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# Independent Dialogue Synthesis Report

## Key Findings from CARE's UN Food Systems Summit Dialogue Process

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## Executive Summary

Over 10 months, CARE convened dialogues across Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), Asia and the Pacific Islands (APAC), and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to garner inclusive participation in the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). Through multi-stakeholder conversations, the dialogues generated feedback on existing challenges within food systems, areas for CARE to prioritize moving forward, and creative solutions to complex global problems. The dialogues sparked unprecedented engagement around food systems change, putting differently interested actors in one room to generate novel approaches and solutions that actors like CARE can use to inform their activities.

This rich data prompts reflection on strategies and priorities. This synthesis is meant to begin that process, something for respective CARE teams to take forward in their conversations, programs, and teams to build upon and continue. The purpose of this synthesis is to enhance understanding of what issues dialogues raised and work to coordinate CARE staff around key areas to act on moving forward from the Summit.

After an analysis of the feedback reports for each dialogue, this synthesis identified nine emergent themes. These range from enhancing risk insurance available to farmers to reorienting agricultural extension services around climate-smart agriculture. The themes are explained in detail below and provided with supportive context from the dialogues in which those issues were particularly notable. Lastly, this synthesis provides additional sections that connect the dialogue findings with CARE’s programmatic areas and the UNFSS National Pathways.

### The UN Food Systems Summit

In 2021, The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, called on all world leaders to take part in a historic Summit to establish and accelerate collective action to transform food systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragilities and inequalities in food systems, stressing the urgent need to ensure that food systems

are more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient.

The UNFSS launched bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable, and equitable food systems. The Summit emphasized that we all must work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food. It was a summit for everyone, everywhere – a people’s summit. Guided by five Action Tracks, the UNFSS brought together key players from the worlds of science, business, policy, healthcare, and academia, as well as farmers, indigenous people, youth organizations, consumer groups, environmental activists, and other key stakeholders. The Action Tracks were:

1. Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
2. Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
3. Boost nature-positive production
4. Advance equitable livelihoods
5. Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress

### CARE’s Role in the UNFSS

Action Track 4 (AT4) was chaired by CARE CEO, Michelle Nunn. Inequality constrains the ability for food systems to deliver sustainable and equitable livelihoods. CARE’s goal is to create inclusive and diverse food systems that contribute to the elimination of poverty, and food and nutrition insecurity by creating jobs, raising incomes across food value chains, protecting, and enhancing cultural and social capital, reducing risks for the poorest and increasing value distribution.

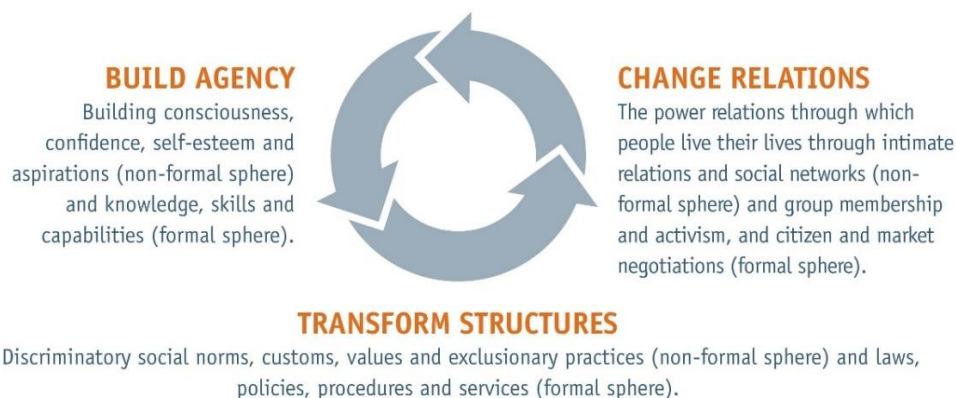
To support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, AT4 worked to ensure that food systems ‘Leave No One Behind’ by addressing inequality as one of the root causes of poverty in all its forms: inequality in access to economic opportunities, gender inequality and inequality in access to productive resources and services that restrict the advancement of equitable livelihoods. By the time of the Summit in 2021, CARE brought forward:

- An innovative set of inclusive, varied and gender-responsive solutions, that are people-centered and respectful of diversity and indigenous knowledge, for the advancement of equitable livelihoods in food systems is developed and socialized.
- A critical mass of government, private sector, public sector, community-based entities, and other actors ready to announce significant commitments to act in line with these solutions.
- A global movement, with previously unheard voices, emerging to challenge inequity in food systems livelihoods and public, private, and voluntary sector bodies are responsive and supportive.

### AT4 Goals to Advance Equitable Livelihoods

Advancing equitable livelihoods requires building agency of the underrepresented -- those that lack the space or the enabling environment in which to exercise their power and rights. It implies protecting and strengthening the capacities and the knowledge, resilience, and innovation that they possess. Changing power relations in food systems is also critical and requires changes both in formal spheres (market negotiations,

group membership, etc.) and in non-formal spheres.



The shift involves transforming structures, including confronting social norms and practices that are embedded in structures that systematically privilege some groups over others, marginalizing the poor. We must confront the inherent barriers within institutions and policies, with the aim of achieving lasting change so that food systems can lead to equitable, sustainable livelihoods, rather than just temporary or seasonal increases in opportunities. Within food systems, this transformation means adjustments to regimes that regulate access to, use of and control over resources, especially those defining land distribution, labour division, and decision-making power.

Central to advancing equitable livelihoods in food systems are the nearly 500 million small-scale food producers who often work in fragile and vulnerable terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Their production choices, technologies, natural resource management, and market links to value chains determine not only the sustainability and resilience of their livelihoods and their capacity to overcome poverty and food insecurity, but also the diversity of food that will be available to their communities and to consumers and the prices they will pay. Equally, the choices made by consumers and the processors, wholesalers and retailers who supply them with food, affects the opportunities available for small-scale producers. But livelihoods in food systems also include wage labour and business along food value chains, and international migrant workers who often have less access to services or support due to their different citizenship status.

The role and potential of the agricultural private sector (corporations, small- and medium- sized enterprises, small businesses, women self-help groups etc.), also needs to be recognized and leveraged to improve equitable access to livelihoods. The private sector holds the potential to generate much-needed investment in agriculture and food systems and ensure responsible and culturally appropriate supply chains that can benefit small-scale producers, workers, and consumers. However, irresponsible, and inappropriate business and financial sector operations can undermine this potential. Responsible investments in food and agriculture require the proactive engagement and commitment of all partners. It is imperative that global financial institutions and organizations cooperate towards responsible investment in agri-food value chains.

Barriers that hamper access to financing for the private sector also need to be addressed. Increasing investment and access to finance is critical to achieve rural transformation, especially for small-scale food producers and rural micro, small and medium agri-food enterprises. In this context, public finance can play an

important role in supporting rural transformation and investment in food systems, mitigating risks, and attracting more private investment.

### Whose Livelihoods?

Discussing food systems means going beyond the classical value chain approach. It is important to consider the multifunctionality of food and agriculture systems. AT4 had to identify the most vulnerable actors in food systems both in urban and rural areas, with a view to ensuring their human and labor rights and promoting their livelihoods. When dealing with livelihoods in agriculture and fisheries, the work must not be limited to production but also production of non-agricultural commodities. AT4 seeks to address how food systems contribute to sustainable development involving a combination of economic, social, and environmental issues.

The workforce in agriculture, fisheries, and food production whose livelihoods need to be improved to ensure equity and social justice are:

- **Agricultural workforce:** comprises an estimated 1 billion farmers (self-employed) and waged, employed agricultural workers.
- **Farmers:** small-scale/family farms to large commercial farms, plantations.
- **Waged agricultural workers:** employed on farms and plantations in crop, livestock, dairy, aquacultural and non-food crop production 300-500 million workers. Migrant, women, indigenous, youth, rural/urban. Full-time, part time, seasonal, casual, temporary, piece rate workers.
- **Fishers/fisherfolk:** marine and freshwater.
- **Food processing/manufacturing workers:** food manufacturing includes all workers who contribute to the processing and packaging of food in global and local supply chains.
- **Transport/distribution workers:** handling and delivering raw food products, semi-processed and processed food products including riders.
- **Supermarket/shop and market workers:** handling packaged, canned foods and fresh foods when serving customers and filling shelves.
- **Food preparers/servers:** restaurants, cafes, hotels, conference centers, catering companies, canteens in schools & factories, street food vendors.

### The Dialogue Process

In preparation for the UNFSS, the UN Special Envoy invited all sectors of society to share their perspectives and solutions. Dialogues were conducted around the world both before and after the Summit, effectively crowdsourcing sustainable solutions to strengthen local and global food systems. The involvement of different stakeholder groups in the Dialogues was essential because food systems touch every aspect of human existence. The dialogues were critical to the UNFSS engagement process and offered a purposeful and organized forum for stakeholders to come together to share evidence, experiences, and new ideas to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and disposes of food. The Summit process

“I am delighted to announce the start of the Food Systems Summit Dialogues because this is an exciting opportunity to share the floor with everyone who cares about making food systems more equitable and sustainable. The Summit will only be effective at setting out the pathway to 2030 if we successfully leverage the collective knowledge and experience of the broadest possible cross-section of the population.”

**Dr. Agnes Kalibata**, UN Secretary General's  
Special Envoy for the 2021 UNFSS

applied the best evidence, ideas, and experiences from around the world to inform new, more sustainable directions for food systems. The dialogues used a standardized approach to convening, curating, and facilitating structured conversations among groups with different perspectives on ways to modify food systems to work for the common good and based on local realities. The outcomes of the dialogues fed into the five priority Action Tracks to ensure a holistic global push to change food systems to deliver the SDGs by 2030.

CARE country offices engaged in the dialogue process by connecting marginalized communities in food systems to program and policy conversations happening locally, nationally, and globally. Based on the success of this first round of dialogues, the aim is to continue building relationships with country offices by collaborating on future dialogues that offer a shared space for individuals to reflect on CARE's programming experiences and discuss continued improvements. CARE convened or co-convened 38 dialogues in 10 countries in ESA, APAC, and LAC. Those countries were Ecuador, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and Nepal.



