening to improve and adapt gender-integration efforts in ongoing and new TA. **Table 1** illustrates some of the key roadblocks encountered and example signs of impact.

**Table 1. Roadblocks and signs of impact while considering gender in nutrition-related TA, as well as in developing gender-aware, evidence-based guidance for FCDO.**

Assumption assessment and trajectory of change	
<b>Considering gender in nutrition-related TA</b>	<p><b>Roadblock:</b> Nutritionists and TA providers do not always have expertise in addressing gender.</p> <p><b>Overcoming the roadblock:</b> MQSUN+ continued to learn and adapt approaches to gender consideration. In weekly SUN calls, the team problem-solved to promote capacity-building and cross-TA learning (for example, the benefit of ensuring stakeholders, including ministries representing women, participate in consultations). As part of the cross-learning on TA to FCDO, teams participated in a call to discuss how to document, monitor, and assess gender equity</p>

## Assumption assessment and trajectory of change

gains. Team leads were continuously prompted to document gender integration; the monthly update format included specific directions, such as ‘instance in which your team or relevant stakeholders participated in or created an opportunity for discussion around gender or equity’.

### Signs of impact:

- Nutritionists and other TA providers report improved capacity and awareness in this area.
- All TA instances include at least one example of integrating gender in monthly updates or exit surveys.

**Roadblock:** Multisectoral planning for nutrition itself is not always widely understood among stakeholders, so including a gender dimension can be challenging.

**Overcoming the roadblock:** It is necessary to make equity a fundamental component within nutrition, as nutrition is unlikely to improve without considering gender and, more broadly, equity.

### Signs of impact:

- In Somalia’s multisectoral nutrition plan, gender equality was included as its own strategic objective, which led to specific discussions around the relevant topics, encouraging women’s active participation and inclusion of other perspectives.
- During an advocacy strategy workshop in Guinea, the team prompted discussions around men’s involvement in child nutrition (e.g., supporting exclusive breastfeeding).

**Roadblock:** Gender norms and roles are deeply embedded in culture and challenging to address through short-term TA provided by small teams (i.e., they may not include gender expertise).

**Overcoming the roadblock:** While MQSUN<sup>+</sup> did not expect to change gender norms during the course of TA, the approach taken helped start dialogues around the implications of considering equitable approaches in nutrition programs, policies, and plans for improved outcomes.

### Signs of impact:

- During the Somalia TA, as the team facilitated a CRF validation workshop, the group had the opportunity to raise awareness around the impacts of child marriage on women’s education and early pregnancies on nutrition. Among potential activities discussed were community gender-sensitization interventions and male involvement in family health.
- The TA team supporting AECF included a recommendation around keeping gender-influenced factors in mind to improve the likelihood of achieving positive impacts for women (e.g., improved decision-making power on production, marketing, and income generation) and averting unintended negative consequences, such as added burdens (e.g., time, labor).

### Evidence-based guidance for gender in nutrition

**Roadblock:** Findings are largely qualitative and context-specific, making it difficult to generalize.

**Overcoming the roadblock:** Rigorous documentation to ensure limitations in findings are clear (e.g., only one scientific database used and, therefore, subject to publication bias) and adopt a collaborative approach to quality assurance to ensure personal bias does not influence results.

**Signs of impact:** The review of the draft [gender guidance](#) for FCDO led to in-depth thinking on how best to support FCDO to improve gender sensitivity of its nutrition programming and outline the areas of interest—i.e., gender considerations across the life course—by sector and evidence.

*Abbreviations: AECF, Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund; CRF, common results framework; MQSUN<sup>+</sup>, Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus; SUN, Scaling Up Nutrition; TA, technical assistance.*

If the influence of gender roles and dynamics on nutrition and the tools/metrics to capture these are reviewed, then there is potential to inform FCDO advisors and similar actors to design equitable programs and review programs with equity in mind. If TA jump-starts the process of implementing and integrating a

gender lens in discussions around nutrition and in nutrition programs, plans, and policies, then there is an opportunity for these to be equitable, which in turn can lead to equitable and improved nutrition outcomes. FCDO advisors from livelihood, health, and humanitarian sectors can create equitable nutrition programs and ensure equitable investments by considering the potential and document influences of gender norms and dynamics in nutrition. See **Figure 2** for the assumption map.

**Figure 2. Summary of assumption map around gender integration in nutrition.**

Key activity	Assumptions	Output	Assumptions	Outcome	Assumptions	Sign of impact
Consideration and documentation of opportunities to integrate gender in TA	<b>IF</b> TA providers and collaborators have the appropriate knowledge and capacity to integrate and prompt gender consideration throughout the TA design and implementation, <b>THEN</b>	Implementation and integration of an equity lens during TA at global and country levels  <b>SHORT-TERM TA</b>	<b>IF</b> discussions around equity and gender increase among relevant stakeholders and those with the power to change the approaches to nutrition, <b>THEN</b>	Improved stakeholder awareness and capacity to consider and integrate gender in policies, plans, and programs	<b>IF</b> the stakeholders translate gender awareness to meaningful* policy, plan, and program objectives/ actions, <b>THEN</b>	Nutrition policies, plans, and/or programs include an evidence-based and contextual gender lens
Review and research around gender integration in nutrition	<b>IF</b> there are sufficient, good-quality, up-to-date, data and evidence, <b>THEN</b> <b>AND/OR</b> <b>IF</b> the reviewers systematically and without bias detected the key themes related to gendered access to nutrition-related services <b>THEN</b>	Evidence-based guidance for FCDO to be gender aware in their program review and design  <b>TOPIC GUIDE</b>	<b>IF</b> FCDO advisors have a deeper understanding and appreciation for equity and used evidence-based tools to inform program design, monitoring, etc., <b>THEN</b> <b>AND/OR</b> <b>IF</b> the review of the evidence, collated tools, and guidance are appropriately shared and/or reviewed by FCDO advisors (e.g., through a nutrition hub presentation) <b>THEN</b>	Improved awareness and capacity to consider and integrate gender in nutrition programs and investments	* <i>contextually informed, practical, with VfM, etc.</i>	FCDO investments and programs are designed—through an equitable approach—to leave no one behind

Abbreviations: FCDO, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; TA, technical assistance; VfM, value for money.

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MQSUN+ cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this brief. This document was produced by MQSUN+ through support provided by UK aid and the UK Government; however, the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the UK Government’s official policies.

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<https://mqsunplus.path.org/resources/assumption-maps-to-assess-signs-of-impact-of-short-term-technical-assistance/>

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