

A Collaboration Between:



Advocacy Guidance Note: Using the Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition

With financial support from:



*[Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition](#)



Photo courtesy of Nutrition International

Acknowledgments

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Acronyms

GTFN	Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition
SGBA	Sex- and gender-based analysis
AUC	African Union Commission
AU	African Union
NI	Nutrition International
SGII	She'll Grow Into It [Campaign]
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and all other identities not explicitly named
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
PACT	Purposeful, Actionable, Continuous, Trackable
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition



Photo courtesy of Nutrition International



Photo courtesy of Nutrition International

Background

Sector commitment to gender-transformative action in nutrition is relatively strong, but in many cases, organizations that deliver nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programs in low- and middle-income countries do not always know how to translate their internal commitment into concrete external actions at the national level. A goal of the [Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition \(GTFN\)](#) is to assist organizations in making the transition from commitment to action by providing practical guidance and tools based on the framework.

This advocacy guidance note is the first in a series of practical tools designed to help organizations incorporate the GTFN into their nutrition policies and programs. While many advocacy guides exist, most focus solely on either nutrition or gender, not both. Our aim is not to duplicate these existing resources but to offer a complementary perspective that bridges both nutrition and gender. By using the GTFN's unique approach, which merges systems thinking with empowerment-based approaches, organizations can enrich their existing advocacy efforts and promote more robust national gender-transformative nutrition policies and programs.

End goal: Nutrition policies, strategies, and programs at a country level adopt a gender-transformative approach.

Conceptualization and focus of the GTFN advocacy guidance note

This guidance note was informed by a landscape analysis of existing resources for gender-transformative approaches to nutrition which found a lack of robust advocacy guidance. Additionally, a needs assessment undertaken with GTFN Coalition members further emphasized the demand for guidance on how to integrate the GTFN into national-level advocacy. Through consultations with the GTFN Coalition, a consensus was reached to focus this guidance note on identifying

advocacy objectives using the GTFN. Recognizing that many organizations already have established advocacy strategies and expertise, this guidance note is intended to serve as a supplementary tool to be used in conjunction with existing organizational advocacy plans.

Aim: Advocate for a gender-transformative approach to ending malnutrition using the GTFN by:

- Applying a new multisectoral approach to defining and addressing the challenge of malnutrition across different issue areas.
- Identifying core policy areas for advocacy for gender-transformative action in nutrition in a national setting.
- Developing country-specific nutrition advocacy objectives or “asks,” and accompanying messaging using the GTFN.
- Supporting and complementing existing resources while creating a unique added value related to existing agendas by centring the systems-thinking approach of the GTFN.

Who is this guidance note for?

- Organizations working across and seeking to influence multiple levels of government (including national, subnational, and regional) to address malnutrition and advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- Subject matter experts working on multisectoral gender and nutrition issues who want to work together for more effective policy changes in contributing GTFN domains/sectors.

How this guidance note should be used: Recognizing that many organizations already have established advocacy strategies and expertise, this guidance note is intended to serve as a supplementary tool to be used in conjunction with existing organizational advocacy strategies and tools. It is also assumed that users of this note will have a basic understanding of the key components of the GTFN.

Why use the Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition for advocacy?

While there is growing recognition that gender equality is essential for good nutrition, it is not always evident how to connect gender and nutrition in practice or how to advocate for such change. The Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition seeks to address this gap. The GTFN is a truly innovative approach that encourages practitioners to think differently so that they can act differently. Its conceptual model, supported by research and practice, enables improved gender analysis, solutions design, and monitoring and evaluation of nutrition approaches, as well as interventions promoting women's and girls' empowerment. By exploring the complex factors across systems that interact with, foster, or limit empowerment, the GTFN identifies areas for action that not only improve nutrition outcomes but also transform gender relations, empower women and girls, and create more equitable systems.

The GTFN applies systems thinking to describe how multiple factors interact to limit or advance development and/or nutrition outcomes. Addressing power structures and harmful gender norms requires a multisectoral approach that embeds systems thinking into program or policy design and delivery. Traditional power holders, advocates, and influencers can be mobilized as agents of change and work together with women, girls, and people of diverse gender identities to use their positions to engage with this process and shape systems to create a more equitable world.

The GTFN understands that motivations, ambitions, and limitations drive how individuals interact within multiple systems. It takes a person-centric approach to understanding systems as a key requirement for addressing the complex nature of malnutrition and gender inequality. A gender-transformative approach understands how power dynamics limit or enhance the participation of women and girls and their ability to claim their rights. Gender-transformative actions “actively” seek to build equitable social norms, structures, policies, and individual gender-equitable behaviour, while also transforming harmful root causes of inequality.



