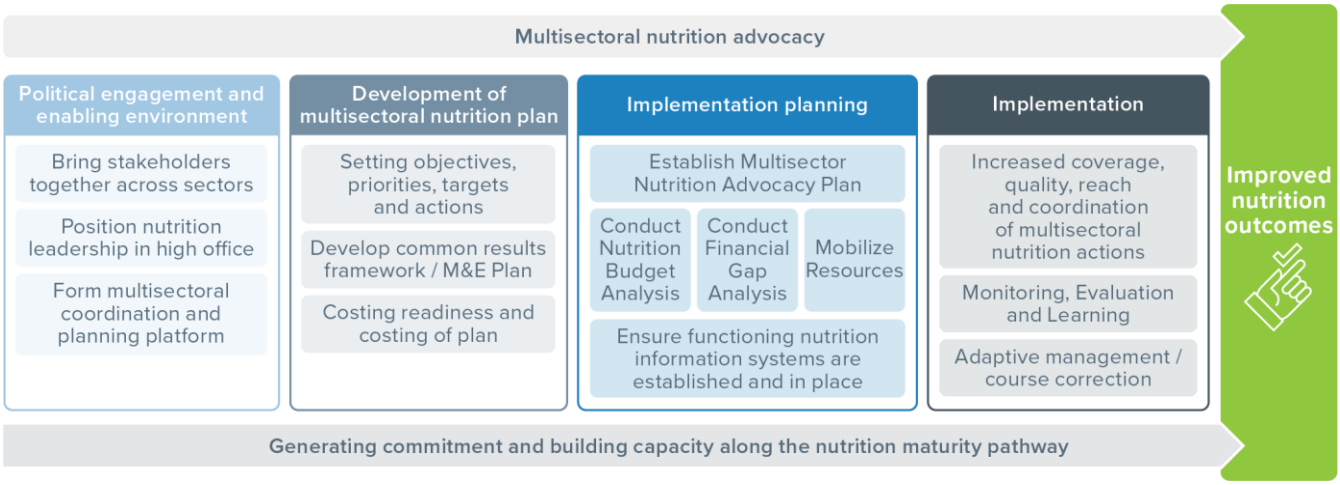
TA Support to Countries along the Nutrition Maturity Pathway

The Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) programme (2015–2023) was a £35.8 million Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) initiative which included two technical assistance (TA) facilities: Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+) from 2016–2020, and the follow-on Technical Assistance to Strengthen Capabilities (TASC) project from 2020–2023. The TAN project also included TA from Nutrition International, and support on knowledge management and learning from the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN), and direct support to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Secretariat (SMS).

Through TAN TA, support was provided to governments in the SUN movement and the SMS to catalyse multisectoral country efforts to scale up nutrition impact, and to FCDO to maximise the quality and effectiveness of its nutrition-related programmes. This included increasing innovation, learning and accountability for nutrition; supporting evidence generation and knowledge uptake; and developing technical capacity with a focus on the critical first 1,000 days of a child's life.

To demonstrate the added value of some of the TA provided during TAN, TASC developed summaries for Yemen, Somalia and Madagascar, depicting how TA supported these countries along their nutrition maturity pathways, described in the conceptual framework (Figure 1). While FCDO-funded TA is highlighted in these summaries, TA was often conducted in collaboration with SUN country governments, implementing partners, and other donors. Therefore, the impact of TA on country progress is an outcome of cumulative support provided prior to, during, and in addition to the TAN programme.

Figure 1: Nutrition maturity pathways



The countries were selected based on their representation of having a stable/fragile or conflict-affected context; receiving long-term/short-term TA; and the types of support provided (national nutrition plans/policies, advocacy/communication strategies, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans, costing, development of roadmaps etc); 'remote' versus in-country provision; geographical location and language.