### Approaches Taken

*Note: Our approach to each region varied, depending on staff availability, capacity, and regional focus.*

CARE Country Offices had full autonomy to decide the focus and theme of the dialogues. This approach ensured the dialogue process was locally focused to best address the needs of target audiences. Dialogues have focused on several topics, including:

- Using gender-transformative, participatory approaches to increase inclusivity in programmes
- The role of youth in achieving sustainable food systems

- Food waste and storage methodology
- Risk reduction and mitigation technology in agricultural systems
- Enhancing communications with local, regional, and national governments
- The rights of marginalized communities in food systems

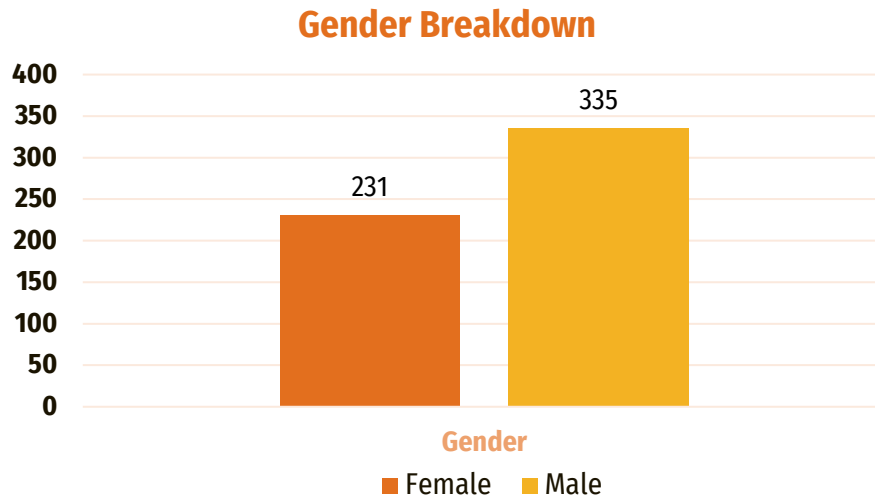
The most CARE-convened dialogues were held in ESA, with a total of 26 dialogues. Here, CARE's regional advocacy coordinator worked with various, long-term Civil Society Organization (CSO) partnerships on the ground to coordinate village-level, district-level, national and multi-national dialogues. We believe the success in this region can be attributed to the depth of relationships the regional coordinator has built as well as the approach of convening dialogues through various CSOs like the Graça Machel Trust (GMT); Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN); and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. This hastened the process and enabled locally knowledgeable actors to convene dialogues rooted in long-term relationships with governments, farmers, private sector actors, and NGOs. This approach was found to be the most effective in garnering dialogues. However, the indirect nature of these dialogues also left CARE more removed from influencing how dialogues were held and lent less control over providing effective feedback reports.

In APAC, CARE regional support connected with country office staff to gauge their capacity to hold dialogues in Bangladesh and Nepal. Similarly, to the success found in the ESA Countries, Nepal and Bangladesh worked with existing CSO partners to hold district and national-level dialogues. CARE Nepal teamed up with six national CSOs to hold a series of seven dialogues across the country, with one dialogue taking place in each of the seven provinces. Upon completion of the seven dialogues, the CSOs engaged in a print media campaign to highlight the key takeaways found during the dialogues. The dialogue results were also fed into an 18-point Position Paper that was submitted to the national government to guide Nepal's UNFSS National Pathway strategy. Despite tenacious support by our regional coordinator there, this region proved difficult to engage country staff, attributed mainly to a lack of capacity and focus on food systems activities, political instability, and strict COVID-19 safety guidelines that prevented group gatherings.

In LAC, CARE Global Advocacy staff and interns worked with country offices to support regional and country specific dialogues in Ecuador and with CARE's LAC Gender Network. CARE Ecuador partnered with CSOs, the private sector, and provincial governments in key regions suffering from childhood malnutrition. The dialogue produced a set of actions to influence Ecuador's "National Plan to Combat Chronic Child Malnutrition" which was launched in June of 2021. The LAC dialogue process suffered from delays in pitching processes and a lack of capacity at the country office level. Countries in both APAC and LAC were affected by political strife and/or government transitions that impaired the planning of dialogues in various contexts.

### Demographic Breakdown

1,046 individuals attended the 20 dialogues that reported participant demographics. In ESA, 10 dialogues had at least partial demographic data, in which 432 participants attended. In Bangladesh, there is demographic data for 133 participants and in Nepal, there is gendered demographic data available for all seven provincial dialogues. In LAC, there is data from the Ecuador dialogue, in which 39 participants attended. The below gender breakdown shows participant data from 14 dialogue reports in Bangladesh, Nepal, Malawi, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Ecuador.



Both CARE and non-CARE dialogue suffer from incomplete reporting on participant demographics, which most commonly resulted from the virtual environment in most dialogues were held. However, based on the reports received with demographic data, it appears that CARE-convened dialogues had more success incorporating women and youth, small-scale farmers, and indigenous peoples into dialogue discussions. CARE had a fair amount of success incorporating local and national government stakeholders into dialogue processes, something that was proven challenging for non-CARE convened dialogues according to the final synthesis reported for all 1000+ independent dialogues.

## Dialogue Main Findings

### Emerging Themes for Action

Analysis across CARE-convened dialogues resulted in nine emerging themes from our dialogues that should act as action areas to support current and future programming. The information provided below should guide our work at country level.

#### Improve Stakeholder Networks Between Government, Agricultural Extension, Civil Society, and Producers

The lack of linkages between public and private sector actors, with producers, food systems workers and consumers were a prominent challenge expressed across all regions where dialogues were held. Dialogue participants conveyed a lack of communication with the government, but due to the structure of the official UNFSS feedback form, it is difficult to identify which stakeholder group raised specific issues. However, in several dialogues, this issue differentially burdened varying populations. For example, in Uganda<sup>i</sup>, participants noted wide information gaps between government and other stakeholders, particularly youth participants. In Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup> below, government investments into the agriculture sector were more than enough for the nation to produce sufficient food to feed the entire population, but the investments were made in outdated agricultural models causing a failure to produce the required nutritious outputs. During a regional dialogue in LAC<sup>ii</sup>, Guatemalan participants raised concerns about free trade agreements, stating that the government is not



exercising public policies and budgets with a commitment to ending malnutrition resulting in corruption and chronic childhood malnutrition in the country.

Ugandan youth called for improved knowledge sharing, better and more consistent communication with the government, and a more inclusive policy-making processes. Many participants suggested that the media should leverage their networks to share successful practices with diverse actors across the country. In speaking to these same disconnects, a Malawi<sup>iii</sup> dialogue proposed that CSOs help bridge the gap between government and producers and increase the number of cooperatives to better ensure communications reach producers. Participants in Zimbabwe called for governments to improve their research to invest in proper models that will support Zimbabwean farmers to adopt new techniques, which also aligns with the emerging theme " Enhance Infrastructure, Data, and Technology to Drive the Transition to Climate-Resilient Practices" which can be found in greater detail later in the report.

Inclusive governance, and improved coordination and communications systems are two examples for ways forward that emerged from the dialogues. Participants in the Provincial Dialogue Series in Nepal<sup>iv</sup>, stressed the need for inclusive governance and policy-making processes that better incorporate traditional knowledge and the needs of local communities, noting that "it is highly essential to ensure the say of smallholder, marginalized, and women farmers in policy and decision making." Elsewhere, participants presented solutions that focused on better intra-government cooperation and coordination. Both Malawi and Nepal stated it was highly imperative that coordination among local, provincial, or district-level governments with central and national governments was improved.

"It is highly essential to ensure the say of smallholder, marginalized, and women farmers in policy and decision making."

**Nepal Provincial Dialogues**

### Invest in Accessible Risk Reduction and Mitigation Technologies

A prominent theme that emerged across all dialogue regions was a call for risk reduction and mitigation technologies. Largely mentioned in discussions around the impacts of climate change, dialogue participants across APAC, LAC, and ESA called for increased investment in tools to reduce risk and mitigate impacts of disaster and crisis that negatively impact food systems and the populations depending on them. ESA<sup>v</sup> regional dialogue participants recognized that urbanization, combined with the modernization of the continent's food systems, is creating a need to "institute appropriate measures to collectively realize sustainable and resilient food systems" which will work to meet the needs of a growing and urbanizing population. In Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup>, participants noted the need for improved warning systems and prediction capability to better inform farmers and producers. They noted that "innovation in information management through modern equipment such as [Information and Communication Technology] plays a critical role in predicting future weather patterns and climatic conditions in the future. Investing in early warning systems reduces the risk of crop and animal losses as a result of disasters." Zimbabwean<sup>vii</sup> dialogue participants also placed investment in research and development for risk reduction and increased support to local disaster risk reduction committees as critical to building resilience to shocks and hazards among small scale farmers. In Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup>, participants called for tailor-made weather reports accessible to producers and climate-sensitive crop advisory services.

Interestingly, Bangladesh dialogue participants included social protection within a broader umbrella or package of risk mitigation services that are needed, particularly for marginalized producers.

## Reorient Producer Services to Emphasize Climate and Nutrition Education

There is a desire to shift supportive services for producers to become better oriented and directed towards climate-smart agroecological models that better promote the production of nutritious foods and healthy diets. Climate and nutrition emerged as clear “gaps” in which participants felt a lack of support or ability to address, expressing a desire for better education and training to address these dual and related crises. Building on the first theme “Improve Stakeholder Networks Between Government, Agricultural Extension, Civil Society, and Producers”, dialogues throughout ESA identified the media and governments as key stakeholders to create information sharing systems that aim to implement climate-smart food systems.

Across the dialogues, supportive services available to producers are inadequately communicating and training on climate-resilient practices and methods. Dialogue participants are calling for climate-change adapted skills to be taught by agricultural extensions and NGOs. Participants across countries shared this same sentiment but identified different reasons for why extension or other producer-oriented agricultural services were failing to modernize. In Rwanda<sup>ix</sup> and Malawi<sup>x</sup>, limited uptake of modern, climate-smart, sustainable, and productive technologies was attributed to the limited reach of agricultural extension services (e.g., only 21% of farmers are being reached in Rwanda). During the Nepal<sup>xi</sup> provincial-level dialogues, participants similarly called to expand climate-resilient agricultural production system and agricultural extension capacity building to promote diversification of production, conservation, and promotion and registration of indigenous seeds. Farmers in country struggle with precarious irrigation systems and participants underlined the need to

“We don't know when it's going to rain, when it's going to [be] dry [...] climate change is not a distant or global problem. It has already altered everyday lives of women and men.”

**Ecuador Dialogue**

promote shared resource systems across farms to conserve inputs and make the best use of arable land. Zambian<sup>xiii</sup> participants echoed conversations in Nepal, expressing that accessibility to diverse seed varieties is dire to the future success of farmers. Governments are providing subsidies for synthetic inputs, and hybrid and limited seed varieties resulting in mass monocropping across the country. Markets no longer favour diversified crop production and participants called for policies that emphasis payments for ecosystem services that enhance local markets. In Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup> peasant families emphasized “we don't know when it's

going to rain, when it's going to [be] dry,” which has caused an increasing turn to agrochemicals use. Many families have chosen to replace crop farming with livestock due to polluted water and land, but the increase of grazing is having detrimental effects on that same land. Participants realize that “climate change is not a distant or global problem. It has already altered everyday lives of women and men.” Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup> dialogues with women called for more context-specific climate-sensitive crop advisory services that are easily accessible and catered to women producers as well as better mechanisms for women to voice their concerns around climate change and its impact on their productive livelihoods.

Participants felt “support systems” available to food systems producers did not adequately incentivize the production of nutritious foods. Some participants felt that the agriculture sector is mainstreaming nutrition at

a slow pace and that there was need to improve synergies so that the sector plans with a nutrition lens. For example, Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup> dialogue participants felt there exists a lack of market incentives to produce nutritious food for domestic consumption and called for government support or tax breaks to producers. Many dialogues conveyed a primary challenge farmers face as the low prices for nutritious foods at the market act as disincentive to farmers, and the lack of price control by the government further disincentivizes adequate production of local, nutritious foods. This finding goes hand in hand with another key theme, “reorienting markets to empower local food systems”, but more specifically calls on governments to provide better policy environments, financial incentives, and implement market regulations that support the production of nutritious foods. Producers need to be secure that making the choice to supply their communities with nutritious food will not cost them their livelihoods. Malawi<sup>iii</sup> participants specifically called on the government to promote sustainable market prices, ensure affordable inputs and enhance access to sustainable technology so that producing nutritious foods for local markets can benefit farmers. Nepal<sup>iv</sup> dialogues share this call on public sector reform to better support the production of nutritious foods. In their report, dialogue participants affirm that “many of the policies, laws, and strategies [...] promote wrong trends and practice to the detriment of a sustainable food system.” They press the government to promote local crops with high nutritional value, set up accountable food governance mechanisms based on the right to food. These examples reflect an overall failure of the policy and market environment to promote conditions to ensure adequate nutritional diets and suggest that alleviating disincentives for producers and consumers is a critical precondition for achieving nutrition security for many.

