

# Technical Assistance to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)

The Technical Assistance to Strengthen Capabilities (TASC) project, funded by UK aid, responded to priority requests for support to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and the SUN Movement Secretariat (SMS) and to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) from September 2020 to July 2023. TASC was a follow-on TA facility from the Maximising the Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition Plus (MQSUN+ 2016-2020) within the broader Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) programme. TASC initially had a duration of 15 months, from September 2020 to November 2021, but was extended to July 2023. The extension phase focused on direct support to FCDO only but also included follow-up tracking on earlier support to the SUN movement.

The TASC project responded to **27 requests** from FCDO to help maximise the quality and effectiveness of its nutrition-related policy and programmes, to support evidence generation and lesson learning and to develop nutrition capacity. Key deliverables from these assignments are used by FCDO country programme advisors and global nutrition actors working across the sectors, and the project has been monitoring this via follow-up tracking.

The impact on each TASC assignment has been measured through a process of follow-up tracking to understand how project outputs have been used to meet strategic objectives and improve nutritional outcomes. Tracking of the impact of TA support (after three and six months) was collated through interviews with the client and key stakeholders. The interviews included providing evidence of uptake through examples of dissemination (publishing guidance documents, developing communication products e.g. blogs) and follow-on work (workplans and strategies).

This brief describes the support provided to FCDO which covered **five Thematic Areas**:

- *Tracking FCDO Nutrition Investments*
- *Nutrition Governance*
- *Nutrition Information Systems and Improved Decision Making*
- *Integrating Nutrition into Programmes*
- *Evidence Synthesis for Improved Action*

## Technical Assistance to FCDO

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## Tracking FCDO Nutrition Investments

FCDO has a long history of investing substantially in nutrition. Recent policy documents outline ongoing commitments that directly or indirectly impact nutritional outcomes. These include:

- [2023 UK Global Health Framework \(GHF\)](#)
- [2022 UK International Development Strategy \(IDS\)](#)
- [2021 position and approach papers on Ending Preventable Deaths of Mothers, Babies and Children by 2030 \(EPD\)](#)
- [2021 Health System Strengthening for Global Health Security and Universal Health Coverage \(HSS\)](#)

Critical initiatives include stepping up life-saving humanitarian interventions and taking forward work on climate change, nature and global health (IDS); strengthening global health security and working towards universal health coverage for more resilient health systems (HSS); strengthening fragile health systems, promoting human rights, gender and equity, reducing malnutrition through safe, healthier and sustainable food systems and addressing the health impacts of climate change (EPD).

### FCDO spend analysis and nutrition policy marker

FCDO engaged TASC to understand its **Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programmes** in 2019, 2020 and 2021, to assess its performance against Nutrition for Growth (N4G) commitments made in 2013. Under the TAN programme, technical assistance (TA) support to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) under MQSUN, MQSUN+ (Maximising Quality of Scaling Up Nutrition/Plus) and TASC has analysed FCDO spend on nutrition since 2010, led by TASC's partner Development Initiatives, and produced a data sheet for comparative analysis over the years.

To support the UK's commitment to adopt the **nutrition policy marker (NPM) as an accountability tool**, TASC conducted FCDO's annual NPM scoring of all projects based on 2020, 2021 and 2022 data used the new Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) NPM. TASC also produced an advocacy brief to support the NPM roll-out, together with guidance on the spend and NPM analysis.

In 2023, with climate becoming a priority for FCDO, under the IDS fourth key strategy, TASC included **climate-sensitivity** in their retrospective 2021 SUN Donor Network (SDN) dataset analysis, as both nutrition and climate are mainstreamed across FCDO programmes and included in the International Climate Financing (ICF) strategy.



- 1 **Nutrition spending [blogs](#) and reports**  
[2019](#), [2020](#), [2021](#)
- 2 **Nutrition policy marker advocacy brief and slide deck**

- 3 **Guidance on how to apply the SDN methodology and NPM to FCDO programmes**



#### Impact

##### Transparency

- The spend reports, blogs and social media messages have been published to give visibility of FCDO's spend, foster transparency, and stimulate future investment in nutrition.
- The blog and report were shared with FCDO comms and the FCDO Minister of State Andrew Mitchell and were published with a statement from FCDO on the decreased 2021 spend results.