The three summaries aim to capture, at a high level, a country's commitment and capacity to strengthen nutrition, and where FCDO-funded TA contributed to this. Commitment and capacity are mutually reinforcing, and refer to planning, financing, and managing processes along the nutrition maturity pathway. TA to foster country commitment focused on supporting countries to develop and strengthen policies, plans, and actions, and institutionalise nutrition within government mechanisms to build ownership and accountability, enabling countries to address their own nutrition challenges. TA to build capacity focused on strengthening evidence and approaches for addressing malnutrition, including the ability of country stakeholders to work across multiple sectors to plan, cost, and resource nutrition-related policies, plans and actions. Within the summaries, the left column represents TA provided under TAN and the right column includes TA-related outputs plus other nutrition-related milestones along each country's maturity pathway.

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Yemen

Key milestones demonstrating country commitment and capacity to strengthen nutrition

2012: Joined SUN Movement, SUN Focal Point nominated

2013: Multi-stakeholder platform for nutrition established

2017–2020: MQSUN+ TA

- Contributed to an update of the nutrition contextual analysis in 2017 (building on MQSUN TA) to reflect the conflict's consequences on the humanitarian situation in the country, and a costed Common Results Framework.
- Supported a Costing Readiness Assessment and contributed to the development of Yemen's first costed Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan 2020–2023, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, and Yemen Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan Advocacy Strategy 2020–2023.
- Supported the SMS in two evidence generation studies that included Yemen: one to identify challenges and opportunities to bridge the development-humanitarian divide during crises, and another on improving data quality in famine-risk countries, which culminated in a final report.

2020–2021: TASC TA

- TA on Nutrition Information and Analysis Systems (NIS) supported stakeholders to clearly define actions to address key challenges and barriers in the NIS, and improve programme coverage and overall data availability, quality, and utilisation.

While the outbreak of conflict and political crises in 2014 posed significant challenges for nutrition coordination and an effective multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) approach due to fragmentation of state actors, the SUN Yemen Secretariat has shown high commitment to nutrition and willingness to collaborate on TA assignments since the beginning of the TAN project. At the same time, SUN Yemen Secretariat faced difficulty accessing senior decision-makers among donors and UN agencies due to COVID, lack of awareness of SUN's political positioning, and perceptions that SUN was allied with one side or another in the conflict.

- Findings from the TA-supported **contextual analysis** informed FCDO's (DFID) business case for Yemen. They were also used to support an update of the **costed Common Results Framework**, to help develop priority areas of the **Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (MSNAP) 2020–2023**. The MSNAP, associated M&E plan and advocacy strategy were developed collaboratively with all the line ministries under the leadership of the Yemen SUN Secretariat.
- The **Costing Readiness Assessment** enhanced the country capacity for costing the MSNAP, enabling the Yemen country team to obtain and use costing inputs and refine activities across relevant sectors.
- A new **National Nutrition Strategy for the Health Sector** was launched in 2021 to strengthen the Ministry of Health's role in partnering with other sectors to identify and tackle the underlying causes of malnutrition. The same year, Yemen launched the Yemen Global Action Plan on Child Wasting and corresponding roadmap, with interventions mainly extracted from the MSNAP, National Nutrition Strategy for the Health Sector, and the National Maternal and Child Health Strategies.
- The impact of the **COVID pandemic** disrupted SUN Yemen Secretariat activities, inhibiting the MSNAP operationalisation process, resulting in turnover of staff in UN and donor agencies, and leading to loss of knowledge of SUN, the MSNAP, and related strategies and plans.
- While the SUN Yemen Secretariat plans to implement the recommendations developed under the TASC **NIS support** to the national nutrition monitoring and evaluation accountability framework, the SUN Yemen Secretariat lacks funding to take them forward. Similarly, the SUN Yemen Secretariat intends to establish a nutrition information system, related reporting guidelines, and improve nutrition integration in the District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS 2), but funding is limited.
- Yemen registered **12 commitments in the Nutrition Accountability Framework**. These include pledges strengthening the National Nutrition Information System; strengthening the transition between humanitarian and development programming across sectors; operationalising the MSNAP through advocacy and enhanced coordination, and implementation of a multisectoral accountability framework; and embedding nutrition actions into National Universal Healthcare towards ensuring accessibility, affordability, and availability of Essential Health and Nutrition Service Package (ESP).
- In 2022, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation signed the **Yemen Call to Action**, which calls for scaling up investments and actions for nutrition, promoting integration of nutrition and the MSNAP into wider development plans, and engaging in the operationalisation of the MSNAP. In 2023, Yemen held the first gathering of national and international nutrition stakeholders in Amman, Jordan, convened by the Yemen Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, to discuss how to advance progress on the MSNAP.

