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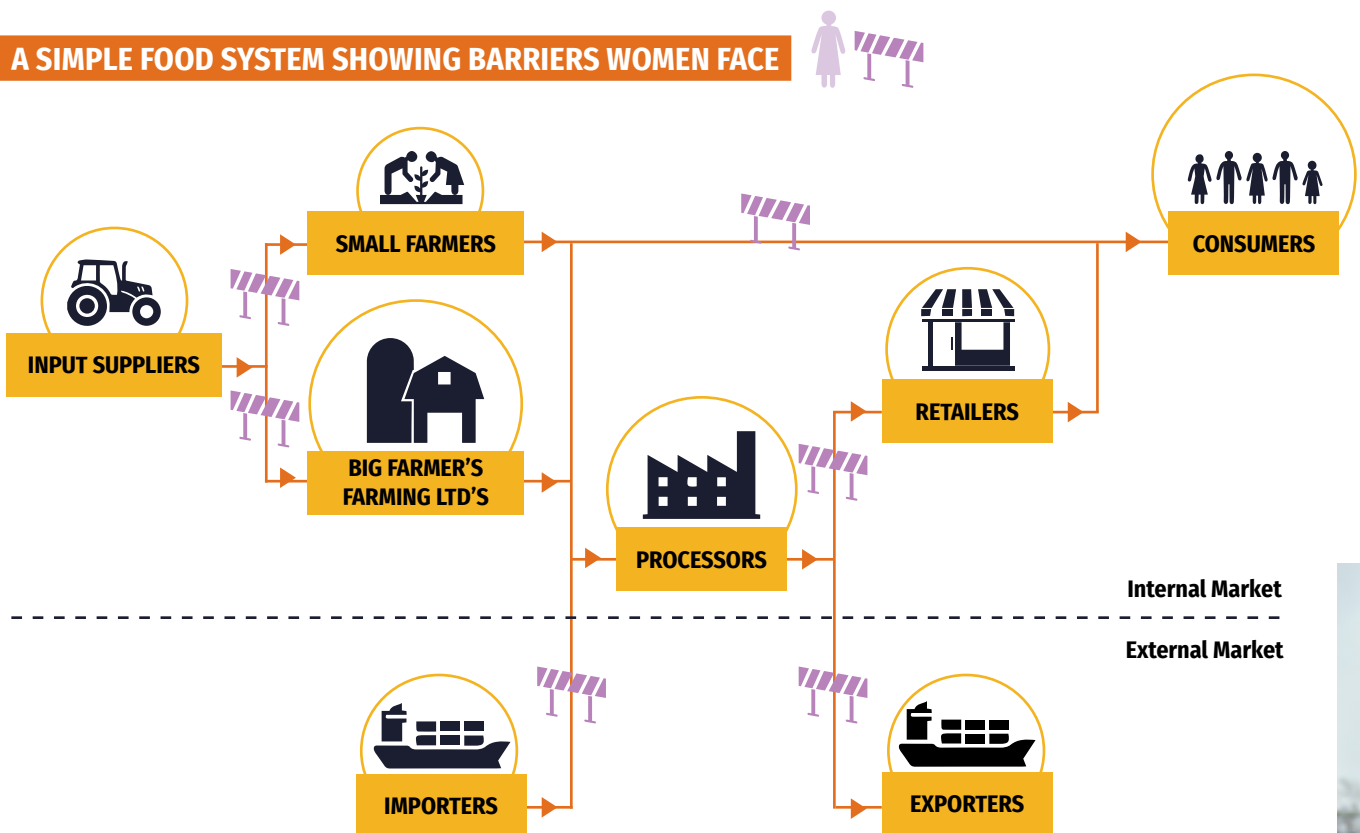
# Enabling Inclusive Food Systems

Food and Water Systems Annual Report

# Introduction

Food systems are the backbone of a healthy, equitable, and functioning society, yet nearly everyone agrees that they are broken. Almost 700 million people are undernourished or chronically hungry, and UN agencies estimate that this could increase by over 130 million because of COVID-19. More than 2 billion are overweight or obese. Roughly a third of food is lost or wasted. And our food systems tax the planet's resources and contribute to climate change. As much as a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions are from food systems. We must transform food systems in the face of hunger, malnutrition, environmental degradation, and climate change. The reality of food systems is a reality of deep, systemic inequality – particularly for women.