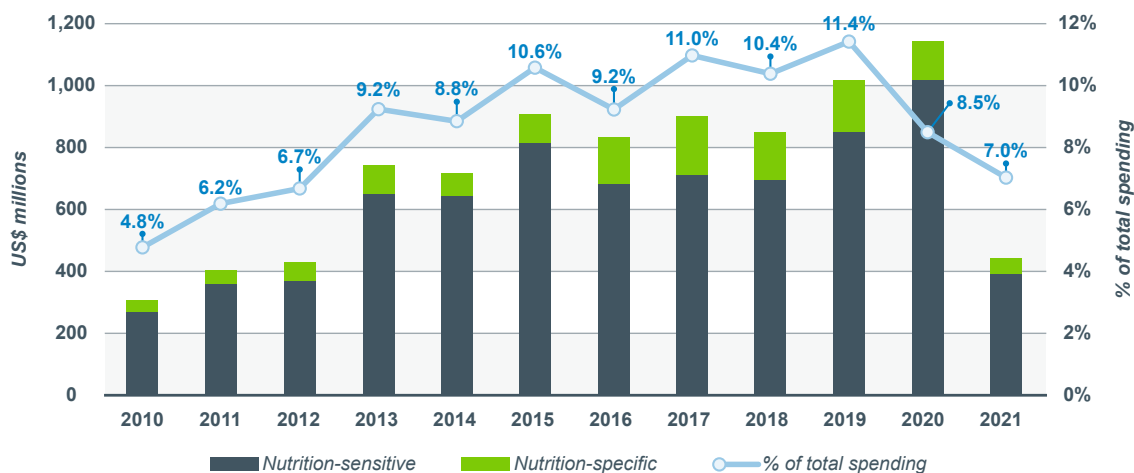
##### Capacity Building

- Guidance materials and capacity building have put FCDO in an excellent position to track its N4G financial commitment of spending £1.5 billion from 2022-2030 on nutrition objectives.
- Over 90% of the FCDO Programme Operating Framework (ProF) guidance on NPM was drawn from the TASC NPM advocacy brief and guidance.

##### Advocacy

- FCDO are advocating with other donors through the SUN Donor Network to use track their climate nutrition spend. The alarmingly low results will be discussed internally in regard to their ICF pledge, and they intend to present at the Committee of World Food Security (CFS) side event in October and look for opportunities at the next UN Climate Change Conference (COP 28) and UN Food Systems Summit (FSS).

## FCDO's total aid spending for nutrition from 2010 to 2021



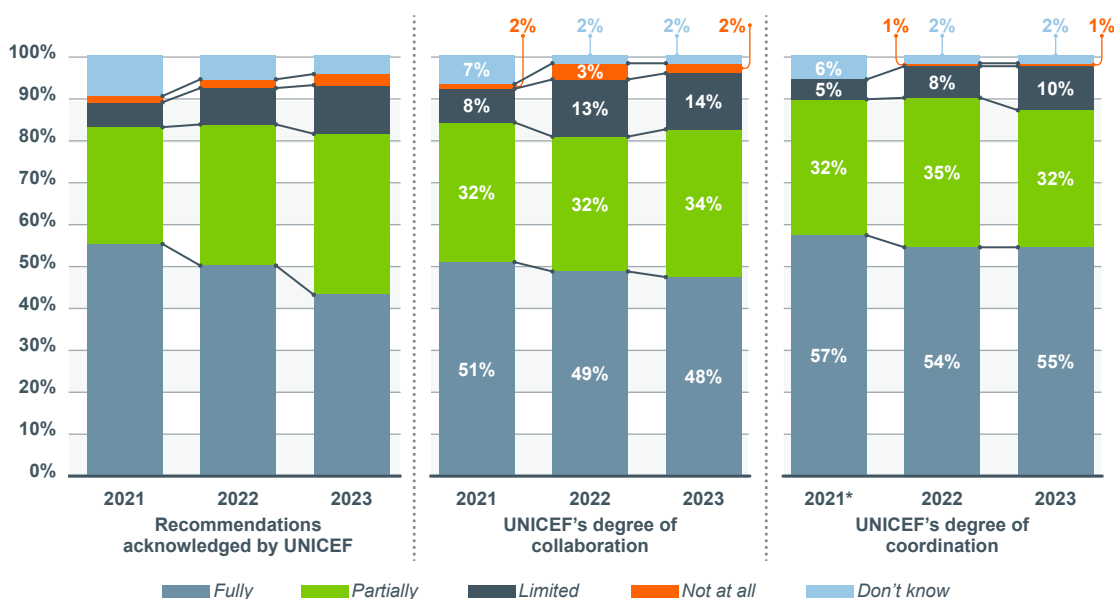
## Feedback mechanism for the Child Wasting Innovation Programme (formerly PARSNIP)

TASC supported FCDO in conducting the Child Wasting Innovation Programme (CWIP) feedback mechanism through the administration and analysis of an annual survey over the last three years, including the baseline in 2021. The feedback mechanism aims to help FCDO measure the progress of their five-year CWIP programme (2020–2025) by capturing stakeholders' perceptions of UNICEF's progress towards the treatment and prevention of child wasting in nine countries in Africa and Asia.

