

Technical assistance to support understanding of opportunities for business to influence nutrition outcomes



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](#).

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) encourages private-sector investments in strengthening ‘national and global food systems to make nutritious diets more affordable and accessible to the poor, in particular for women, adolescent girls, and children.’ Furthering this agenda, at the request of FCDO, Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN⁺) carried out a review and documentation of how the private sector can be engaged in improving nutrition.

Through this case study, MQSUN⁺ assessed the activities and outputs that enabled progress towards scaling up multisectoral nutrition efforts, nutrition impact, and the pathways towards these end goals. This was done by first developing an assumption map to outline the potential results pathways, and then by assessing whether technical assistance (TA) provided to FCDO UK validated these assumptions and what the implications and areas for further research are.

Assumption pathway to impact

The hypothesized assumption map (**Figure 1**) frames MQSUN⁺'s thinking around the steps—from research on private-sector engagement towards improved nutrition. It only notes a selection of assumptions, and many of these assumptions have other dependent components; not all of these can be

validated by MQSUN+ or within the time frame of the project. Furthermore, this assumption map is part of a larger one that also encompasses the other type of activities and TA provided.

Figure 1. Assumption map from research and review towards improved nutrition.

Key activities	Selection of assumptions	Key outputs	Selection of assumptions	Key outcomes	Selection of assumptions	Signs of impact	Selection of assumptions	Impact
Research and review	IF existing evidence demonstrates or may demonstrate sound linkages between business and nutrition AND this information is well collated and disseminated effectively, THEN	Increased knowledge and awareness among FCDO advisors and relevant stakeholders from multi-disciplinary fields	IF relevant stakeholders feel a sense of empowerment because of increased knowledge, THEN	Opportunity for improved capacity for evidence-based decision making around engaging with the private sector for nutrition	IF the relevant stakeholders make evidence-based decisions and justification for potential business cases AND there is sufficient buy-in from leadership, THEN	Increased and more targeted investments to develop private-sector action in nutrition	IF investments translate into effective implementation and strengthened positive and minimized negative business efforts towards nutrition AND the implementation is efficiently, effectively, and sustainably carried out AND contribute positively to nutrition, THEN	Improved nutrition

Abbreviation: FCDO, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Table 1 reviews how this particular TA fits within the hypothesized assumption map and influences TA by demonstrating a contribution to nutrition impact, an indicator suggested by MQSUN+ to capture contribution to the global nutrition agenda and the nutrition theory of change (TOC).

Table 1. Review of how technical assistance fits within the assumption map.

Trajectory and evidence of change	
<p>Activity: Research and review</p>	<p>MQSUN+ conducted an in-depth desk review to support the development of impact pathways and the analytical framework for assessing private-sector engagement in nutrition. Complementing this, MQSUN+ conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with over 60 organizations (33 for-profit, 22 development, 6 donor, and 4 research).</p> <p>Outputs: A report titled Where Business and Nutrition Meet reviewed examples and lessons learned from business initiatives to address nutrition. It looked at three FCDO-defined pillars, through which the private sector may directly or indirectly impact nutrition: (1) naturally nutritious foods, (2) fortified foods, and (3) workforce nutrition actions. For each, one or more pathways laid out potential actions along value chains (e.g., product development, sourcing, production, marketing, distribution, or sales).</p>
<p>Output: There is increased awareness among FCDO advisors and others</p> <p>Outcome: There is an opportunity for improved capacity for evidence-based decision making on engaging the private sector in nutrition</p>	<p>The team spent significant time refining the report to ensure it clearly laid out the existing experience, gaps, and recommendations in a user-friendly form, to effectively demonstrate the linkages between business and nutrition. It also supported dissemination to increase stakeholder awareness of the findings.</p> <p>Outputs: The team presented the findings from the report in London to FCDO advisors and external stakeholders (e.g., private-sector companies and business associations). MQSUN+ published the report on its website and presented the findings at the Africa Nutrition Epidemiology Conference in Ethiopia.</p> <p>The above also exemplify dissemination and capacity-building efforts.</p>