### Enhance Infrastructure, Data, and Technology to Drive the Transition to Climate-Resilient Practices

In all regions CARE held dialogues, participants expressed a lack of adequate infrastructure and technology that is preventing them from adopting climate-smart, sustainable, and resilient practices. Expanding on the previous theme “Reorient Producer Services to Emphasize Climate and Nutrition Education,” participants recognize that even with improved services and education, without proper infrastructure and technology access, it is impossible to adopt climate-smart methods. The needs expressed ranged depending on location and type of production participants practiced.

Across all regions, dialogues repeatedly stated that access to both indigenous and improved seed varieties is a major need for all farmers. Nepali<sup>iv</sup> farmers recognize that biodiversity and cultural diversity must be addressed to transform to a green economy that promotes agricultural and forest-based enterprises. Malawian<sup>x</sup> participants envisioned a district-based seed system which would promote diversified seeds, specifically legumes, that are currently neglected by markets.

The most prominent need expressed was improved physical and technological infrastructure that supports a shift to climate-smart practices and prevents food waste. Most common physical infrastructure needs included collection and storage hubs, irrigation systems, and road systems. Poor access to storage and preservation techniques results in a devastating loss to producers and inaccessibility of adequate nutrition in local markets. The Rwanda<sup>ix</sup> dialogue focused on nutrition security and participants urged that the pathway to reduce food loss was through improving the infrastructure of distribution chains, post-harvest handling and processing, and increasing investment in infrastructure, technology, and capacity-building. Aligned with these findings in Rwanda, Nepal’s Provincial Dialogues and the Regional<sup>xvi</sup> Dialogue in Bangladesh and Nepal called for

improvements to “precarious” infrastructures (irrigation, roads, and cold chain and food storage facilities) to support a sustainable food chain for affordable, safe, healthy and nutritious diets. Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup> dialogues further raised this issue, in which one of the main findings was an expressed need to “ensure that there is efficient infrastructure (road network) and temperature-controlled vehicles to transport food after harvest.” Losses also occur due to the rapidly changing climate, and Zimbabwean participants require access to information and communications technology (ICT) that predicts future weather and climate conditions. Investing in early warning systems will reduce the risk of crop and animal losses resulting from natural disasters.

Huge post-harvest losses were a concern in an overwhelming number of dialogues, and improved food preservation technologies and infrastructure was a rallying call across contexts. There is a clear need to improve food preservation mechanisms to address food loss challenges, support farmer’s livelihoods by protecting their harvests and elongating the time available to sell their produce. Bangladeshi<sup>viii</sup> agronomic and livestock farmers stressed that without innovations in technology infrastructure, that nation will fail to provide adequate, safe, and nutritious food for its citizens.

### Improve Information Sharing Systems to Empower People to Make Informed Decisions

There is a need to enhance food and nutrition knowledge sharing between professionals and the general public to empower people to make informed decisions. Systems must improve information-sharing tactics that influence people to be knowledgeable about where their food comes from, make healthy choices, preserve, and prepare foods in ways that will maintain their nutritional value, and meet the food preferences of most people. In Guatemala<sup>ii</sup>, women lack access to information regarding how the climate crisis is affecting agriculture production in the country. There are 24 languages in Guatemala and without culturally relevant messaging, women are unable to make informed decisions which is impacting their livelihoods. Bangladeshi<sup>viii</sup> participants noted that as agriculture becomes more commercialized, producers and consumers are disassociating from the life cycle of the food they are consuming. Sub national, national, and multi-national companies grow, harvest, process, store, and distribute food. To increase profit margins, market actors change the originality of food by using chemicals to increase its storability, enhance taste, and improve looks. Foods pass through lengthy and invisible supply chains resulting in low quality food, leaving consumers with little to no role in maintaining the quality of food once it enters the market system. The general public requires improved messaging and information sharing systems that will help them make informed choices that benefits the climate, increases nutrition, and reduces food waste.

A lack of adequate communication systems bears a burden on nutrition outcomes. Dialogues called for public health and nutrition campaigns to enhance consumer knowledge and awareness of healthy diets, safe food preparation, and promote healthy consumer choices. Dialogues in Zambia<sup>xii</sup> and Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup> recommended communication campaigns to promote behaviour change in consumption patterns to increase nutrition, preserve nutritional value, and ensure leftover food is not wasted. Zimbabwean participants noted

“Consistency in policies around the whole food systems is also key in promoting, protecting, and supporting the consumption of nutritious foods by the general populace.”

**Mutoko District Dialogue Zimbabwe**

that consistent food systems policy is key in promoting, protecting, and supporting the consumption of nutrition food by the general population. Malawians<sup>x</sup> in Zomba and Mangochi reflected on the large amount of food waste that often occurs during cultural events and festivals, and how important it is to use these community gatherings to spread messaging that challenges the norms to reduce waste. Outside of large community events, participants called for an increase in food preparation and consumption awareness campaigns that offers alternative ways to use food that is regularly wasted or not consumed culturally. In Nepal<sup>iv</sup>, participants urge investment in marketing to help promote local crops with high nutritional values, which both supports small-scale producer goods and consumer consumption. Stakeholders in Rwanda<sup>ix</sup> similarly desired enhanced consumer awareness campaigns around food safety to ensure the availability and accessibility of nutritious foods, while minimizing illnesses due to unsafe food. Suggested communication approaches included civil society actors, agricultural extension officers, and community members. The Ugandan<sup>i</sup> youth dialogue supported empowering grassroots actors to develop communications systems that promote local healthy diets through community-based stakeholders advocating and communicating accessibility, affordability, and nutrition information.

### Revalue Peasant and Indigenous Practices and Economies

Though most urgently addressed during the Latin American dialogues, dialogue participants globally pressed for revaluing peasant and indigenous economies. Participants noted the sustainable practices, regenerative ecological outcomes, and essential livelihood value of peasant and indigenous economies should be seen as a key solution to the food systems challenges the Summit was created to solve. Currently, in Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup>, traditional crops that support indigenous families' food security and constitute the main source of food for urban populations are being abandoned at an alarming rate. The abandonment can be explained by low market recognition and climate variability, causing increased consumption of unhealthy and processed foods. The abandonment of traditional crops reinforces food insecurity and malnutrition amongst indigenous communities which has a significant impact on women and children. Indigenous representatives provided a picture for what "revaluing" economies might look like in their context: "the possibility of reactivating and strengthening the peasant and indigenous economies - responsible for the country's nutrition- implies the design and adoption of public policies that stimulate and facilitate sustainable, diversified, and organic agricultural production, providing them with the necessary infrastructure and favourable conditions to invest (agricultural insurance, low-interest loans, access to financial information) as well as market circuits that bring producers and consumers closer through an offer of healthy and nutritious food."

"The possibility of reactivating and strengthening the peasant and indigenous economies - responsible for the country's nutrition- implies the design and adoption of public policies that stimulate and facilitate sustainable, diversified, and organic agricultural production, providing them with the necessary infrastructure and favourable conditions to invest (agricultural insurance, low-interest loans, access to financial information) as well as market circuits that bring producers and consumers closer through an offer of healthy and nutritious food."

**Ecuador Dialogue**

These similar calls were echoed across the other dialogues. In Malawi<sup>iii</sup>, participants from the districts of Zomba and Mangochi raised their concern that too much produce in the market is imported, and could be substituted with local produce if the regulatory environment did not favour foreign companies at the disadvantage of smallholder farmers. In Zambia<sup>xii</sup>, valuing indigenous economies meant protecting and promoting indigenous seed systems knowledge and traditions, rather than outlawing use and sale of traditional varieties and breeds. Participants in those dialogues ask government to affirm the “rights of peoples, nations and states to democratically define their own food, agriculture, livestock, and fishery systems, and develop policies guiding how food is produced, distributed, and consumed.” In Nepal<sup>iv</sup>, the protection and promotion of traditional food production were premised on ecological and financial necessities. Currently, national policies do not fully acknowledge the generational knowledge indigenous communities hold in creating sustainable food systems. Participants called to incentivize small scale farming and move away from commercial farming that requires expensive inputs, so local production can be sustained independent of expensive imports. Participants also attached cultural and social value to protecting and preserving traditional food production. This theme saw significant overlap with the earlier theme “Enhance Infrastructure, Data, and Technology to Drive the Transition to Climate-Resilient Practices” which emphasizes the important indigenous seed varieties

### Reorient Markets to Support Local Food Systems

There was a consensus that markets are poorly structured, offer inadequate returns or incentives for local producers, and fail to benefit local small scale and marginalized producers. Markets must be intervened upon to promote the livelihoods of producers and drive more sustainable consumption patterns. Participants at the Nepal<sup>iv</sup> attendees noted that, “land is currently treated more as a commodity and is used for purely commercial purpose not as productive asset for growing crops and raising livestock. Commodification of each component of the farming system (i.e., food [and] land) [...] is seriously undermining the noneconomic attributes of food (i.e., nutritional value).”

Food policies and laws seem to promote agricultural development to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainability, however, they have not adequately considered the unique features of Nepalese farming. 80% of farmers are small holder farmers with less than 1 hectare of land holding, representing 70% of Nepalese farming households. They are resource poor and cannot invest but are involved in the preservation of productive resources and food production, especially during crisis, and contribute to the sustainability of local food system. They are engaged in family-based farming, preserving the ancient culture, norms, and values along with the indigenous knowledge passed on from several generations. Policies and laws have failed to duly recognize their contributions and provide small holder farmers an appropriate identity as “producers or farmers”. This has limited their access to government facilities and services as they are excluded from the core agricultural development policies, strategies, and programmes. Market-controlled production resources and policies that favour the commercialization of agriculture has displaced a majority of food producers, especially small holder farmers, from agriculture and left behind cultivable land barren due to absentee landlordism.

“Land is currently treated more as a commodity and is used for purely commercial purpose not as productive asset for growing crops and raising livestock. Commodification of each component of the farming system (i.e., food [and] land) [...] is seriously undermining the noneconomic attributes of food (i.e., nutritional value).”

**Nepal Provincial Dialogues**

Particular market failures varied across contexts. It was raised during *Zambian*<sup>xii</sup> dialogues that bureaucratic requirements prevented cooperatives from registering and finding markets, and policies valued imported produce over local producers. Participants suggested the Ministry of Trade should implement public procurement schemes that would improve the cooperative registration process and enhance access to markets. *Malawi*<sup>xiii</sup> dialogues concurred with this finding, that cooperatives in Zomba and Mangochi districts struggled to be registered and faced overwhelming market competition with imported goods that had been given favourable market conditions over local producers.