- 1 Summary of key findings and slide decks for 2021 (baseline), 2022 and 2023
- 2 Methodology note

- Impact**
- CWIP feedback mechanism findings have prompted FCDO and UNICEF to identify opportunities for doing things differently in their child wasting programmes.
  - In 2023, FCDO staff (with support from TASC) administered the survey tool and conducted data analysis independently using the methodology note. They now have the capacity to do the following two years' feedback mechanism in-house.

## Key findings of the CWIP FM on UNICEF's level of collaboration





## Nutrition Governance

The **2008 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition** highlighted an urgent need for new architecture and governance arrangements to address the (then) highly fragmented and poorly led nutrition sector. Improving governance for nutrition can help ensure that research and data are applied and translated into inclusive policies and programmes; sustained political commitment and accountability are generated; strategic partnerships and cooperation across sectors are enhanced; and transparent financial and human resources are sufficiently allocated to maximise quality and coverage of nutrition actions.

TASC implemented various assignments to improve nutrition governance and advocacy on climate action and nutrition:

### Review of the global nutrition architecture

TASC developed a summary of evidence of i) the effectiveness of global nutrition leadership in reducing fragmentation, increasing coherent and effective support to countries, and ensuring the nutrition community influences the wider architecture; ii) the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in holding entities to account and influencing behaviour.

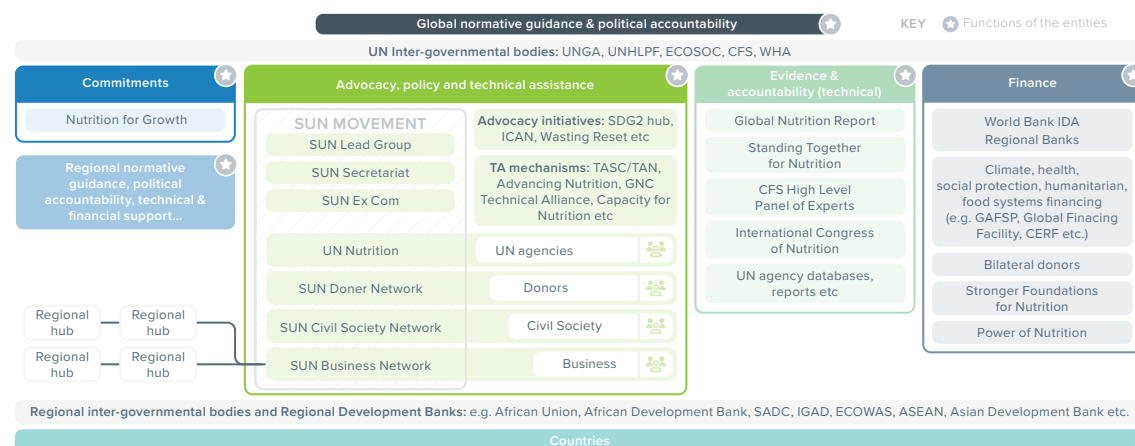
**1 Mapping of the nutrition architecture**

**2 Final report on the review of evidence and recommendations**

**Impact**

- The recommendations and content of the report will be used as a resource document by the FCDO Nutrition Policy Team to set FCDO's future plans for programming, policy and diplomatic engagement.

### Global Nutrition Architecture



### I-CAN Initiative on Climate Action and Nutrition

In preparation for COP 28, TASC supported the I-CAN WHO technical team to develop a set of key deliverables, including the I-CAN narrative, key messages on climate action and nutrition, and proposed baseline data and targets for the defined I-CAN outcome on food procurement.

**1 I-CAN narrative**

**2 Agreed key messages for the FSS stocktake and COP 28**

**3 Baseline data and targets for I-CAN outcome on food procurement**

**Impact**

- TASC support has ensured that I-CAN has key messages and a narrative that have been agreed upon by all member states in preparation for the World Health Assembly (WHA) side event, the FSS stock take and COP 28. TASC consultants brought the gender lens into the narratives and key messages, which was originally missing.
- A methodology has been developed to produce baseline values for the I-CAN outcome 3.3: Number of countries that factor climate into food procurement for food in public settings, decisions for food in safety nets and emergency programmes.



