

FCDO Response

28 October 2020

FCDO Response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact recommendations on: Assessing DFID's results in nutrition September 2020

Recommendation 1: FCDO should capture and communicate progress against all goals in its nutrition strategy, including strengthening systems and leadership for improved nutrition.

Accept

We agree we should extend our current approach to results to capture the full impacts of UK Aid. We are developing a new results framework for nutrition to track the outcomes and impacts of different types of FCDO support, including for example diplomatic engagement, technical assistance and service delivery. The framework will be accompanied by guidance on using quantitative and qualitative evidence to develop results case studies, which can more fully capture the contribution that UK Aid makes to improving the nutrition of the poorest people in the world.

The Prime Minister has set out a Five Point plan for global health security, which builds on UK partnerships to strengthen health systems and resilience in vulnerable countries. Enabling governments to strengthen their own systems and lead efforts to address malnutrition is as important as directly delivering services to those in need. This principle was emphasised in the UK's 2017 Global Nutrition Position Paper. Our Technical Assistance for Nutrition programme has helped improve how we and others monitor the impact of work to support governments. We regularly review how this information improves the quality and impact of the work we and our partners do. The learning generated is being used by the wider nutrition community to enhance monitoring and accountability. We will continue to proactively communicate this learning with partners.

Recommendation 2: FCDO should strengthen statistical capacity and quality assurance in-country and centrally, to support more accurate measurement of programme coverage and convergence, and to use the data to improve nutrition programming.

Accept

Effective use of data and strong data systems are central to making sure UK Aid is targeted to those who are most in need and to maximise impact. FCDO has set out an ambitious vision for use of data and evidence to drive delivery across the organisation. We recognise the need to strengthen statistical capacity and to make better use of this resource to further embed rigour in quality assurance.

We will reassess the current methodology for monitoring the reach of our nutrition-related programmes. This will focus on where there are opportunities to simplify the

approach, whilst strengthening quality and incorporating learning from reviews of the results process. As part of this, we will incorporate the latest evidence of what works to improve nutrition outcomes. We will also develop a tool to help country teams use the nutrition result methodology as the basis for promoting a multi-sector approach to address malnutrition. This will highlight how different sector programmes could be converged to reach those at risk.

We will review the process of reporting nutrition results to improve standardisation across reporting offices and to support quality assurance at country-level and centrally. We will develop guidance for effective monitoring of programmes. This will include advice on the selection of indicators to monitor coverage, outcomes and impact. It will also set out how qualitative information can be used to monitor and communicate progress across the breadth of our activities.

We will also undertake a review of nutrition data to identify where FCDO can add most value to strengthen government data systems for nutrition to improve targeting of services and to track whether those in need are being reached.

Recommendation 3: FCDO should strengthen systems for identifying and reaching the most marginalised women and children within its target groups.

Accept

Protecting the nutrition of the most marginalised women and children will remain a priority for the UK as part of our commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children. As noted by ICAI, we have made good progress to ensure nutrition services reach women and children in the most fragile and conflict-affected countries. As part of our commitment to improving food security and malnutrition for the most vulnerable, the Foreign Secretary announced a new UK Aid commitment to address COVID-19 and famine, and appointed Nick Dyer as the UK's first Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs. This commitment includes a new partnership with UNICEF to reform how child wasting is addressed will further strengthen the coverage and quality of nutrition services in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

We agree that further steps should be taken to make sure no one is left behind. We will undertake new analysis of the latest available data to determine who remains most vulnerable to malnutrition in the regions where we work and least reached by effective nutrition services. We will also re-evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies to ensure quality nutrition services reach those in need. As part of this, we will identify where there is an overlap between those most at risk of malnutrition and those targeted by social protection programmes. We will use this information to provide concrete guidance for country teams when designing and monitoring nutrition-related programmes to improve our ability to reach those most at risk.

Recommendation 4: FCDO should more consistently gather citizen feedback to help improve and tailor its nutrition programmes.

Accept

FCDO teams are already expected to make sure the views and experiences of citizens inform the design and delivery of programmes, and to adapt approaches to

different contexts. There are many positive examples of effective citizen feedback by FCDO – some of which have been highlighted in ICAI's review – but we agree that we can improve our consistency in this area.

We will integrate new FCDO guidance on citizen engagement (developed earlier in 2020) into our guidance on the development and delivery of nutrition programmes. We will host learning opportunities for FCDO nutrition focal points to build awareness of a new online learning module on citizen feedback – and to share experiences of citizen feedback within nutrition programming. We will also work with external technical assistance partners to FCDO to enhance their understanding of best practice in this area.

Recommendation 5: FCDO should scale up its work on making sustainable and nutritious diets accessible to all, to help address the double burden of malnutrition, through nutrition-sensitive agriculture and private sector development.

Accept

Enabling access to nutritious diets that are sustainable in the face of climate change is important for averting undernutrition, avoiding increases in overweight and obesity and achieving the SDGs. We welcome ICAI's findings on the progress we have made in this area. There are examples of our work that were not covered in the review. For example, our support to Africa Improved Foods has enabled high quality complementary foods to be distributed to the poorest children in Rwanda. We have also invested in new agri-technologies that raise the productivity of nutritious foods and reduce food loss. In 2019, the UK together with other partners launched the Just Rural Transition initiative which aims to support a transition in food systems to deliver sustainable, healthy diets. We also support the Access to Nutrition Index to ensure companies act responsibly and increase the healthiness of their food products, particularly in developing countries.

More can be done to improve access to nutritious diets. We will ensure FCDO teams understand how investments in agriculture and private sector development can boost availability and affordability of nutritious foods. As part of our work on a new results framework, we will also provide practical options for teams to monitor the impact of programmes on the diets of target groups, including women and children. We will also continue to strengthen the way nutrition outcomes are monitored in our Commercial Agriculture Portfolio Review to capture progress made to integrate nutrition objectives into these programmes.

We will continue to leverage UK science expertise and to invest in research and development to deliver new technologies and evidence to support the transition to climate-resilient and nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems. We will also continue to build support for the Just Rural Transition and support the move away from farming practices that harm climate and nature, towards more sustainable agriculture that provides nutritious food.

Recommendation 6: FCDO should work more closely with its partners to achieve the convergence of nutrition interventions, by aligning different sector programmes to focus on those communities most vulnerable to malnutrition.

Accept

Adopting a multi-sector approach to address malnutrition was a priority of the UK's 2017 Global Nutrition Position paper. Ensuring those at risk of malnutrition benefit from the range of services needed to address the immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition will remain essential for achieving the 2030 Global Goals.

FCDO already has experience promoting greater convergence of its own different sector programmes to improve nutrition. We will capture learning to date and develop best practice guidance on where convergence is most valuable and how this can be practically achieved through our own programmes. Convergence and, where relevant, integration of sector programmes will also be promoted as part of FCDO's work to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children.

We will also work with external partners to make sure governments have the best available guidance on how to make sure those most at-risk of malnutrition benefit from appropriate packages of support through different sector investments. Our new partnership with UNICEF will support this effort given its focus on promoting greater convergence of programmes to address the causes of acute malnutrition among women and children.