

IGNITE has developed a client diagnostic tool to assess its clients' progress towards mainstreaming gender and nutrition. This case study outlines the lessons learned through the development of the tool and highlights the benefits of implementing it. The guiding question for IGNITE in developing the client diagnostic was:

What does it mean to "mainstream" gender and nutrition for an agricultural institution?

IGNITE's client diagnostic process scores clients (African agricultural institutions) across **8 domains** to assess their progress towards mainstreaming gender and nutrition.



8 Domains of IGNITE's Diagnostic

1. Policies and Approaches
2. Culture and Capacity
3. Budget Allocation
4. Evidence Collection
5. Evidence Analysis
6. Do No Harm
7. Accountability
8. Integration of gender and nutrition

For teams providing **technical assistance (TA)** and **capacity building (CB)** looking to implement a diagnostic of their own:

Value of a Diagnostic



For clients

- Demystifies gender and nutrition
- Identifies opportunities
- Spurs institutional commitment
- Objective external assessment



For TA & CB teams

- Identifies opportunities for TA & CB
- Yardstick to measure impact
- Relationship builder
- Aligns TA & CB team objectives

Lessons Learned

In Tool Development

1 Gender and nutrition: complementary, but different

Although nutrition and gender outcomes mutually affect each other institutions conceptualize and operationalize them as two distinct topics. Gender is often considered at the institutional and programmatic levels and operationalized through a gender policy. Nutrition is usually considered at the programmatic level and operationalized through nutrition approaches. Therefore, a diagnostic process must be flexible and not always treat the two themes in the same way.

2 Assemble the right team for the job

Developing and implementing a diagnostic assessment in gender and nutrition requires a specialized team with expertise in numerous fields. For IGNITE's diagnostic tool, thematic experts in gender, nutrition, MEL, and organizational development were crucial for success. Cross-sector skills, such as qualitative interview skills, analytical tool development skills, client management, and project management were also essential at different stages of tool development.

3 Iterate and learn by doing

IGNITE benefitted greatly from its iterative approach to tool development, which allowed the team to make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, and make improvements based on what works and what does not. IGNITE found that moving to piloting once a minimum viable product was ready and keeping the overall goals in mind was important to avoid getting lost in the weeds of continuously iterating.

In Implementation

4 Balance a participatory and top-down approach

Any diagnostic process includes a level of collaboration between client and advisor. This collaboration can include varying degrees of client participation, such that the relationship becomes more of a partnership, as opposed to one party analyzing the other. Each approach has pros and cons, and each client has different needs and expertise, so striking a balance in IGNITE's approach was important for the success of the diagnostic.

5 Strike a balance on rigor and efficiency

Conducting a diagnostic is a time- and resource-intensive activity as it requires thorough planning, data collection, and analysis. Finding the right balance between rigor and efficiency is imperative. It is also important to note that this time and resource weight is felt differently by the two parties so this balancing must be done for both sides to ensure continued engagement.

6 Do not get too technical

It is easy to get lost in the technical details of domains and scoring, which can translate to a highly technical report that yields less value for a client. IGNITE has found that keeping its audience (the client) in mind when scoring and reporting is essential for producing a useful final product.

7 Be proactive and structured when action planning

One of the main purposes of a diagnostic is not only to identify opportunities for improvement but also to help clients take action and address those opportunities. IGNITE found that taking a proactive and strategic approach to action planning can help ensure that momentum is not lost, and opportunities are addressed in a methodical and prioritized manner. This includes prioritizing identified opportunities, creating improvement plans, using evidence and best practices, and ensuring client senior leadership is buys-in to the process.