## Nutrition Information Systems and Improved Decision Making

A robust and trustworthy national nutrition information system (NIS), especially in fragile states impacted by climatic crises, is crucial to guide decision-makers to respond with the right action at the right time, targeting the most at risk. In the current climate, with constraints on funding and the impacts of climate change, an improved NIS with credible analysis and consensus can inform programme design and scalability based on constantly changing contexts, especially in the Horn of Africa.

### Support to FCDO country offices to improve nutrition information systems

TASC has supported FCDO country offices in Yemen, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya to review their national and sub-national information systems, identifying gaps and providing recommendations on improving data collection and analysis and informing decision-makers. In Yemen, Ethiopia and Somalia, TASC developed analytical scoping reports on what data exists, what the bottlenecks are, and why consensus on analysis and data sharing was limiting effective decision-making. TASC provided recommendations with a set of sequential actions to help improve the overall availability, quality and utilisation of nutrition and health data. They also included how to draw on multisectoral data collection mechanisms to understand the underlying drivers of malnutrition.

Through multisectoral needs assessments in Ethiopia and Kenya, and support to the government with a SMART+ survey in Ethiopia, together with the IMPACT/REACH programmes, TASC has supported vital data collection to understand the underlying causes of malnutrition at a time of consecutive failed rains. The assessment results have informed donors, implementing partners and governments on programme design and resource allocation. They have also fed into the national seasonal government-led data analysis processes with key stakeholders.



- 1 Yemen NIS situation analysis, and key findings reports and slide decks
- 2 Ethiopia recommendation brief; NIS scoping report; NIS and Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) surge and Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) reports
- 3 Ethiopia SMART+ survey and Multisectoral Household Assessment (MSHA) data sets, fact sheets and presentations
- 4 Somalia NIS landscape report; Drivers of Malnutrition report and slide deck; monitoring tracker
- 5 Kenya multisectoral needs dataset for Northern Kenya



### Impact

#### Yemen

- Post TA, the Nutrition Cluster (UNICEF chair) in Yemen developed a work plan to delineate roles and responsibilities, forming the Nutrition Information Task Force for Yemen.
- Since this support in Yemen, UNICEF has secured funding for approximately 65% of the recommended actions for developing a national nutrition monitoring and evaluation (M&E) accountability framework, aligned with WHA targets for 2030 and strengthened District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2) reporting.

#### Ethiopia

- Ethiopian NIS recommendations led to continued support to the Nutrition Cluster and Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit (ENCU) to prioritise key actions for improved NIS and rapid response mechanism. These were included in the ENCU July 2023 annual workplan and built into their advocacy for support and funding.
- In Ethiopia, the SMART+ survey and MSHA data and findings for Somali Region and Oromia will be used to inform nutrition actions and decisions on resource allocation. FCDO will use the assessment results to review their [Ethiopia Crises 2 Resilience \(EC2R\)](#) programme, which has flexible resource allocation, as well as FCDO-supported health programmes.

#### Somalia

- FCDO is planning to use the NIS and drivers of malnutrition recommendations to inform their humanitarian (HARBS) and development (Better Lives) programmes on how best to integrate nutrition and work with the government, the Nutrition Cluster, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and the Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Unit (FSNAU) to provide real-time monitoring data to inform programming within the changing context of Somalia.

#### Kenya

- FCDO co-financed multisectoral needs assessments in northern Kenyan counties to collect current nutrition-related data. This will be used for the [Kenya Integrated Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) situation analysis in mid-July 2023, to prioritise populations most at risk and identify priority sectoral needs for coordinated response.



## Integrating Nutrition into Programmes

Nutrition is inherently multi-sectoral and often lacks an institution home, as there are numerous pathways through which nutrition can be addressed such as through health and food systems, social protection, water hygiene and sanitation (WASH), and education. It is important to identify how sector-specific programmes can contribute to nutrition outcomes, and to deliberately coordinate and create an institutional, financial, and M&E arrangements that simultaneously address nutrition and other sectoral goals. TASC has supported FCDO in integrating nutrition into programmes via evidence-based guidance, as described below.