Figure 1. GTFN Infographic: The GTFN modularizes the multisectoral dimensions of malnutrition captured in the UNICEF Framework and provides an analysis of each domain using the three empowerment components: agency, resources, and opportunity structure. The seven domains that outline the relationship between diet and disease, as it relates to nutrition (GTFN, 2020).

The GTFN provides a unique way of advocating for gender-transformative action in nutrition that builds on existing complementary resources (e.g., Standing Together for Nutrition's [Gender Policy Brief](#), FHI360's [Closing the Gender Gap Action Agenda](#), Scaling Up Nutrition's [Gender and Nutrition Communications Toolkit](#), Food System's [Countdown Initiative](#)). These resources emphasize the need to expand the reach of nutrition programs, ensure access, and disrupt the gender nutrition gap by countering disparities rooted in harmful gender norms. Moreover, they recognize that the interconnected impact of food systems shapes lives and that addressing gender and social inequalities is an empowering and effective manner to tackle malnutrition. Ultimately, everyone is accountable for gender-transformative change, and this tool not only supports existing resources but creates a unique added value related to these existing agendas by centering the systems-thinking approach of the GTFN.

Advocate for a gender-transformative approach to ending malnutrition using the GTFN

1

Who is going to work on this?

1. What internal personnel will be a part of this effort?

2

What are the landscapes where you're operating?

1. What is the in-country/region situation for women and girls?
2. How does nutrition intersect with other areas of policy in my country?
3. Who are the key stakeholders?
4. What policies and financing currently exist?

3

Define your goal: what is the change you want to see?

1. Conduct a gap analysis
2. Define your advocacy objective or "ask"

4

What is your GTFN advocacy strategy?

1. Who are your target audience(s)?
2. What are your advocacy messages?
3. What would success look like for your advocacy efforts?

5

What do you need to execute your GTFN advocacy strategy

1. Which resources may be required?

6

What are the potential risks?

1. Which risks are most relevant to the execution of your strategy?

7

What is your M&E plan?

1. How will you know if you're on the right track?

Who is going to work on this?

1.1 What internal personnel will be a part of this effort?

Guiding prompts

- **Internally** – Who will be included on the team? What are the necessary inputs? Etc. team composition, necessary inputs, etc.?
- **Externally** – Who will support the efforts?

What are the landscapes where you're operating?

2.1 What is the in-country/region situation for women and girls?

Guiding prompts*

**Prompts regarding Agency, Resources & Opportunity Structure are presented in no particular order — please afford equal consideration to all.*

AGENCY: In your context, what type of agency do women and girls have? Can they define their own goals, make decisions for themselves, and negotiate, influence, or exert control over their lives?

- Do policies explicitly recognize the importance of agency and decision-making in achieving the nutrition of women, girls, and people of diverse gender identities; include specific provisions to empower them to actively participate in nutrition-related decisions, resources, and opportunities needed for informed decision-making; and address and challenge traditional gender norms and roles that may hinder their decision-making?
- Are specific measures outlined in policies that support collective action among women's groups or organizations in the context of nutrition and food security?
- Does the policy content include a focus on enhancing women's knowledge and skills related to nutrition, food preparation, and agricultural practices?

- Do policies prioritize the participation of women and people with diverse gender identities in local governance, community-level initiatives, and leadership positions related to nutrition and food systems?

RESOURCES: In your context, what type of resources can women and girls access? Can they earn and keep money, own land and possessions, control their time, access the same information as men, and move around freely?

- Do policies explicitly recognize and address the barriers that hinder women, girls, and people with diverse gender identities from accessing and controlling resources relevant to nutrition, including challenging traditional gender norms?
- Do policies include specific provisions that aim to ensure women's equitable access to resources like land, credit, income, and agricultural inputs?
- Do policies prioritize programs or initiatives that empower women economically and promote women's ownership and management of productive resources, ensuring they have increased control over income generated from agriculture, food production, and nutrition-related activities?
- Do policies emphasize the importance of legal and policy reforms that support women's rights to access and control resources critical for improved nutrition?

OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE: In your context, what are the formal and informal opportunity structures? What are the laws, customs, regulations, policies, and norms governing behaviour?

- Do policies outline strategies or interventions that explicitly recognize, address, challenge, or transform harmful gender norms that impact nutrition and food security outcomes, or empowerment in women's decision-making and agency?
- Do policies outline gender-responsive services and strategies that cater to the distinct nutritional needs and challenges of diverse women and girls across different life stages and circumstances?
- Do policies acknowledge and consider the impact of women's workload on their ability to achieve adequate nutrition for themselves and their families?