Somalia

Key milestones demonstrating country commitment and capacity to strengthen nutrition

2014: Joined SUN Movement

2016: Multi-stakeholder platform for nutrition established

2016: Sun Focal Point nominated

2017–2020: MQSUN+ TA

- Contributed to the development and implementation of a Common Results Framework including assisting stakeholders in defining the overall goal, objectives, indicators and set of interventions by sector. This entailed stakeholder mapping and close engagement with the government.
- Supported development of the Somalia Multi-sectoral Nutrition Strategy (2019–2024)
- Conducted National Nutrition Plan Review of the MSN using the SUN checklist on the criteria and characteristics of good national nutrition plans.
- Assisted stakeholders in defining a Multisectoral Plan of Action for the First 1,000 Most Critical Days Programme and supported a related costing-readiness assessment.
- Supported the SMS in two evidence generation studies that included Somalia: one to identify challenges and opportunities to bridge the development humanitarian divide during crises, and another on improving data quality in famine-risk countries, which culminated in a final report.

2020–2023: TASC TA

- Supported Somalia through the 7th round of the SUN Budget Analysis Exercise to enhance budget allocations for nutrition.
- Included in 'Effectiveness of TA' case study.
- Developed a landscape of nutrition information systems in Somalia with recommendations on how to increase coverage of nutrition services, to improve processes and diagnostics for decision making, and strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus.
- Defined key drivers of malnutrition in Somalia and how they can be addressed through integrated programming.
- Developed (in collaboration with IMPACT/REACH) a real-time monitoring framework to strengthen the quality of real-time nutrition, health, WASH and food security information and analysis, particularly aimed at reducing excess mortality.

The Government of Somalia, at national and sub-national levels, and the SUN Focal Point, have consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to nutrition. TA support has catalysed the country-led progress for nutrition planning and built country capacity to track and to align budgetary allocations to nutrition.

- The TA-supported Common Results Framework set the foundation for developing the first **Somalia Multisectoral Nutrition Strategy (2019–2024) (MSN),** which aims to align all nutrition-relevant policies, promote cross-sectoral integration and coordination, and eliminate policy fragmentation. The **Somalia National Nutrition Strategy (2020–2025)** (NNS) identifies overarching strategic results required to address high levels of malnutrition in Somalia, and complements the strategic activities of the MSN. Both the MSN and NNS fed into the Somalia **Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) 2020.** This includes the integration of a full package of nutrition-specific interventions into basic healthcare services at national and sub-national levels. An accompanying 2019–2021 **advocacy and communications framework/plan** provided the basis for promoting harmonised nutrition advocacy, with guidelines and messages to steer operationalisation.
- A review of the **National Nutrition Plan** supported by MQSUN+ informed the development of the **Somalia Multisectoral Plan of Action** and built the capacity of government stakeholders through a **costing readiness exercise** to identify detailed data, activity, and targets to support them in costing the plan. Following the TA, the country took forward the planning, adding the operational details, initiating costing, and validating the plan independently.
- **Domestic nutrition financing** has increased to 3% in the last few years, which helped support the integration of nutrition into the second Five-Year National Development Plan (NDP 9, 2020–2024) through the wider set of health interventions under the EPHS.
- In 2021, results from the TASC-supported **nutrition budget analysis** were shared during a three-day National Nutrition Learning event under the Prime Minister's Office. They equipped the country team with the skills and knowledge to conduct future budget analyses on their own. The same year, Somalia registered 12 commitments in the Nutrition Accountability Framework. These include pledges to increase domestic funding for nutrition across government line ministries to 5%, reduce the prevalence of stunting among children aged 0–59 months to 25% and the prevalence of wasting to 9%, all by 2025, and enact an overarching Somalia Food Security and Nutrition Act (FSNA) by 2023, which was recently drafted.
- The 2023 TASC support identified key considerations for FCDO nutrition-related humanitarian and development programming in Somalia, to ensure nutrition is integrated into business cases and programmes address drivers across sectors impacting on nutrition outcomes. The **real-time monitoring framework** provides decision-makers with regular updates on hotspots and people in need, informs resource allocation, and will be used as a pilot case for the development of a new global real-time monitoring framework.