### Improving how FCDO reaches those most at risk of malnutrition, uses social assistance to improve nutrition outcomes, and monitors and evaluates nutrition-relevant programming

TASC developed evidence-based guidance notes to support the design, targeting and monitoring of investments to address malnutrition in response to recommendations from the **2020 Independent Commission for Aid Impact Review (ICAI)** of FCDO/DFID's work on nutrition. These included guidance on how to identify and reach key population groups that are most nutritionally at risk in different settings; how to use social protection programmes to target those most at risk of malnutrition; and how to improve M&E of nutrition-relevant FCDO programmes across sectors including health, social protection, WASH, agriculture and food systems. A fourth guidance document on food systems, that was also part of the ICAI response, is described in the next section.

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| 1 <b><u>Improving how to reach those most at risk of malnutrition guidance note</u></b> | 3 <b><u>Monitoring and evaluation of nutrition-relevant programmes - a guidance note</u></b> |
| 2 <b><u>How to promote better nutrition through social assistance guidance note</u></b> | 4 <b><u>ICAI summary briefs</u></b>  |

- Impact**
- FCDO received an 'adequate' score on the ICAI response, which is the highest possible mark they could receive. The guidance notes were a key part of the effective response.
  - The guidance notes informed TASC support to assignments in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, DRC, Malawi, and Kenya on nutrition pathways, indicators and cross-sectoral nutrition integration.

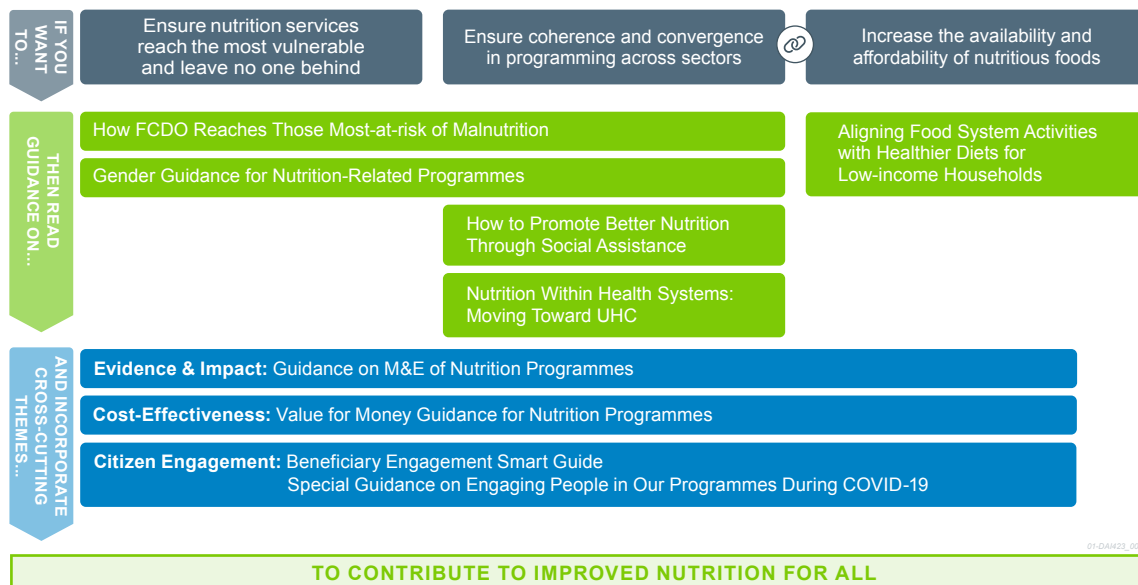
### Food systems and healthy diets

TASC produced and facilitated the uptake of evidence-based guidance to support FCDO's policy engagement and aid investments related to food systems for improving access to sustainable and nutritious diets. Aligned with the IDS and the EPD, this support informed TASC's contribution to the successful planning and execution of the thematic session on healthy diets and food systems for the 2021 Tokyo N4G Summit. It also enabled the FCDO Nutrition Policy Team to develop their country engagement strategy for nutrition integration across key geographies. Finally, it built FCDO health and private sector advisers' skills on integrating nutrition-sensitive food systems programming into their portfolios, including strategically important commercial agriculture investments in Africa.

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| 1 <b><u>Aligning food system activities with healthier diets for low-income households guidance note</u></b> | 4 <b><u>Food systems learning events for FCDO private sector development and health advisers</u></b>                             |
| 2 <b><u>Narrative for 2021 N4G thematic session on food system transformation for healthy diets</u></b>      | 5 <b><u>Expert advice for enhancing the nutritional impact of five FCDO agriculture and food systems-related investments</u></b> |
| 3 <b><u>Nutrition and food systems situation analysis for key FCDO regions and countries</u></b>             |  |

- Impact**
- Outputs built FCDO's foundation/proof of concept for taking a food systems approach, continuing to inform FCDO investments related to food systems, healthy diets and nutrition.
  - The situational analysis supported FCDO's engagement with EPD priority countries on nutrition.
  - Expert advice on how to integrate nutrition into current food system-related agriculture investments in Africa is under consideration.