“The market is dominated by intermediaries who set and impose prices on agricultural production; local markets are sites of material violence by ‘snatchers’ who seize products peasants produce to sell on the market. This undermines the functioning of markets and prevents producers from receiving fair compensation for their productive labor”.

**Ecuador Regional Dialogue**

“Middle-men” and market intermediaries pose additional challenges in Africa and Latin America, presenting greater difficulties for producers to receive an adequate financial return for their efforts. *Ecuador*<sup>xiii</sup> reports were particularly evocative in their description of market capture and its impact on producers: “The market is dominated by intermediaries who set and impose prices on agricultural production; local markets are sites of material violence by ‘snatchers’ who seize products peasants produce to sell on the market. This undermines the functioning of markets and prevents producers from receiving fair compensation for their

productive labour.” Producers receive unbearably low prices for the production they generate, “which, together with the deterioration of the quality of life of families and women, configure a scenario of growing inequality where peasant producers provide goods for subsidy (where social and environmental costs are not considered) for the consumption of urban families.” To these ends, participants promote the creation of market circuits to bring producers and consumers closer, implementation of markets for direct marketing from farmers to consumers and regulate prices for local products as they do imported ones.

Participants across dialogues suggested their countries move away from a purely profit-driven agroecological system, calling for greater reorientation around social benefits of a system that adequately fulfils nutritional and ecological needs. For example, *Zambian*<sup>xii</sup> dialogues found that “It is imperative that national food systems move away from agro-industrial and genetically engineered production methods which are responsible for dietary monotony and reliance on ultra-processed foods [...] towards a system that supports food sovereignty, small-scale producers and local markets.” Participants urged to move away from seed sectors built only around economic benefit, and instead promote a socially viable and sustainable farmer-managed seed system. Similarly in *Nepal*<sup>iv</sup>, participants called to focus on commercialization should not run counter to the notion of farming primarily as a means of producing food to feed the population and not for producing a commodity for sale in the market. Participants in dialogues in *Malawi*<sup>xiii</sup> advocated for a similar policy orientation with perhaps stronger language, recommending government policies move away from industrial, genetically engineered production methods and instead support food sovereignty, small scale producers, and local markets based in ideas of ecological balance. To those ends, participants ask to impose strict liability on pesticide producers and disincentivize industrial agriculture approaches and incentivize nature-positive approaches.

### Implement Equitable Food Systems for Women, Youth, and Marginalized Populations

A need for greater equity in food systems was a consistent theme across dialogues. Populations that participants focused on most were youth and women, both of which CARE is well-positioned to focus attention and programming around moving forward from the Summit.

Four solution areas emerged to achieve more equitable food systems amongst marginalized groups:

### **1. Increased Access to Productive Resources, Training, Education, and Technology**

Participants identified inequitable access to productive resources such as credit, land, and agricultural inputs. Dialogue participants called for greater investments by governments and civil society to ensure women and youth have equal access to and control of resources necessary to be full participants and contributors to food systems. For example, the regional CSO Dialogue in East and Southern Africa<sup>xiv</sup> Regional dialogues urge CSOs to continue supporting women and youth's access to and control of resources as one of the central challenges to achieving sustainable and resilient food systems. During a different East and Southern Africa<sup>v</sup> Regional dialogue, participants called for investments into strengthening education value chains across universities and vocational colleges to leverage secondary and primary education to improve the skills of young people who are entering the agri-labour force. Global<sup>xv</sup> participants at the co-led SUN and the International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN) dialogue called for educational opportunities for women and youth on technology, microfinance accessibility, building micro-enterprises in food systems. Through the establishment of climate-smart agriculture hubs, women and youth smallholder farmers can learn systems to produce high-quality foods in their communities, increasing their incomes and agency. Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup> dialogue participants who pointed out that women who own and control agricultural assets, such as land, are perceived as being less productive than their male counterparts. Due to this, credit systems favour men, locking women out of access to productive resources. Participants agreed that governments need to mainstream equitable gendered leadership in the agriculture sector.

The importance of improving women's nutrition education, especially centred around breastfeeding and the first 1,000 days window emerged as a major theme during the global<sup>xv</sup> SUN and ICAN dialogue. Participants agreed that scientific-based information about the health benefits of breastfeeding for women and children needs to be more accessible so all women can make the best-informed health decisions for themselves and their families. There was a concern that as misinformation increases to spread across social media and marketing, more women are receiving contradicting information resulting in malnutrition and reinforcing harmful social norms. Governments need to promote enabling environments that increase accessible information at a community level, translated into all languages. The deterioration of health conditions as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and high rate of malnutrition has pushed the Ecuadorian government to adopt a child malnutrition agenda, but participants in the dialogue<sup>xiii</sup> urged the government still needs to be doing more to improve accessibility. Health policies must expand coverage of service and prioritize primary preventive care, with a particular focus on policies that impact pregnant and lactating mother healthcare accessibility. Adequate nutrition and regular medical check-ups should be guaranteed to reduce the correlation between the deterioration of women's health during childbirth and postpartum, and malnutrition in newborns.

### **2. Increased Inclusion in Decision-Making Processes, Leadership and Cooperatives**



Key to addressing inequality is the disproportionate inclusion of women and youth in decision-making processes at all levels, whether in the household, policymaking processes, or civil society groups. This will require tackling harmful gender norms, which was raised by multiple dialogues. Global<sup>xv</sup> participants at the SUN and ICAN dialogue recognized that there are many harmful cultural practices that further prevent women and girls from playing a key role in decision making. Girl children have disproportionate access to formal education, which increases their risk of child marriage. Despite the important role women play in peasant economies, participants during the Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup> dialogue observed that it is a common belief that women assume care and domestic work and should not be elected to leadership positions. Men take a dominate role in the household and women are often subjected to violence within their families and communities. This unequal gender dynamic and the non-recognition of indigenous justice systems regarding violence against women have resulted in high rates of adolescent pregnancy and suicide attempts. In rural communities, it is common for 13- and 14-year-old girls to become mothers which has led to a high rate of child abandonment, further reinforcing the cycle of poverty and child malnutrition in future generations.

The ESA<sup>xiv</sup> Regional Dialogue found that a key priority for CSOs should be to support the integration of women and youth in food systems planning and policy processes. Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup> participants similarly recommended to “incorporate women’s opinion into various relevant policy planning, formulation and implementation processes.” Uganda<sup>i</sup> Youth Dialogues emphasized that youth inclusion in leadership and decision-making is necessary to enable full youth contribution to food systems, the “way forward,” youth promoted in these decisions was for “youth voices to be included in policy processes consistently so that they advocate for resilient and sustainable food systems with vigour.”

Increased attention to the inequitable power in savings and loan groups was brought forward in Malawi<sup>x</sup> dialogues in Zomba and Mangochi. In these districts, village banks are largely participated in by women, however, decisions over how to use savings was made by men. This finding emphasizes how efforts to achieve equity in decision-making must attend to multiple levels, starting from the household to the community and up through national policymaking processes. At the community level, there is interest in strengthening women and youth associations and leadership through strategies like community funds which improve their decision-making capacities, economic autonomy, and self-affirmation. A central aspect particular to women is training in rights, fundamentally from a perspective of causing changes in the new generations.

### **3. Improved Policy Environments That Ensure Equity for Women, Youth, and Other Marginalized Populations**

Dialogues found policy environments at the member-state level failed to provide adequate protection and promotion of women and youth. From dialogues in Nepal<sup>iv</sup>, participants noted “more often than not policies, institutions, programs, and services are gender-blind. It is crucial to make them gender-responsive in view of the growing responsibility of women in the agricultural sector and ensure women’s representation in the decision making and their ownership and control over land.” Women constitute almost half of the agricultural labour force in Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup>, but still do not have official recognition as farmers. As a result, they do not have access to the various resources and services to support their livelihoods. Women need official recognition of women as farmers, with proper means of identification such as agriculture cards. For decades, female agriculture laborers have faced wage discrimination and the government needs to set a minimum wage rate to eliminate discrimination amongst agriculture labour. Similarly, in Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup>, participants agreed on a

“More often than not policies, institutions, programs, and services are gender-blind. It is crucial to make them gender-responsive in view of the growing responsibility of women in the agricultural sector and ensure women’s representation in the decision making and their ownership and control over land.”

**Nepal Provincial Dialogues**

continued need for the government to mainstream gender in agricultural sectors by ensuring policies and programs do not favour men over women. Policy environments to help mitigate youth unemployment and better youth economic opportunity are encouraged. Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup> dialogue participants suggest that policy orientations should favour the employment of young men and women in agriculture and complementary fields.

During the SUN and ICAN global<sup>xv</sup> dialogue, the issue of child labour in food systems was raised as a major priority for all governments. Most child labour occurs in the agriculture sector, so it is vital that children, especially girls, are

protected from exploitative labour practices and incentivized to attend school. Policies must focus on creating viable career opportunities for youth people to ensure they are protected from mistreatment and to ensure the future of sustainable food systems.

#### 4. Address Barriers to Participating Fully in Food Systems, Particularly Market Exclusivity and Time Poverty

**a. Market Exclusivity:** Market activities are characterized as adult-male dominated spaces, spaces of violence against women, and where middle-men and unregulated market encounters pose barriers to women and youth participating fully as equal economic agents. Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup> dialogues identified a challenge women face in benefiting from market activities, which was also mentioned in the earlier theme “Reorient Markets to Support Local Food Systems,” in which ‘snatchers’ seize hold of products, preventing women from safely accessing markets. Enhancing access of women and youth to markets means making those spaces where women and youth are safe and where market actors deal equally with men, women, and youth.

#### **b. Time Poverty - Obligations and Cultural Norms That Prevent Full Participation in Food**

**Systems:** Women’s disproportionate burden of care work and lack of remuneration both women and youth receive for their work was a common concern across regions. Potential pathways included changes in policies that would acknowledge and compensate women’s work. Participants in the Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup> dialogue on women’s role in food systems noted that key to closing the gender gap is recognizing women’s productive contribution of reproductive labour, that the “state should recognize care work and undertake initiatives to redistribute the burden of care work.” Participants also recognized the need for programs and initiatives to change behaviours and mindsets towards more equitable sharing of household labour. Zambian<sup>xi</sup> participants expressed that due to societal norms that place women as the sole caregiver, working mothers do not have time to cook and attend to their children until after their working hours are completed. This time burden has resulted in higher malnutrition rates among children, affecting classroom performance. During a dialogue in Malawi<sup>x</sup>, Mangochi district participants note part of the challenge is behaviour or social expectations that food preparation is only women’s work and needs to be included in gender-awareness and behaviour-change campaigns to advocate for more equitable share of responsibility for family nutritional needs.

Consequences of climate change are being disproportionately felt by women in Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup>, who are faced with the loss of vegetative cover, prolonged droughts, soil erosion, and other issues which forces women to travel increased distances for water, firewood, and fodder. In many cases, both parents must travel outside their communities in search for work, leaving behind their children to care for one another. Both situations have resulted in an increase of malnutrition and intrafamily violence.

### Guarantee Access to Adequate and Dignified Livelihoods for Food Systems Stakeholders

Dialogues present a dire set of circumstances burdening the world's food systems workers. Shrinking incomes, inaccessibility to adequate healthcare and nutrition, and the limited opportunities diversified livelihood opportunities present a concerning picture, particularly for small scale producers.