Madagascar

Key milestones demonstrating country commitment and capacity to strengthen nutrition

2012: Joined SUN Movement, SUN Focal Point nominated

2013: Multi-stakeholder platform for nutrition established

2017–2020: MQSUN+ TA

- Reviewed and updated the National Nutrition Policy.
- Conducted a National Nutrition Plan Review of the National Action Plan for Nutrition 2017–2021, using the SUN checklist on the criteria and characteristics of good national nutrition plans.
- Developed an implementation plan for the National Action Plan for Nutrition 2017-2021 and an accompanying monitoring and evaluation framework (both still in draft format).

2020–2021: TASC TA

- Supported Madagascar during the 7th round of the SUN Budget Analysis Exercise.
- Supported the development of the fourth National Multisectoral Action Plan for Nutrition 2022–2026 and accompanying monitoring and evaluation framework, and the National Nutrition Policy 2022–2030.
- Included in 'Effectiveness of TA' case study.

Since joining the SUN movement in 2012, the Malagasy Government has made significant strides in improving the policy, regulatory and legal frameworks for nutrition at the national level. This includes the appointment of the National Coordinator of the National Nutrition Office as SUN Focal Point, as well as extensive consultation at sub-national and community level for development of the fourth National Multisectoral Action Plan for Nutrition (PNAMN 2022–2026).

- TASC support contributed to the formation of the National Nutrition Policy (PNN 2022–2030) as well as the **PNAMN 2022–2026**. These were informed by MQSUN+ support on the **National Nutrition Plan Review** and a review of the **National Action Plan for Nutrition (PNAN III 2017–2021)**. The PNAN III 2017–2021 was finalised by UNICEF, and ultimately fully funded, validated at the national level, and disseminated at the regional level with media coverage to increase visibility.
- Nutrition is included in The Plan Emergent Madagascar 2019–2023 (**Madagascar's National Development Plan**) with a goal to reduce the prevalence of stunting among children under five years from 41.6% to 13% by 2023.
- The NNP review recommended the use of more realistic targets, including a review of anaemia targets, for the PNN 2022–2030 and PNMAN 2022–2026. These were then adapted with the support of WHO and integrated in the WHO Nutrition Global Targets Tracking Tool. Following the review, both the policy and the plan added additional risk and mitigating strategies in the logframes, recognition and inclusion of key national and sub-national stakeholders in the annexes, as well as feedback and inputs from community health volunteers, youth groups, village agricultural groups, front-line health workers, WASH committees and school directors.
- Following the recommendation from the 'Effectiveness of TA review' of Madagascar concerning involvement of sub-national stakeholders to improve ownership, 23 regions were involved in the conceptual phase of the PNAMN 2022–2026 plan development and face-to-face workshops. Recommendations from the review also led to the addition of a dedicated expert in gender, equity and social inclusion (GESI) being included in the TA support to develop GESI-sensitive training materials. These were subsequently used throughout the PNN 2022–2030 and PNAMN 2022–2026 planning process.
- Madagascar registered eight commitments in the Nutrition Accountability Framework, including increasing its allocation for the nutrition sector by 50% each year between 2022 to 2026 during the implementation of the PNAMN, and reducing the prevalence of stunting to 28% and wasting to 5% by 2026.