## ICAI guidance notes towards improved nutrition



### Country-level support to South Sudan and Syria nutrition integration

TASC identified evidence and opportunities for FCDO to integrate nutrition into programming and country engagement plans for South Sudan and for the Building Local Resilience programme in Syria (BLRS). These assignments sought to ensure that nutrition becomes part of FCDO's humanitarian, resilience, and development priorities at the outset, to support the UK towards upholding their N4G commitment to spend at least £1.5 billion from 2022–2030 on nutrition objectives globally, and to score 'significant' on the OECD Nutrition Policy Marker.

- 1 Matrix of evidence and presentation for FCDO South Sudan**
- 2 Report and slide deck with recommendations on strengthening nutrition integration in the BLRS proposal**

#### Impact

- In South Sudan, FCDO used the findings to improve linkages between their activities and to increase delivery of joint nutrition-specific and -sensitive interventions.
- FCDO's Nutrition Policy Team adapted aspects of the South Sudan presentation to support messaging during their December 2022 Professional Development Conference with the Food and Agriculture Network.
- FAO used the recommendations to ensure a stronger focus on nutrition in the BLRS programme.



## Evidence Synthesis for Improved Action

Robust nutrition data and evidence are needed to support effective policies and programmes and to advocate for nutrition investment across sectors. While data and evidence for improved nutrition are widely available through journals, virtual dashboards, and regular products produced by UN agencies, think tanks, and international organisations, they require translation and contextualisation to be useful. The TASC assignments described below were all designed to make data and evidence more accessible to FCDO country offices and advisers, and support informed decision making for nutrition-related programming.

### COVID-19 evidence tracker

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, TASC summarised new data and evidence over five consecutive months to monitor the indirect impacts of COVID-19 on nutrition and policy responses through an easily navigable document. Topics covered included COVID-19 and the nutritional status of women and children; breastfeeding practices; dietary practices; availability and price of nutritious food; delivery and coverage of services; and gender, equity and social inclusion.

- 1 **Reports on tracking data and evidence on the indirect impact of COVID-19 on selected nutrition outcomes, interventions and policy responses ( Feb 2021; Mar 2021; Apr 2021)**
- 2 **Nutrition Hub presentation on the indirect impact of COVID-19 on nutrition**

- Impact**
  - The monthly trackers supported FCDO with consolidated up-to-date information and evidence gaps on COVID-19 and nutrition, for use and consideration on existing and future nutrition programmes and decision making related to COVID-19.

### FCDO guidance on child wasting and cholera

TASC developed concise, user-friendly, and evidence-based internal guidance for FCDO health and humanitarian advisors on child wasting prevention, management, and policy engagement considerations, and the integration of nutrition in cholera prevention and response protocols.

- 1 **Understanding wasting and wasting programmes guidance note**
- 2 **Wasting service provision integrated within health and emergency systems**
- 3 **Nutrition integration in cholera prevention and response guidance note**

- Impact**
  - The guidance notes will support FCDO advisors with non-technical backgrounds in nutrition in understanding, selecting and funding interventions and approaches for preventing and managing child wasting, and how to better integrate nutrition in cholera programming.
  - The notes will support business case development and/or adjustment of current programming for prevention of and response to nutrition crises.

### Nutrition interventions (ASSR) assessment – Democratic Republic of Congo

Since 2013, FCDO has been assisting the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) government to implement health programmes that include a CMAM component. TASC was asked to validate the accuracy of screening data and malnutrition recovery rates in supported communities and health zones reported by their implementing partner and provide recommendations to improve nutrition-related monitoring of their current health programme.

- 1 **Brief summary of CMAM evidence from the region**
- 2 **Final report with recommendations on improving the monitoring current programme**

- Impact**
  - The assignment highlighted the importance of CMAM interventions being robustly designed, with standardised indicators and appropriate mechanisms for tracking progress, providing evidence of impact, and enabling comparison across programmes.
  - The recommendations will help the FCDO DRC country office improve their current and future nutrition-related programmes, and assist other countries in replicating and improving similar programmes.