Gender and equality in MSPs

Why is this important for MSPs?

The SUN Strategy for 2016-2020 acknowledges that marginalisation and inequity is a key issue, stating that with support from SUN, SUN countries will ensure equity, equality and non-discrimination for all, with women and girls at the centre of efforts, by 2020. Equity should be considered in the design and set-up of MSPs themselves, by **striving to involve representatives from vulnerable or marginalised communities, and women, at all levels and within decision-making processes**. Groups might be considered marginalised for different reasons depending on context, including their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, economic background, disability, age, or a combination of these.

In order to address this multi-dimensional issue, equity (including gender equity and equality) should be considered as a cross-cutting issues in all aspects of MSP design, planning and implementation. **People leading, building, or regenerating an MSP should identify marginalised groups** within their countries, and ensure that representatives from these groups are invited to participate in the MSP in meaningful ways, or that key needs of these groups are considered. **Ensuring that women from within any of these groups are also included is essential**. It is not just about inviting people to join, or ensuring groups are represented, however: in order to better facilitate access for marginalised groups **it is important to consider that particular groups may require different support and have different needs in order to achieve access to the MSP** and provide valuable inputs. Achieving this will not only ensure the MSP is equitable and non-discriminatory within itself, but also help improve nutrition outcomes amongst the most vulnerable sections of society due to the inputs of these

groups.

Examples of stages of the MSP when particular attention should be given to equity and equality:

When planning the MSP:

Establish scope and mandate – the viewpoints of marginalised people, or trusted entities representing these, should be included

Develop monitoring mechanisms – ensure inclusion of gender and equity issues within monitoring criteria.

Thinking about representation and roles:

Mapping stakeholders – ensure someone is representing women and other marginalised groups, with consideration for diversity within groups, intersectionality among different aspects of marginalisation, and multiple vulnerabilities.

Power in MSPs – be aware of issues of power within the MSP and that representatives of marginalised groups may have different support and communication needs in order to contribute to the MSP.

Leadership

Manage the process – making sure that the representatives of marginalised people and their interests are included in the day-to-day running of the MSP.

How does this work in practice?

Uganda's nutrition MSP is led by the Office of the Prime Minister, but includes the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This ministry is not only responsible for ensuring women's equity and equality are promoted within the development process, but also for promoting the rights of some other vulnerable groups (notably however, LGBTQI issues are

not considered in this working definition of gender). Considerations for women's equality have been included at all levels of the MSP, including the stakeholders, management processes at various levels (government level to district coordination committees) and in the implementation of nutrition projects. While it is important to include ministries dealing with equity issues on the MSP, note that simply including the ministry is unlikely to be enough to ensure equity on the MSP; specific work should be undertaken to work towards full recognition of marginalised groups and their needs.

Namibia's MSP (called NAFIN) also explicitly includes the Ministry of Gender at national level. This means that gender issues are tabled and discussed, and that gender is considered in the MSP's actions. However, NAFIN does not make allowances for women to be specifically included on the MSP itself, which is an area the MSP could consider. In addition, the committee takes into consideration nutrition activities for the most marginalised group in Namibia – the San people – but does not currently have San participation in the MSP itself, another area for consideration.