- Do policies include specific provisions that outline strategies to alleviate women's workload (i.e., by promoting more gender-equitable division of labour in the household) to enable them to achieve adequate nutrition for themselves and their families?

Helpful resources

Nutrition International's [Sex- and gender-based analysis \(SGBA\): A toolkit for nutrition programs](#).

Nutrition International's [SGBA Tool 2: Identifying gender barriers in country landscape](#).

Illustrative example

Nutrition International (NI) played a technical and financially supportive role in the development of the Adolescent Nutrition Advocacy Strategy 2023-2028 being implemented by the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) governments and partners in Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Eswatini, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The advocacy strategy was launched during the community's 71st Health Ministers Conference in Maseru, Lesotho. The strategy aims to improve nutrition and health through reduction of the prevalence of underweight, overweight, and obesity, and decrease the prevalence of anemia and other micronutrient deficiencies among adolescent boys and girls in the ECSA-HC region.

In its supportive capacity, NI ensured that aspects of agency, resources, and opportunity were considered during the strategy development process. Among the many commitments, the ECSA-HC member states committed to:

- Supporting the drafting and operationalization of multisectoral adolescent nutrition policies and strategies.
- Encouraging more robust integration of adolescent nutrition in education, agriculture, health, water sanitation & hygiene (WASH), social protection, and related systems.
- Advocating for the enforcement of laws and regulations aimed at stopping harmful practices including female genital mutilation, early marriages, and teenage/adolescent pregnancy among girls, especially in marginalized area

2.2 How does nutrition intersect with other areas of policy in my country?

Guiding prompts

Look at the seven domains of GTFN and discuss:

- In which domain(s) does my organization operate, and how does nutrition intersect with them?
- Across each of the domains, do women and girls have agency to make their own decisions? If not, where and why?
- Across each of the domains, what resources can women and girls access? Where are the gaps and why do they exist?
- What structures/policies/institutions govern policy, financing, and programming in these domains?

Helpful resources

See: 2.1 Identify in-country/regional landscapes.

Illustrative example

See: 2.1 Identify in-country/regional landscapes.

2.3 Who are the key stakeholders?

Guiding prompts

- Identify key stakeholders among elected officials, bureaucrats, judiciary, civil society, advocates, and experts.
- Are gender equality advocates or women's rights groups on your list? If not, why?
- What are your key stakeholders' positions on gender and nutrition? How does that affect your work?
- Which of the key stakeholders need to work with you to design advocacy strategies and carry them out?

Helpful resources

See: 2.1 Identify in-country/regional landscapes.

Illustrative example

See: 2.1 Identify in-country/regional landscapes.

2.4 What policies and financing currently exist?

Guiding prompts

- What are the main financing flows and policies that govern nutrition and gender in your context?
- Where do they come from, and how sizable are they? What impact do they have (positive and negative)?

Helpful resources

See: 2.1 Identify in-country/regional landscapes.

Illustrative example

See: 2.1 Identify in-country/regional landscapes.

Define your goal: what is the change you want to see?

3.1 Conduct a gap analysis

Guiding prompts

- From your landscape mapping, what are the key gaps in gender and nutrition financing, policy, and programming across the seven domains of the GTFN?
- Of these gaps, where is your organization or coalition best placed to provide and advocate for solutions? Where do you have the expertise, connections, and legitimacy?
- Of these gaps, what are the potential policy or financing solutions? If you don't know, how would you find out?

Illustrative example

The African Union Commission (AUC) and NI launched the global “She’ll Grow Into It” (SGII) advocacy campaign during the High-Level Dialogue on Nutrition Financing in Maseru, Lesotho, on March 24, 2023. The objective of the campaign at the continental level is to improve the health, wellbeing, and empowerment of girls through efforts to prevent iron-deficiency anemia. The SGII campaign is being rolled out to AU member states through advocacy initiatives and events to influence policies and programs.