- 1. Income:** Across almost all dialogues, participants stress that poorly functioning markets and ecological degradation have reduced income opportunities for agricultural producers. Many are facing unregulated markets and compete with large-scale farmers and imports at impossible scales for small or medium farmers can match. Shrinking incomes mete out negative consequences on the ecological systems farmers rely on, forcing short-term increases in intensity of agriculture at the cost of long-term productivity of soil. Malawi<sup>x</sup> participants addressed the trade-offs farmers are confronted with, connecting the degradation of ecosystems and natural resources to the limited income-generating activities. Participants say over-reliance and dependence on fishing has led to overfishing. Governments, CSOs and development organizations need to promote and enable alternative livelihoods like beekeeping, livestock production paired with natural resources management. Additionally, there are no regulations that offer price protection on farm produce, causing local market prices to be significantly lower than the farm gate prices set by the government. In Guatemala, participants informed that 76% of women's work hours are unpaid, so participants during the LAC<sup>ii</sup> regional dialogue called for institutional programs focused on women's access to productive resources and fair wages.
- 2. Health and Nutrition:** Shrinking incomes further exacerbate rising costs of food and healthcare, resulting in negative feedback loops on health and nutrition outcomes. Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup> dialogues addressed the deteriorating health conditions indigenous and peasant producers are facing and recommend expanding the coverage of health services that prioritize primary and preventative healthcare. In Rwanda<sup>ix</sup> dialogues participants addressed the outcomes on nutrition that inadequate incomes present, noting that high prices of nutrition foods make healthy diets inaccessible to 89.6% of the population and recommend activities to cut down production costs and improve income opportunities for consumers. During the global<sup>xv</sup> SUN and ICAN dialogue, participants discussed the need for effective accountability mechanisms that track countries' progress in the realization of human rights as it relates to their commitments to enhance food systems. It was agreed that many countries have unfortunately not sufficiently promoted, fulfilled, and realized the right to adequate food, and that nutrition interventions are too often confused with tackling hunger. This dialogue called for the establishment of more precise international legal instruments that ensure countries understand the policies and interventions needed to tackle hunger and malnutrition. Existing accountability mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review, should be adapted at a country level to guarantee countries are held accountable to report progress against fundamental rights in food systems.

- 3. Land Tenure:** Related to income and livelihood opportunities was the pressing matter of land in many contexts. Producers suffer from low to no landholding opportunities, and competition over land is an ever-urgent crisis that disproportionately negatively impacts on already poor or marginalized producers. In Malawi<sup>x</sup> dialogues in Zomba and Mangochi districts, producers suffer from low production due to landholding size and call for a review of land tenure system and ownership, advisor councils to form recommendations to better utilize government land, and increased regulations governing land to prevent degradation. In Zambia<sup>xii</sup> dialogues, participants similarly called for policies to enable more inclusive access to land, giving priority to local youth and traditional community ownership rather than corporate land-grabbing which current government policies seem oriented around. In Nepal<sup>iv</sup>, participants shared the above concerns for more inclusive tenure and user rights, specifying needs for women, poor, and small farmers, and underlined the need to promote group and family farming through conservation and efficient land use rather than private, single-holder land ownership. A concern about the rising interest in land banks was also raised, mentioning these efforts could have negative impacts on landless and land poor farmers, only benefitting a few corrupt market actors. The Government of Nepal should instead focus on effective land reforms that ensure smallholder farmers, women, and marginalized populations can own land.
- 4. Social Protection and Risk Insurance:** One final aspect of livelihood security found was the call around enhancing the provision of social protection and risk insurance supports for food systems stakeholders. In many places, inadequate or no social protection exists to mitigate the risk producers face while supporting the essential nutritional needs of their communities. The spectre of climate change and the already drastic impacts it has imposed on the livelihoods of producers across the globe only spells a continually increased need for risk insurance that supports producers in the fallout of natural or climate-related emergencies. Several recommendations to enhance protection were made that garnered enough mention to include in this synthesis.

First, several calls were made for increasing government coverage of risk insurance for producers, one of which was from Nepal<sup>iv</sup> provincial-level dialogues, in which participants called to expand vulnerability-based crop insurance mechanisms and development of relief and livelihood recovery programs during and after natural disasters. Regional dialogues between farmers in Bangladesh and Nepal<sup>xvi</sup> emphasized that even when supports are available, most farmers are not aware of them or do not know how to access them. These challenges bred further calls for information and better accessibility mechanisms to connect food systems producers with supportive services.

Second were calls for greater investment in risk reduction services. Most notably, in Zambia<sup>xiii</sup>, local investments in social protection delivery systems including shock responsiveness and livelihood opportunities for the poor and vulnerable groups' remain very low. There, participants urged for greater investment in disaster risk reduction committees and increased capacity of those bodies to respond and assist victims of natural disasters. The Bangladesh and Nepal<sup>xvi</sup> regional dialogue pointed out that smallholder farmers lack savings and capital to manage any shocks or risks, and many are already indebted with micro-credits and informal loans with high interest. Informal loans and micro-finance in rural areas have predatory interest rates, often double or triple what conventional bank loans offer. Agriculture insurance is rarely available, and the terms and conditions required rarely match the capacity of

smallholder farmers. Participants advocated for identification and categorization of farmers that link them to category-specific social security, subsidies, services, and contribution-based pensions.

### Links to CARE's Impact Areas

The below programme categories are based on the six identified focus areas in CARE's 2030 Vision Report. Transforming food systems will require a unified effort across sectors and due to this many of the identified themes are cross cutting across multiple program areas.

#### Food, Water, and Nutrition

##### Food Loss and Waste

Food loss was a very prevalent challenge that participants rose in dialogues. Food waste appears most in relation to lack of information, technologies, and inadequate infrastructure. Various ways forward that were identified in dialogues were expanding storage facilities and access to processing and collection hubs. Additional ways raised were better education and training on food preservation methods that were safe, and evidence based. Increased investment in devising and communicating food preservation methods should be integrated into nutrition and food security programming, to better enable people to retain value for their products and get the most nutritional value for the food our planet is already producing.

##### Right to Nutritious Food

Dialogues emphasized that programming around nutrition should be rooted in the right to affordable, healthy diets. A representative quote that should direct CARE's energies is from a dialogue in Zambia<sup>xii</sup> which highlighted the strong rights-based arguments CARE can leverage for nutrition advocacy, "food choices are often considered personal choices. But choice is instead determined by many factors and can be conscious, conditioned, or constrained. Even if one has high nutrition literacy, the lack of local availability or the inaccessibility, due to high price, of healthy foods may prevent an individual from adopting healthy dietary habits. Hence, a transition to sustainable food systems should have at its centre the full realization of the human right to adequate food, whereby every individual and every community should be enabled to have adequate, accessible, nutritious, culturally adequate, healthy, and environment-friendly food at all times. This requires putting right-holders at the centre, rather than the interests of the market." While choice and consumer behaviour have also been highlighted, dialogue participants underscore the underlying structures that are determinative of nutrition outcomes. To those ends, dialogue participants urged the adoption of policy frameworks that better ensure the right to adequate nutritious food.

##### Food Affordability

One central challenge around nutrition expressed in dialogues was affordability of food. Rising food prices, particularly for nutritious foods, has priced many out of affording adequate, healthy diets. Malawi<sup>iii</sup> dialogue participants in Zomba and Mangochi raised this issue, where participants note that most families can't afford recommended meal frequency, and consumption is based on seasonality which leads to imbalanced and inadequate diets. Additionally, the cost of food items is too high, and food crops that could otherwise be used for consumption are used as cash crops due to poverty. Nepal<sup>iv</sup> and Rwanda<sup>ix</sup> dialogues similarly found market

prices for nutritious food to be far too high for consumers to afford, particularly vulnerable groups. Dialogues recommended methods to address high food costs, particularly through increasing and intensifying agricultural production of nutritious foods through introduction of improved breeds and varieties, soil-erosion prevention measures implemented through extension services, reductions of food loss, greater food and land use governance, promotion of local food production systems and expansion of opportunities for women and youth producers in order to intensify production.

### **Food Availability**

Closely related to affordability in both root causes and solutions identified in dialogues is the issue of availability of nutritious foods. Dialogue participants raised the issue of low yield of nutritious foods that can withstand climate shocks and other ecological challenges producers face. Dialogues recommended governments and CSOs incentivize production of nutritious foods, investing in research and development of improved, climate-smart varieties, and increasing access to financing and technologies to increase output of small-scale farmers. Several dialogues recommended governments restructure incentives for the production of nutritious foods, providing more adequate gains for farmers who choose to produce critical nutrients populations need. In Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup>, participants note that “farmer’s choice to plant food crops is guided by demand and market prices. They felt that prices for nutritious foods are usually associated with low demand and very high prices which many citizens cannot afford resulting in farmers not preferring to plant them. Some stressed that food preparation methods influence food price, methods used in preparing junk food led to them fetching low prices and the unregulated marketing of junk food greatly influences food preference.”

### **Infrastructure Investments**

Infrastructure was identified as a clear and present challenge and an increasingly urgent necessity in many dialogues. Dialogues attributed poor or lacking infrastructure for a variety of food systems challenges including food loss in post-harvest handling and processing, driving up the costs of food and pricing out vulnerable consumers due to increased transportation and handling costs, and making nutrient-dense foods inaccessible at markets due. Thus, many dialogues called for immediate investment in roads, food collection, and processing facilities to improve distribution and preservation capabilities to ensure nutritious foods are accessible and affordable to consumers.

### **Consumer-Facing Nutrition Information and Education**

Though less emphasized than in non-CARE-convened independent dialogues, participants in CARE dialogues did call for increased awareness and education campaigns to influence consumer behaviour and knowledge to promote healthy diets. In Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup>, dialogues called to address the root factors influencing consumption patterns like “culture, economy, social construction, availability, affordability, and desirability of certain foods,” arguing that “there is a need to develop nutrition interventions that address behaviour change targeting the above factors.” CARE-supported Global<sup>xv</sup> SUN Dialogue on nutrition similarly noted a lack of access to information at the community level, lack of translation, and misinformation harms women’s nutrition. Several approaches were identified to achieve higher consumer awareness and promote healthier consumer choices. For example, Uganda’s<sup>i</sup> youth dialogue recommended grassroots, community-based actors be supported and financed to provide locally appropriate information on nutritious foods and preparation methods.

### Food Safety

Participants closely related food safety to the need for improving consumer information and infrastructure. Those two pillars seem to characterize all recommendations around food safety. Programs are needed to properly educate populations on methods for safe food preparation and consumption. However, it is also critical to provide for better access to technologies and infrastructure to promote food preservation to far greater portions of the population than currently have access. Dialogues called for additional regulatory measures and policy environments promoting food safety, and investments in research and development of certified products on the market that better inform consumers on safe food to purchase.