## A SIMPLE FOOD SYSTEM SHOWING BARRIERS WOMEN FACE



A **food system** includes growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food and food-related items by numerous food system actors, all influenced by drivers and processes determining how these activities are performed. Activities by actors in food systems result in outcomes that feed information back to environmental and socioeconomic driving forces. Food systems are a continuum, and no classification

can fully account for the huge diversity within each type. Multiple food systems co-exist within any given country. For a food systems approach to be effective, those using it must be mindful that food systems are dynamic and comprise multiple actors with multiple motives facing a range of drivers – policy, market, social, technological, biophysical environments, and more – that influence their activities. (CCFAS, 2019)

Inequality shapes who has access to food and the resources to grow it and buy it. It governs who eats first and who eats worst. Inequality determines who has access to water, and who can adapt to a changing climate. Hunger and poverty are not accidents—they are the result of social and economic injustice and inequality at all levels. The reality of inequality is no truer than for women—half the world’s population, with far less than their fair share of the world’s resources. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are exposing the existing flaws in food systems, many of which stem from gender inequalities and the unfair treatment of women and girls. Women lack the access, information, and inputs they need to fight food insecurity and malnutrition. CARE’s [Left Out and Left Behind: Ignoring Women Will Prevent Us From Solving the Hunger Crisis](#) reveals that despite women’s and girls’ significant roles in food systems, global responses to COVID-19 and related hunger crises are either ignoring them or treating them as victims who have no role in addressing the problems they face.

Women farmers play a vital role in global food production, water collection, and the way families eat, yet they are largely unappreciated. They often eat last when food is scarce. They struggle to secure land title, obtain credit and insurance, purchase seeds and equipment, or access agricultural training. Yet, like everyone, they have a right to food and for many, farming is their livelihood. Investing in women farmers and addressing this imbalance is not only critical for women, but for creating a more sustainable food system that benefits everyone. Research shows that if women farmers had the same access to resources as men, they could

increase yields on their farms by 20–30 percent, potentially reducing the number of hungry people in the world by up to 150 million.

CARE’s food, water and nutrition security work spans from responding to emergencies to enabling small-scale farmers, fishers, and pastoralists to sustainably increase productivity through water and other agricultural inputs, access markets, build resilience to climate change, and ensure the nutrition of their families. We emphasize the role that small-scale food producers play in ensuring the food and nutrition security of all – and particularly emphasize the role and rights of women as water collectors, food producers and consumers. Our work is guided by CARE’s SuPER principles for just and sustainable food systems:

**S**ustainable food and water systems are grounded in healthy ecosystems, but they also depend on the human and political component: stable, accountable and durable institutions that equally support men and women, rich and poor.

**P**roductive food systems allow food producers to make a profit on their investment, increase availability of nutritious foods, and give consumers access to nutritious and diverse foods that they can buy for home consumption.

**E**quitable food systems enable equal rights, opportunities, resources and rewards for smallholder farmers, taking into account women’s needs and constraints, and supporting access to affordable nutrition food by rural and urban consumers.

**R**esilient food systems help women, girls, men and boys build equitable and reliable access to key resources, including water, health, information (market, price, climate, for example), decision-making power, finance, natural resources, strengthening their adaptive capacity to climate impacts and ability to deal with loss and damage, and supporting recovery mechanisms that are accessible to both women and men, such as household savings and formal safety nets.

The time is now. Change is necessary to create sustainable and equitable food and nutrition security for the planet, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable people. We know it is possible to have just and sustainable food systems that provide adequate and nutritious food for everyone in the system—especially women and girls. Transforming food systems under a changing climate – to ensure food and nutrition security for all – demands action from all actors. At CARE, we are committed to do our part in the face of current challenges to ensure food systems are fair for current and future generations.