Trajectory and evidence of change

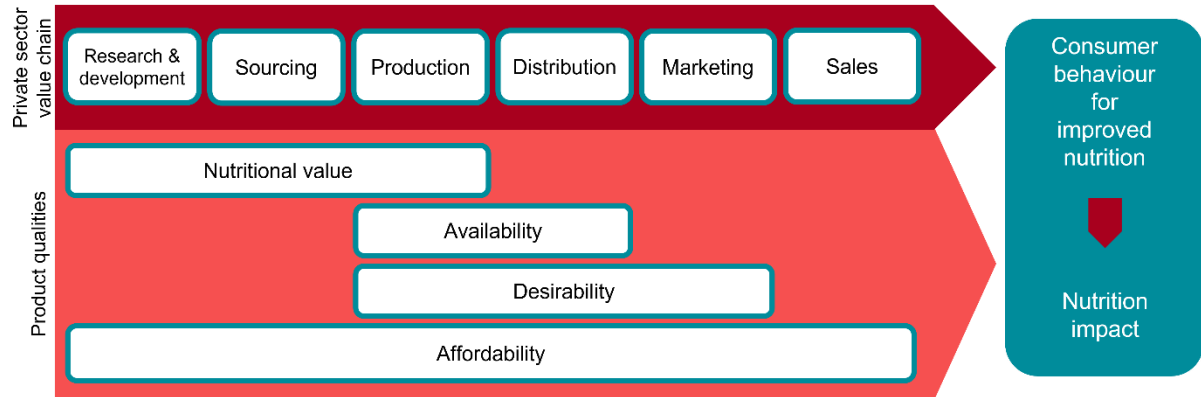
<p>Signs of Impact: There will be increased and more targeted investments for private-sector action in nutrition</p>	<p>FCDO leveraged the findings of the report and improved knowledge and awareness of the importance of private-sector linkages to nutrition, to inform decisions for further investments in this area.</p> <p>Outputs: (1) MQSUN+ received an additional TOR to support the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF) in understanding the potential positive and negative nutrition impacts of its agribusiness investments on consumers and to identify ways that AECF's agribusiness investments could positively address nutrition.</p> <p>(2) The Where Business and Nutrition Meet report developed by MQSUN+ was annexed to FCDO's Sustaining Action on Nutrition tender, focusing on Food Systems for Nutrition Partnerships. The report was referenced as having informed FCDO's agenda and strategy. As part of FCDO's request for TA, it specified that the MQSUN+ TA approach was one to follow for a wider purpose.</p>
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Abbreviations: AECF, Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund; FCDO, UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; MQSUN+, Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus; TA, technical assistance; TOR, terms of reference.

From this, MQSUN+ hypothesized that if investments translate into effective implementation and strengthened, sustainable business efforts for improved nutrition, it can lead to improved nutrition.

Figure 2 highlights how this is summarized in the [Where Business and Nutrition Meet](#) report. Specifically, it outlines how different business focuses along or across the value chain influence consumer behavior for improved nutrition. For instance, adopting a low-tech or proximity service to increase farmers' access to cold chain or process equipment may work well to reduce food loss and increase farmers' income, while also increasing consumers' access to fresh produce.

Figure 2. The influence of value chain activities on product qualities.



Acknowledgments

Following on the success of Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition (MQSUN) (2012–2016), the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded MQSUN+ (2016–2020) provided technical assistance to FCDO, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) countries and the SUN Movement Secretariat to catalyze multisectoral country efforts to scale up nutrition impact, maximize the quality and effectiveness of nutrition-related programs, increase innovation in nutrition, support evidence generation and knowledge uptake, and develop technical capacity. MQSUN+ was a consortium of five expert organisations: PATH (lead), Aga Khan University, DAI Global Health, Development Initiatives, and NutritionWorks.

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This brief was produced by Arja Huestis, Monica Kothari, Amanda Coile, Carrie Hubbell Melgarejo, and Carrie Hemminger; special acknowledgments to Rhea Shah and Anya Leslie Samtani for their support in collation and review.

Suggested citation: Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+). *Technical assistance to support understanding of opportunities for business to influence nutrition outcomes: MQSUN+ retrospective case study*. Washington, DC: PATH; 2021. <https://mqsunplus.path.org/resources/assumption-maps-to-assess-signs-of-impact-of-short-term-technical-assistance/>

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