### Enhanced Extension Services

A predominant finding supported across all regions was inadequate coverage and use of extension services. Calls to enhance extension services was found in almost every dialogue, though the means and recommendations for improvement varied across context. In Rwanda<sup>ix</sup>, for example, only 21% of farmers are being reached by extension services, which participants argue leads to inadequate knowledge, skills and capacity of farmers that limits production of nutritious foods. Extending coverage must also be accompanied by increasing the quality of services extension officers are able to provide. Extensions are called to educate and train farmers, disseminate technologies tailored to the context and stakeholders' needs like improved inputs, varieties and feed, play critical role in reshaping the agricultural sector by empowering women and youth to participate in food production. The variety of needs extension services are asked to fill, and the number of ways they are being asked to improve reflect the broad needs that are being inadequately addressed. This perhaps begs a rethinking and reinvestment in extension services prioritizing the above gaps dialogues have identified.

### Food Fortification

Discussed mainly during the Food Fortification Summit dialogue in Kenya<sup>xvii</sup>, food fortification is important to ensure the sufficient intake of vitamins and minerals. In Kenya, the economic impact associated with underweight and stunted children is significant with compounding effects on health, education, and productivity. Every year, the country is estimated to lose 373.9 billion Kenyan Shillings, which is equivalent to 6.9% of the GDP. The government implemented the Kenya National Food Fortification strategic plan in 2018 and discussed was the roles each stakeholder in attendance will play in strengthening the plan through 2022. The government should continue to coordinate plan implementation, enforce laws and mandates, and provide evidence-based reviews of policies and research for evidence generation. Civil society should continue supporting the government in implementation, mobilize policy makers to strengthen food fortification, promote the distribution of fortified foods, and advocate for enabling environments. The private sector should support the formulation of food fortification policies and regulations, ensure reliable access to fortified foods, and work with consumers to access nutritious foods.

### Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Improved water and irrigation infrastructure was a common need identified across all dialogue regions. As climate change continues to devastate natural resources, the need to sustain water sources has never been

more needed. Agriculture contributes to a massive amount of water waste and pollution which is impacting ecosystems and the livelihoods of fishing communities. Women in result must travel further to collect water, further intensifying the time deployed to family care and preventing women's equal participation in economic activities. During the LAC<sup>ii</sup> Regional Dialogue, participants stressed that a high percentage of households do not have access to basic sanitation or water, which has detrimental consequences, especially women and children, in the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants at the regional dialogue from Cotopaxi were seeing increases in conflict due to the redistribution of water sources to support large scale broccoli and flower producing companies which is impacting indigenous peoples the most.

### Gender Equality and Women's Economic Justice

#### Gender Equity in Food Consumption

Dialogues directly connected nutrition outcomes to gender inequality. Dialogues in Rwanda<sup>x</sup> recommended increasing decision-making power of women in households as a key to increasing consumption of nutritious foods. In Malawi<sup>x</sup>, participants attributed poor nutrition outcomes in women and girls to cultural norms that men consume the best and the most portion of meals. In both Malawi and Zambia<sup>xii</sup>, child malnutrition was attributed to women's time poverty. Participants in Zambia characterized this challenge, "For working mothers, they are not given time to attend to their children not until their working hours are over; They have no time to cook for their children due to longer working hours hence the rate of children that are malnourished is high." Participants there thus called to "recognize the particular vulnerability of women and girls to malnutrition and aim to protect a women's human right to adequate food and nutrition by embedding the empowerment of women within all food systems strategies." Women and girls are thus responsible for much of the work of ensuring adequate nutrition and are often the most vulnerable to malnutrition. Recentring gender inequality, connected to nutrition outcomes presents one opportunity for CARE to realize mutually supportive strategic priorities.

#### Control Over Productive Resources

Consistently across dialogues participants recognized the critical role women play in food systems, especially food production, but again and again they are blocked from accessing productive resources and social protection mechanisms. Women around the world lack access to land tenure rights, financial services, formal employment, social protection systems, and education opportunities. In Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup>, women are not officially recognized as farmers, so they are unable to access resources and services provided by the government. This was especially problematic in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic because women were denied support systems, such as financial assistance and insurance, even though they constitute almost half the agriculture labour force in the country. Even when women do have access to formal financial services and resources, they are still blocked from decision-making processes at a community and household level. In Malawi<sup>x</sup>, village banks are mainly used by women, but many women do not have control over how finances are used. Harmful cultural norms impact women in Zambia<sup>xi</sup>, where childcare responsibilities still fall mainly on the woman. Working mothers must attend to their children after their working hours, leaving little to no time to cook which has resulted in higher childhood malnutrition rates. In Zimbabwe<sup>vi</sup>, men are still viewed as being more productive than women resulting in lines of credit typically favouring males. Dialogues across the globe called for improved policies that protect women in food systems and more education for women and youth about



entrepreneurship and business opportunities in food systems.

### **Safety and Security**

In addition to the lack of productive resources women can access, women globally still face safety and security risks accessing markets. In Bangladesh<sup>viii</sup>, participants requested that “women-friendly” transportation options should be established to help increase women’s mobility in market settings. In Ecuador<sup>xiii</sup>, markets are run by men who are often violent. The male dominated culture reinforces violence against women as the norm, which has resulted in high rates of adolescent pregnancy and suicide attempts. It’s common for 13- and 14-year-old girls in Ecuador to become mothers, creating a new generation of impoverished families. This reality has been accentuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but women do not consider the pandemic as being the real cause of death, stating “COVID does not kill because of poverty; poverty kills women.”

### **Climate Justice**

#### **Unify Efforts Across Sectors**

The impacts of climate change are being felt around the world, but typically the effects are most heavily felt by the world’s poor. Research must be conducted on the gaps and interlinkages between climate change and all other sectors because it is clear that the world needs “all hands on deck” to mitigate the effects of climate change. Multiple dialogues called on their governments to adopt policies that connect resource and communication across sectors to mitigate disasters and promote data-driven solutions. Major communication gaps still exist between the general population, academia, and governments about how to reduce risks and adopt resilient practices. The lack of adequate technology that allows small-scale farmers to properly predict erratic weather patterns has resulted in higher usage of agrochemicals, which is degrading soil and water systems and further reinforcing climate change.

#### **Climate-Smart Agriculture**

Farmers are feeling the impacts of climate change in their yields and quality of produce. Dialogues called for an increase in training and accessibility to climate smart methods and inputs. This was routinely raised when discussing access to indigenous and traditional seed varieties. Communities recognize that their traditional agriculture systems in combination with new technology can function to mitigate many of the most devastating climate impacts. Extension services must include climate smart practices and investments need to be made in early warning systems to reduce the risks of crop and animal losses as a result of disasters. Infrastructure must be enhanced to reduce food loss and waste in the supply chain and market prices should support crops that are grown using climate smart techniques. Women and indigenous populations should be targeted to receive climate-smart agriculture trainings because they are typically the groups that most heavily feel the burden of climate change.

### **Health**

#### **The First 1,000 Days**

The first 1,000-days of life was a main discussion during the global<sup>xv</sup> SUN and ICAN dialogue. The health

benefits of breastfeeding are crucial for the development of children. Harmful social norms remain a common challenge that is preventing the adoption of breastfeeding. The lack of accessible and translated information at the community level, misinformation spread through social media, and contradicting marketing has all reinforced harmful social norms that undermine the value of breastfeeding in the 1,000-day window. Women need access to scientific information and data, so they can make the most informed decision for themselves and their family according to their own circumstance. Government should promote enabling environments that allow women to make the best-informed decisions. During the regional LAC<sup>ii</sup> dialogue, participants from Guatemala and Ecuador were concerned that media actors were not properly educating the public about the importance of the first 1,000-day window and they called for several actors across sectors to work together to share messaging on maternal and childhood health.

### **Harmful Cultural Norms and Misinformation**

As mentioned in the above 'First 1,000 Days' section, the major gaps between the government, academia, and the media reinforces harmful and detrimental messaging. The media plays a crucial role in disseminating health information to the general public, especially women. The media can challenge social norms that impact women and children's health, especially when it comes to household food consumption and nutrition education. Even if the proper information is available, it is often not accessible. Participants from Guatemala in attendance at the LAC<sup>ii</sup> regional dialogue shared that women struggle accessing information because of the lack of translation options for local languages.

### **Humanitarian Action**

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food systems was a major theme woven throughout a majority of the dialogues. It is clear that the pandemic has caused compounding impacts on all sectors and exposed the weaknesses and gaps within systems. In Nepal<sup>iv</sup>, policies and programmes favour large, commercial, and corporate farms regardless of the environmental impact their systems cause. Yet, during the pandemic these commercial and corporate farms failed to provide to market centres in urban and peri-urban areas due to the inefficiencies in their unsustainable systems. Traditional and household farms contributed to local food security without external support. This same sentiment was raised at the LAC<sup>ii</sup> regional dialogues, where women producers provided 70-80% of the labour involved in family and peasant agriculture. They provided food during the pandemic and that contribution must be recognized. Women need to have their voices raised in food systems dialogue because they face significant challenges as small producers. Participants at the ESA<sup>v</sup>**Error! Bookmark not defined.** regional dialogue stressed that we must learn from this moment and mainstream risk management into planning. The examples given were through annual vulnerability assessments and action planning, creating strategic grain reserves and other emergency measures, and through input subsidy schemes to provide affordable inputs and other grants to assist farmers' recover following disaster.

### **Links to National Pathways**

#### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh dialogues had a specific focus on gender equality, women's empowerment, and the engagement of women across all Action Tracks. This includes women's rights to land; economic empowerment of women in food systems; unpaid care and agricultural labour burden; women's leadership in food systems; access to technologies (including digital); changing norms and addressing institutional barriers; and gender-responsive agricultural and food systems policies. Women account for roughly half the agriculture workforce and nearly three-fourths of the rural female workforce is engaged in agriculture, yet they face constraints expanding production because they do not have equal land rights and are not officially recognized as farmers.

The dialogue called on the Bangladeshi government to end wage discrimination between men and women by setting minimum wage rates for agriculture labour and to recognize women as farmers so they can access to the range of agricultural services provided by the government. The Bangladesh National Pathway recognizes this need, stating "the capacity building of women, inclusive and gender-sensitive financing arrangements, and institutional reforms to tackle gender-based inequalities and discrimination have been prioritized in both the [National Food and Nutrition Security Policy] (NFNSP 2020) and the 8th [Five Year Plan] (FYP), in line with SDG 5 (gender equality)."

Dialogue participants recommended a series of additional actions the government must take to achieve gender transformative change that were absent from the National Pathway. Identified was a need to expand and strengthen public food distribution systems (PFDS) for rural and urban informal workers and farmers so food goods consider the nutrition and health needs of women and children. The state must formally recognize care work and take initiative to redistribute the burden of care work away from being viewed as solely the women's role. Women's safety must be considered when addressing transportation and mobility improvements.

The National Pathway fails to recognize the unequal burden the ongoing pandemic and climate change has on women. Women need context specific, climate-sensitive crop advisory services and accessible climate-resilient technology. Bangladesh should invest in research on the interlinkages between climate change, food systems, and the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls, especially those living in climate affected coastal areas and slums. This is especially crucial to end child marriages and gender-based violence. Participants recognized these resources also need to be expanded to address the needs of other marginalized populations such as transgender, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and sex workers. Participants called for all hospitals to require designated doctors who can give basic medical support to these marginalized groups.

### Nepal

Working in tandem with the government; the National Farmers Group Federation (NFGF), a federation of 4550 farmer groups across the country; and six CSOs working in agriculture, land, forest, irrigation, and food, CARE Nepal co-convoked seven dialogues at the local, provincial, and federal levels. All dialogues were focused on the theme "The Rights of Marginalized Communities are the Basis for a Sustainable Food System." The Nepal National Pathway was developed based on the evidence and outcomes from these seven dialogues, plus three additional nationally held dialogues. The government has identified three-year plans for action which have been organized under the five Action Tracks.