Peter Caton/CARE

## Food Systems Breaking Under the Strain of COVID-19

Food and nutrition systems are severely strained as a result of COVID-19. A combination of disrupted markets, lack of international trade, lower travel, and mobility restrictions are impacting people's ability to grow, buy, sell, or prepare food they need to stay healthy. By the end of 2020, 270 million people are likely to face a hunger pandemic, an 82% increase over last year triggered by the COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

CARE's food security response program to the hunger pandemic builds on [She Feeds the World](#)'s holistic model to improve food and nutrition security by helping women farmers claim their rights and receive the support they need in face of the pandemic. We know from experience that sustainable and equitable impact necessitates change across many connected areas. CARE's **Food Security Pandemic Response Program** meets the Do No Harm principles for all participants while aligning with [WHO safety guidelines](#) and [CARE International COVID program guidance](#) to provide women farmers access to the resources, support and information they need to invest in their small plots of land, businesses, families and communities by focusing on three core axes across the [humanitarian development nexus](#):

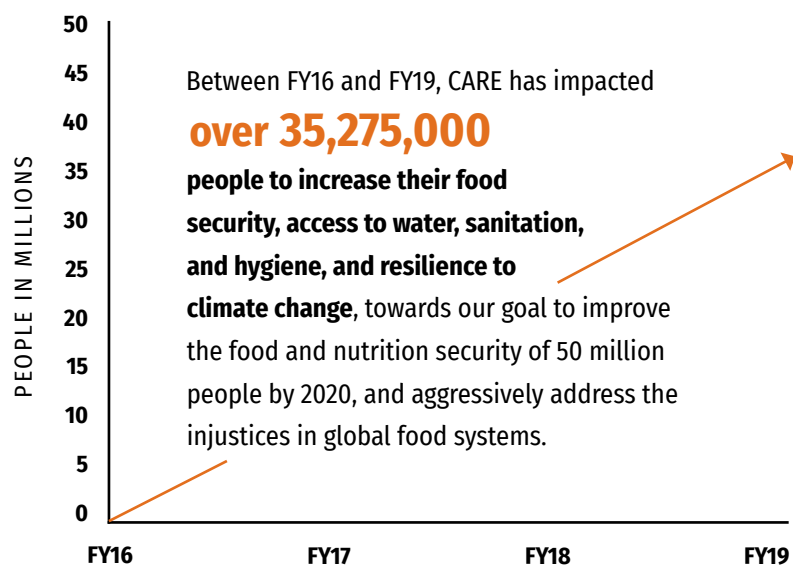
1. Farmers, including women, must have access to water, agriculture resources and markets.
2. Gender equality, including addressing gender-based violence, must be at the core of all response.
3. Safety nets must be gender-responsive and need to be scaled up to ensure that those most in need have access to nutritious food.

It is imperative that we consider women's rights and empowerment as an essential element of the COVID-19 response in long-term resilience—not a trade off between immediate crisis response and a longer-term goal of women's rights. [CARE recognizes women's ingenuity, solidarity, and adaptive capacity as a key role in food systems, and vital component to not only recover from the COVID-19 crisis but build back better.](#)

# Results

In Fiscal Year 2019, CARE had 560 projects in its portfolio on food and nutrition security and climate change resilience;

**reaching 20.3 million people directly and 77.5 million indirectly across 66 countries.**



## CARE's Food and Nutrition Security & Climate Change Resilience Impact by Indicator:



**Reduced food insecurity for 4,279,165 people**  
- 50.9% women and girls - with 68 projects across 24 countries.



**Contributed to 1,191,258 children under 5 escaping stunting**, increasing the food and nutrition security of over 2,635,000 people with 23 projects across 16 countries.



**Increased resilience capacities to the effects of climate change and vulnerability for 2,239,006 people** with 69 projects across 25 countries.



**Increased access to water, sanitation, and hygiene for 5 million people.**

We are constantly aiming to improve our results in these programs, and so this report builds on previous CARE work – including [Cultivating Equality](#), [the SuPER Principles](#), and [Beyond Productivity](#) – to strengthen food systems around the world amidst growing global attention on the food-health-planet nexus. The examples drawn for this report feature 19 projects, plus CARE's ongoing COVID response data, across 17 countries to demonstrate our reach and impacts within CARE's food systems approach to address inequalities in food systems for the world we seek – one with food security, access to clean water, improved nutrition, and climate justice for all.