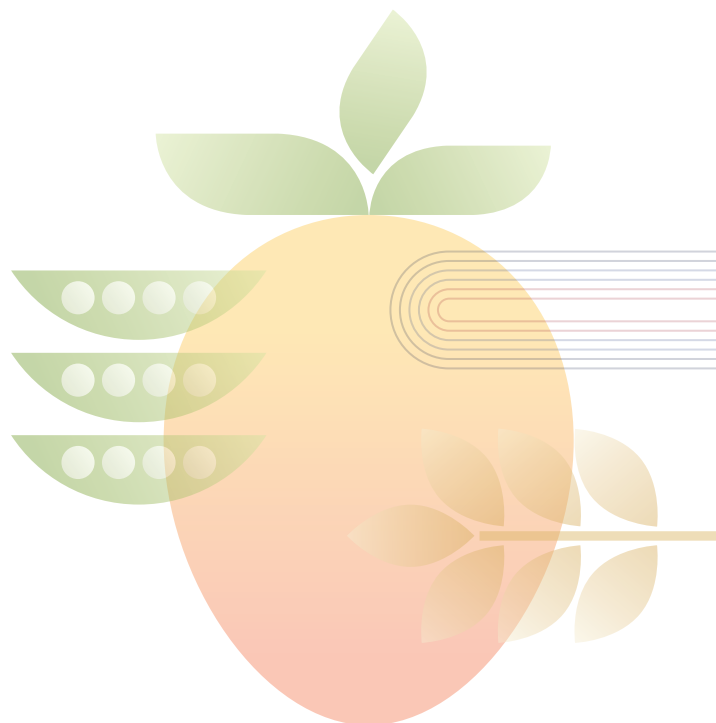
3.2 Define your advocacy objective or “ask”

Guiding prompts

In a group and over a period that allows time for reflection and consultation, brainstorm, investigate, and prioritize a series of policy and financing solutions to the identified gaps.

- Do your solutions consider outcomes for women and men, girls and boys, and LGBTI/people with diverse gender expression?
- Do your solutions cut across multiple domains or policy areas (e.g., economic empowerment, or water and sanitation)?
- Do you understand how your solutions would affect the agency, resources, and opportunity structures for women and girls?
- Who would your solutions impact and how? What would they cost?

Narrow down your solutions to one to five critical “asks.” Use the [SMART](#) or [PACT](#) frameworks to craft meaningful and actionable advocacy objectives that set clear outcomes and indicators specific to the gender-transformative change you want to see.



What is your GTFN advocacy strategy?

4.1 Who are your target audience(s)?

Guiding prompts

- Conduct a stakeholder and power analysis to determine the main actors to include and who your advocacy should target.
- Examples include members of parliament, policymakers from ministries of health or education, traditional leaders, multilateral organizations, donors, countries, and institutions such as teachers' organizations, police, or health centres.
- Analyze their awareness of gender inequality and consider if their awareness level affects the issue in question. Is your primary target audience positive, negative, or neutral on gender issues?

Helpful resources

- Rutgers. (2019). Module 4 Gender transformative approach and advocacy: Adopting a gender transformative approach to advocacy in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Utrecht, NL: Rutgers. <https://rutgers.international/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Rutgers-GTA-manual-module-4.pdf>
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- Diakonia. (n.d.). Gender mainstreaming toolbox: A guide and a checklist. <https://www.diakonia.se/en/how-we-work/long-term-development/mainstreamed-areas/diakonias-gender-mainstreaming-toolbox/>

4.2 What are your advocacy messages?

Guiding prompts

- Ensure that messages explicitly address gender equality.
- When you articulate "asks," include any relevant tailoring to the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men, boys and girls, and LGBTQIA+/people with diverse gender expression.
- What are the impacts of your asks on women and girls, boys and men?
- What happens if your asks are unsuccessful?
- What connections to decision-maker interests and priorities can you make in your messaging?

Helpful resources

See: 4.1 Target audience(s).

4.3 What would success look like for your advocacy efforts?

Guiding prompts

- Ensure data are disaggregated by sex and age, and gender statistics are available to inform target audiences on the outcomes achieved.
- Use the gender-sensitive indicators that were developed when you set the objectives.

Illustrative example

The NI Kenya team has been intentional in adopting gender-transformative approaches through advocacy sessions with the county government leaders, members of county assembly, and women county leaders and representatives. The team has championed gender-transformative interventions that will improve the nutrition, health, and economic situation of women in Kenya. This is a multisectoral approach that works closely with the other sectors such as the gender and social services at the county level, as well as in collaboration with the SUN Movement.

References:

Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition. (2020). What is a gender-transformative framework for nutrition? <http://www.gendernutritionframework.org>



Photo courtesy of Nutrition International

What do you need to execute your GTFN advocacy strategy

5.1 Which resources may be required?

Guiding prompts

- Who else needs to be consulted or involved?
- What staffing, expertise, and funding do you need?
- How will you develop an operational plan for your strategy?
- What roles and responsibilities will everyone have?

What are the potential risks?

6.1 Which risks are most relevant to the execution of your strategy?

Guiding prompts

- What are the risks of your strategy to members of your organization, partners, and women and girls? How will you mitigate these risks?
- What happens if you don't succeed?

What is your M&E plan?

7.1 How will you know if you're on the right track?

Guiding prompts

- Do you have the right indicators of progress, and can you collect the data for them in a timely way?
- Do you have systems set up to regularly review progress and course-correct if needed?
- What happens if you don't succeed?



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