#### **Action Track One: Ensuring Safe and Nutrition Food for All**

**Proposition:** Increase agriculture productivity, develop sustainable food chains for affordable, safe, healthy, and nutritious diets to improve levels of nutrition, ensure all people are well nourished and healthy, and achieve zero hunger.

**Pathway:** Ensure policy coherence (especially across the agriculture, food security and nutrition, education, and health sectors) and food governance. The government will encourage farmers and youth to engage in the agricultural sector to intensify the production of affordable, safe, healthy, and nutritious food for all people in a sustainable way.

**Key elements of the Pathway:** One of the most important aspects is to harmonize existing relevant policies and improved governance through the value chain. Food governance was identified as a key action to ensure fair pricing of the products, strong supply chains, and quality food.

### **Action Track Two: Shifting to Sustainable Consumption Patterns**

**Proposition:** Enable, inspire, and motivate people to enjoy healthy and sustainable food goods; slash food loss and waste; and transition to a circular economy through advancing technological, environmental, economic, social, regulatory, and institutional fronts.

**Pathway:** Set up regulatory mechanisms to effectively monitor the quality of foods and educate people to consume healthy and nutritious local food; reduce food loss and waste; and promote, protect, and support breastfeeding practices.

**Key elements of the Pathway:** Implementing strong regulatory mechanisms was identified as an important element for promoting healthy food production, regulating markets, and influencing consumer behaviour. Raising awareness among value chain actors is crucial to reduce food loss and waste.

### **Action Track Three: Boosting Nature-Positive Production**

**Proposition:** Protect natural ecosystems from new deforestation and conversion for food and feed production; sustainably manage existing food production systems; restore degraded ecosystems; and rehabilitate soil function for sustainable food production.

**Pathway:** Adopt agroecosystem based resilient planning and revitalization of indigenous food systems; and make concerted efforts to conserve and utilize the biodiversity and nature through improving the value of nature positive food system.

**Key elements of the Pathway:** Integrate resiliency mechanisms into all development planning from the beginning. Nepal has a unique mountain food system, and it is crucial to revitalize this system to increase biodiversity and ensure sustainability.

### **Action Track Four: Advancing Equitable Livelihoods for All Food Systems Workers**

**Proposition:** Develop inclusive and diverse food systems that contribute to the elimination of poverty, and food and nutrition insecurity by creating jobs; raising incomes across food value chains; protecting and enhancing

cultural and social capital; reducing risks for the poorest; and increasing value distribution.

Pathway: Invest in research, development, and innovation in the agriculture sector to diversify food systems and promote improved value chains; and develop the entrepreneurship skills of small and commercial farmers, including SMEs, to raise their income, improve their livelihoods, and address the problem of food insecurity, leaving no one behind.

Key elements of the Pathway: Increased investments in research, development, and innovation is key to diversifying and promoting the productivity and incomes of all the stakeholders engaged in the food value chain.

### **Action Track Five: Building Resilience to Vulnerabilities, Shocks, and Stresses**

Proposition: Develop inclusive and equitable food systems to ensure that all people are prepared to withstand and recover from instability, and participate in a food system that, despite shocks and stressors, delivers food security, nutrition, and equitable livelihoods for all.

Pathway: Ensure longer-term investments develop the resiliency of food systems and communities to withstand shocks and stresses to promote sustainable and equitable livelihoods for all.

Key elements of the Pathway: Resilience building requires longer term engagement, investments, and capacity strengthening. Hence, the actions must focus on strengthening the capacity of communities and institutions to better adapt and make them resilient against shocks and stresses.

## Kenya

CARE's Kenyan dialogues focused on the role parliamentarians and various stakeholders play in promoting fortified foods in the country. This dialogue, along with a series of other national dialogues, supported the development of Kenya's National Pathway. The government has identified four aspirations to reach their 2030 vision and goals. These aspirations are:

1. Increase the number of young people receiving school based agricultural education
2. Increase the uptake of digital agricultural solutions
3. Improve the diversity of diets including fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, and fish, as well as grains
4. Heighten climate action to build the resilience of our people

The CARE dialogue focused solely on the role fortified foods play in achieving sustainable food systems, which was only a small focus in the overall National Pathway. The themes and conversations that emerged from CARE's dialogue will speak to the third aspiration area "improve the diversity of diets including fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat and fish, as well as grains." Dialogue participants identified the commitments various stakeholders should follow to incorporate fortified food into national supply chains. Civil Society Alliances should:

- Continue to support the government to design, enact, and enforce large scale staple food fortification programs.

- Mobilize policy makers and parliamentarians to strengthening food fortification.
- Support county governments to enhance compliance, monitor, strengthen coordination platforms, and create awareness and demand for fortified foods.
- Support the availability of quality vitamin/mineral premix and the capacity of the food industry to fortify.
- Work with government and partners to promote fortification.
- Promote the distribution of fortified foods.
- Advocate for enabling environments.
- Develop capacities of small and medium scale millers to fortify.

Kenya announced in their National Pathway that they will develop Nutrition Action Plans to ensure all people can access diverse diets and improved food safety behaviours. These Action Plans could be the space for CARE and other Civil Society Organizations to advocate for and implement nutrition and fortified food programming that moves away from a carbohydrate-based diet to one rich with protein, vitamins, and minerals.

### Malawi

Malawi's key milestone is to raise the country's income status to a lower middle-income country by 2030. This goal should facilitate equitable economic access and distribution of food across the country. The pathway identifies the major challenges the country faces categorized under the five UNFSS action tracks. Each action track has a 3- and 10-year plan on how to tackle the challenges. While this pathway offers detailed priorities to improving national food systems, the pathway still lacks some challenges that emerged through CARE's convened dialogues.

A notable theme missing from Malawi's National Pathway is the impact COVID-19 has on food systems. The Pathway does not mention COVID-19, but it is abundantly clear that the pandemic has impacted all of the action tracks that the Pathway organized its actions under. Participants in the Nkhotakota and Balaka districts identified that Malawi must enhance food preservation and storage mechanisms, improve information sharing and technology access, and strengthen agriculture extension services to maintain vibrant food systems amidst the climate crises and pandemic.

This National Pathway offers a thorough plan to improve food systems over the next decade, making it a more robust plan in comparison to other released pathways. Although, due to the comprehensive approach that is required to improve food systems, the pathway does fall short in providing specific and detailed approaches to achieving the government's priority actions. This presents an opportunity for CARE, and other Civil Society Organizations, such as the Civil Society Network on Agriculture (CISANET), to fill in those gaps through the actions identified during district dialogues. The Zomba and Mangochi dialogues provide specific actions and programs to undertake within three and ten years that are all in line with government's priorities. In the Pathway, Malawi recognizes that Civil Society must support the government by organizing follow up dialogues with communities and tracking activities on the ground. This role can serve to continue unearthing specific actions the government and other stakeholders can take to reach the overall goal of raising the country's income status.

### Rwanda

CARE's convened dialogue in Rwanda was one in a series of nationally convened dialogues that filtered into the development of the National Pathway. CARE's dialogue had six ministers and five members of parliament in attendance, including over one hundred participants representing other key stakeholder groups. The dialogue had two main focuses:

- Ensuring food security and nutrition for all, decent livelihoods, and to promote rural development while building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses
- Crosscutting pillars toward Rwanda's sustainable food systems: Empowering youth and women and access to financing.

The government recognized the importance of these two themes and incorporated them into four priority pillars that Rwanda will focus their pathway on:

1. Ensuring Availability, Accessibility, Affordability and Food Safety for all while increasing demand for healthy and nutritious diets.
2. Developing food systems that contribute to environmental sustainability.
3. Enabling farmers and others in the food chain to enjoy decent livelihoods and to promote rural development while building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses.
4. Emerging cross-cutting themes include enhancing the contributions from women and young people and financing for Food Systems transformation.

The National Pathway offers high level program goals to be achieved over the next decade for each pillar. The delivery of Rwanda's pathways will be anchored by and aligned to existing planning documents. The Pathway details how Rwanda's food systems transformation will contribute specifically to the achievements of several SDGs, particularly SDGs 1, 2, 8, 13, and 15. The plans also aligns with the East African Community (EAC) Vision 2050 of increased investment and enhanced agricultural productivity for food security and a transformation of the rural economy.

The Pathway details plans to transform food systems over the next decade and recognizes that to achieve the goals, it will take concerted effort between stakeholders due to the multifaceted nature of food systems. This highlights the important role Civil Society plays in hosting conversations to continuously develop and improve on approaches to ensure sustainable change is achieved. CARE can play a key role due to the already established relationship with key parliamentarians that attended convened dialogues. It will be crucial to maintain this relationship to ensure this Pathway becomes a reality for Rwandans.

### South Africa

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), CARE International (Southern Africa Office), and the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) co-hosted a national multi-stakeholder dialogue focusing on the Biennial Review Results (BRR) for South Africa, with a special focus on climate change and nutrition. Together, the partners conducted a review of South Africa's performance against its commitments on nutrition and climate change in the Malabo Declaration. From the review, it emerged that South Africa was missing its targets on climate change, food security and nutrition. According to the presenters, food and nutrition insecurity has long been an issue in South Africa, with 11% of the population (6.5 million

people) suffering from hunger in 2019, which has been further compounded by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), indicated that government experienced delays in reporting its targets, partly because of challenges with data collection and the non-domesticated measurements. It was highlighted that the department's data systems were not aligned to the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Plan (CAADP) Malabo Declaration's Biennial Review classifications. The dialogue expressed concerns about communication gaps between stakeholders, especially when collecting data.

The South African National Pathway did not state to include the findings from the BRR in the pathway, but the takeaways from the dialogue were aligned with the pathway. It is important to note that there were government representatives in attendance to the BRR dialogue. The national pathway seeks to transform current food systems based on four objectives:

- Enhance sustainable local production for local consumption of safe, nutritious, and indigenous foods
- Promote social, economic, and environmental resilience
- Facilitate inclusive, sustainable, and competitive value chains
- Promote integrated food systems policies, legislation, planning, and governance

The fourth objective partially echoed the dialogue findings and called to launch, enhance, and fund existing centrally coordinated food system governance structures, such as the Food Security Council, with clear mandates, roles, and responsibilities supported by clear policies, legislation planning, and governance. The pathway also plans to reconsider the model of Public-Private Partnerships to include communities and academia in the partnerships. There was a clear call in the dialogues that the government also needs to set up multi-stakeholder committees that will monitor food and nutrition security progress and reduce the impacts of climate change.

Information and technology access was one of the levers of change identified to achieve the pathway objectives. The others being efficient and effective governance systems, The Competition Act drive of efficiency and competitiveness, government and business procurement, financing, and coalition participation. Data and information for food producers must be established, which includes the about 3 million household farmers and their members in former Bantustans, commercial farms, mines, towns, townships, informal settlements, and metros. This would include improving information sharing mechanisms, tracking community-level food insecurity, establishing climate and agronomy feedback systems, creating conservation campaigns, and improving early warning systems and alerts.

It is crucial that multi-sectoral organizations continue working together to critically assess the progress being made in the country through processes like the BRR. It was found in the review that progress in implementing the CAADP framework has been slow. Governments are the custodian of this policy framework, but non-state actors are critical in creating enabling environments and advocating for inclusive transformation in food systems.

### Uganda

CARE co-convened dialogues under two themes in Uganda; the role of youth in achieving sustainable food



systems and the media's role in contributing to resilient food systems. Youth were a key impact population in the National Pathway and some of the dialogue results were aligned with the priorities identified in the pathway. The pathway was guided by three questions:

1. How will food systems contribute to the good health and nutrition of everyone in Uganda?
2. How will food systems contribute to the well-being of women, youth, and children?
3. How will food systems contribute to the regeneration of natural ecosystems and substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions?

During CARE's dialogues, the main challenge identified by the youth was the lack of youth involvement on policy issues, especially those that relate to climate change, high malnutrition rates, and communication gaps between the government and the youth. While the pathway has identified impactful actions to empower youth in food systems, it does lack actions which would incorporate youth voices in policy making processes. Most of the pathway focuses on improving women's position in food systems, which while vitally important, it does fail to address the crucial role youth play in achieving nutritious, affordable, equitable, and sustainable food systems transformation.

The dialogue identified the media as a key stakeholder in Uganda's development process because it can effectively influence populations to achieve resilient and nutritious food systems. The pathway lacks discussion around the roles of different stakeholders in improving food systems and fails to recognize the essential role of the media. To utilize the power of the media, the government needs to implement quick, accurate, and consistent information sharing systems so the media can play the role of disseminating messaging to various population groups. Media actors must ensure the information shared is accurate and easily understood by a majority of the population. There must be regular accountability from all actors, especially the government, on the food systems agenda in which the media will play a key role in ensuring transparency on the process.

The national pathway has identified important actions for the government to take to transform food systems, but a major missing theme that remains is the role different actors play in supporting the government in their pathway. That is why it remains crucial that civil society and other stakeholders continue to hold conversations focused on key populations and their needs. Both youth and the media play different roles in achieving food and nutrition security, but both are equally critical in the process.

### Zimbabwe

The co-convened dialogues in Zimbabwe focused on two cross-cutting themes; building resilience to shocks and hazards for small scale farmers; and supporting sustainable consumption patterns and reducing food waste. The outcomes from both dialogues were in line with the identified commitments made through the National Pathway. Zimbabwe organized its pathway via the five UNFSS Action Tracks and incorporated actions to empower small-scale famers throughout the plans. Notably, the country plans to adopt policies and make investments that support the development of small and medium enterprises in agribusiness including providing training, skills development, and financing; and leveraging national actions for building the resilience of small-scale farmers to the impacts of climate change. The commitments identified under Action Track three and five further support the dialogue findings in identifying the need to improve irrigation facilities, roads, and transportation infrastructure; and promote traditional and indigenous crop varieties.

The commitments identified under Action Track two are directly aligned with the findings from the dialogue “Unleashing innovation towards sustainable consumption patterns and reduction of post-harvest food waste.” Participants felt there was urgent need to adopt new agricultural technologies that will improve crop management, pest control and disease management while contributing to the consumption of diversified diets by the general populace. Citizens need to be empowered to make informed decisions on their nutrition choices and manufacturers need to provide nutritional food options. The market needs to reflect the importance of nutritious food in pricing models, currently nutritious foods are associated with low demand and high prices, discouraging farmers from producing vital crops. The Pathway plans on tackling these challenges by launching National Food Based Dietary Guidelines to increase consumer demands for healthy food options. The government will use subsidies to boost agriculture and commercial production of nutritious foods and target younger populations with messaging that supports the consumption of indigenous and traditional foods. The country plans to invest in post-harvest infrastructure and food preservation initiatives to reduce food waste and spoilage.

The dialogue results are clearly aligned with the actions identified by the government of Zimbabwe, which is encouraging and reinforces the need to maintain a supportive relationship between civil society actors and the government. A key opportunity to strengthen support systems is through the already established Food and Nutrition Security Committees which operate at national, provincial, district, ward, and village levels.

## Reflections and Conclusion

### Opportunities

With less than a decade left to reach the SDGs it has never been more necessary to take a global, multi-sector approach to transforming food systems. The purpose of the independent dialogue process was to inform deliberations leading up to, during, and following the Summit. The UNFSS functioned to spark conversations and urge governments to take real action, but the Summit was just one moment in time and change must be implemented now. The dialogue process should not end with the Summit but must be continued to ensure the commitments made are realized. The following are suggested opportunities to continue the dialogues process:

- 1. Learn From Other Dialogues:** The CARE convened dialogues on their own serve as an invaluable resource to guide transformative change in food systems. In addition to the CARE dialogues, the UNFSS process resulted in over 1,000 independent and 600 Member State dialogues spanning across the world. These reports are filled with significant findings that can guide CARE to better incorporate locally raised issues and needs.
- 2. Further Explore Critical Issues:** Dialogues generally provided high level conversations across multiple cross-cutting areas, which uncovered critical issues that could benefit from further conversations. Due to limitations of discussion lengths, group sizes, and in-person conversations, it is recommended that dialogues continue to be held that would give space to other emerging themes and topics. Communities could benefit from exploring dialogues with specific audience focuses, such as conversations exclusively open to women or indigenous groups, to overcome power imbalances and dive deeper into specific needs and solutions.

- 3. Strengthen Organizational Relationships:** CARE co-convened dialogue with a large variety of organizations from civil society, academia, to government agencies. These organizations all bring different audiences, viewpoints, and needs which serve to strengthen CARE's programmatic and advocacy approaches. Building on the relationships developed through the dialogue process will increase the voices of various stakeholders and strengthen CARE's ability to enact sustainable change in the countries we work. Food systems impact all sectors and communities, so it is crucial to work in collaboration with diverse organizations to truly transform the future of food.
- 4. Continuously Evaluate Food Systems Transformation:** Multiple National Pathways specifically called out the important role ongoing dialogues have on the implementation of their commitments. Most countries have released plans to make incremental change over the next five to ten years, which will require ongoing monitoring and accountability mechanism to gauge the impact of commitments. Dialogues will play a crucial role in holding governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders accountable and implement real time changes to systems as needed.

### Challenges

The first challenge CARE faced was in obtaining buy-in globally for the dialogue process. This is largely attributed to the difficult expectations placed on country offices to continue operating at a high level during the pandemic while also taking on new work related to the UNFSS. They suffered from limited capacity under very difficult circumstances that negatively affected the number of countries dialogues were held in. Relatedly, "Food Systems" was not understood as relevant or prioritized by all country offices and contexts. The "sell" internally to CARE country offices was at times challenging and reflects the recency that "food systems" have been discussed as broadly as they were in the UNFSS. This indicates that future coordination with country office staff should begin early, with an assessment of what resources each team is able to contribute and adequate support to mitigate the lack of capacity at the country level. The messaging around food systems should be built early in the process of selling to country offices to inform them of how each of their programs intersect with food systems in how CARE leadership is conceiving of it.

Dialogue processes were also challenged by the limited information provided in feedback reports. Many dialogues were not held virtually and not recorded, so this synthesis relied upon Feedback Reports, which did have missing information that limited findings. The official UN Feedback Report format was also not constructed to capture attribution, which prevented this synthesis or other dialogue learnings to reflect whose voices were being included in the process. The way dialogues were reported particularly failed to capture divergences and whether certain ideas or concepts were more well or poorly received than others. Future reporting processes should be constructed with better capability to reflect power dynamics within rooms to provide more layered and nuanced data about who and how concepts were discussed.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an ever-present factor in the dialogue process and demanded each coordinating team remain flexible and responsive to the shifting public health landscape to ensure participant and staff safety, even while working to convene as inclusive and participatory conversation as possible. Mobility was far more limited in most contexts CARE held dialogues during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in some contexts was mobility restricted entirely. To those ends, CARE did hold dialogue processes entirely virtually. In some contexts, we limited the number of participants and chose outdoor environments or in larger, better-ventilated

accommodations than would otherwise be necessary. While the team went to every effort to put the safety and health of all participants first, this factor did limit how inclusive dialogues were, and the number and places dialogues could be safely held.

### Conclusion

Dialogue processes proved to be a rich ground for stakeholders to voice their challenges and come together to generate novel approaches to building more inclusive and resilient food systems. CARE's dialogue processes specifically have acted to "test" field approaches to building effective multi-stakeholder spaces, findings new ways to influence government pathways, and how to leverage partnerships to push forward CARE's strategic interests.

Key learnings from these processes can and should be integrated into remaining dialogue findings and be used across CARE to inform priorities based on the voices of stakeholders engaged in dialogues.

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<sup>i</sup> Ugandan Dialogue "Role of Youth in Achieving Sustainable Food Systems"

<sup>ii</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Dialogue "Food Systems in Latin America: Outstanding debt toward women in the region and their leadership amid the crisis"

<sup>iii</sup> Malawi District Dialogues "Transforming our thinking around Food Systems in Malawi to Achieve zero hunger and good nutrition" held in Nkhotakota and Balaka Districts

<sup>iv</sup> Nepal Provincial Dialogues "Covering the Voice of Small Farmers: Inclusive Agriculture Policy and Practices" held in all 7 provinces

<sup>v</sup> East and Southern Africa Regional Dialogue "A University-Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Food Systems for Improved Productivity, Inclusivity and Resilience"

<sup>vi</sup> Zimbabwe Dialogue "Unleashing Innovation Towards Sustainable Consumption Patterns and Reduction of Post-Harvest Food Waste"

<sup>vii</sup> Zimbabwe Dialogue "Pathways of Creating Sustainable Food Systems and Building Resilience to Shocks and Hazards among Small Scale Farmers in Mutoko"

<sup>viii</sup> Bangladesh Dialogue "Women in Food Systems: The Invisible Indispensable"

<sup>ix</sup> Rwanda Dialogue "Shaping Rwanda Food Systems Pathways for Improved Food and Nutrition Security"

<sup>x</sup> Malawi District Dialogues "Transforming food system is crucial for delivering on all the sustainable development goals" held in Zomba, and Mangochi

<sup>xi</sup> Zambia District Dialogue Series "Achieving a Sustainable Food System in Zambia" held in Kafue and Chongwe Districts

<sup>xii</sup> Zambia District Dialogue Series "Adding Farmers and Consumer Voices to UNFSS" held in Kabwe, Kitwe, Mkushi, Rufunsa, and Chilanga Districts

<sup>xiii</sup> Ecuador Dialogue "Independent National Dialogue towards the World Summit on Food Systems"

<sup>xiv</sup> East and Southern Africa Regional Dialogue "Building Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems in Africa: Mobilizing African Voices and Building Momentum for the UN Food Systems Summit"

<sup>xv</sup> Global Dialogue "ICAN and SUN CSN UN Food System Summit Independent Dialogue - Gender Equality, a Key Driver to Enhancing Food Systems and Good Nutrition"

<sup>xvi</sup> Nepal and Bangladesh Regional Dialogue "Putting Smallholder Farmers at the Centre of Food Systems"

<sup>xvii</sup> Kenya Dialogue "Commitments during Parliamentary Engagement on UN Food Systems and 2nd Food Fortification summit in Kenya"