# She Feeds the World: A Food Systems Approach

CARE sees the inextricable link among markets, value chains, and agriculture; nutrition and climate change; gender equality and water: all key to food and nutrition security and all critical elements of food systems. Emphasizing systems approaches speaks to our ability to tackle challenges holistically, across disciplines and from multiple perspectives. CARE's [She Feeds the World \(SfTW\) Framework](#) unifies our approach across CARE International and captures the best of what CARE does in our food and nutrition security programming and advocacy across these multiple sectors. Under SfTW, CARE committed to helping

**50 MILLION** people  
**IMPROVE** their food and  
**nutrition security and**  
**climate resilience by 2020.**

SfTW focuses on women, youth, and small-scale producers by enabling them to access the resources, support, information, skills and confidence they need to invest in their farms, businesses, families and communities. As a result, these women will boost production and generate income that they use to send their children to school, feed their families more nutritious meals, keep their kids healthy, expand their businesses and employ others, and build savings that help them weather tough times. CARE focuses on the enabling environments that support women and girls by engaging directly and indirectly with men and boys, civil society, private sector, academic, and government partners. We also work with women throughout value chains, as we want to see more women breaking barriers and exclusionary social norms in extension services, micro-finance institutions, or marketing associations. Our success is measured in the number of women small-scale producers and their families who can claim their rights to food and nutrition security in terms of greater access to water, finance, markets, production, income, nutrition, equality and resilience when uncertainty strikes.

## Gender Equality

Evidence from global sources, as well as CARE's analysis of the underlying causes of poverty across its programs around the world, overwhelmingly demonstrate that gender discrimination - or the denial of women's basic human rights - is one of the major causes of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity ([World Bank, 2012](#); [CARE, 2010](#)). And now, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are exposing the existing flaws in food systems, many of which stem from gender inequalities and the unfair treatment of women and girls. Women and girls are a significant portion of food producers - making up about 43% of the agricultural labor force worldwide, and about 50% in Sub-Saharan Africa ([FAO, 2011](#)) - and they are the majority of food providers for their households, responsible for 85-90% of the time spent on food preparation around the world ([WFP, 2020](#)) and the majority of water collection is done by women and girls, but their contributions are frequently unseen. Too often, women eat last and least.

Despite the many barriers they face, women and girls are instrumental to food systems and are already leading the charge to meet COVID-19-related challenges. Women leaders at all levels are finding solutions: from planting crops during curfew to keeping markets open, to supporting the poorest people in their communities. Addressing gender inequalities will help deconstruct the barriers these women face, boosting productivity, promoting good nutrition, and leading to better outcomes for women, girls, and their communities.

Empowering women is a powerful tool for bringing sustainable institutional change to agricultural systems in the face of climate change. To tackle the issues of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and climate change, women must be given greater access to education, inputs, and other resources in order to have greater control and influence over their households. Women must also be valued for their contributions and their knowledge. Their role as providers of family health and nutrition means they bring a different - and needed - perspective on vulnerability and household needs and priorities.





Josh Ester/CARE

In noting that **she** feeds the world (as producers, caregivers and community activists), then, CARE recognizes this reality, but works to support women to do this more effectively by challenging the barriers that hold back their equal access to resources, services and markets. By putting gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of our work for food and nutrition security, we aim to redress these imbalances and injustices, promoting greater equality in private and public spheres. It is why we stress the importance of addressing women's time poverty, and recognizing, reducing and redistributing domestic and care work to enable more equal relationships and social norms.

CARE is committed to achieving gender equality and empowerment for women and girls through our humanitarian and development programming using the [Gender Equality and Women's Voice approach](#). In FY19, almost half of all FNS CCR projects (49%) were reported as **Gender Sensitive**, meaning there was minimally an awareness and consideration for gender roles, norms, and relations. An additional 35% were reported as Gender Responsive and Gender Transformative – 19% and 16% respectively.

Gender Transformative projects and activities encourage critical awareness among men and women of gender roles and norms; promote the position of women; challenge the distribution of resources and allocation of duties between men and women; and/or explicitly address power relationships between women and others in the community, such as service providers or traditional leaders.

In FY19, FNS CCR Projects were

**49%**  
Gender Sensitive  
**19%**  
Gender Responsive  
**16%**  
Gender Transformative



## **Farmer Field and Business Schools** **and Social Analysis and Action** **in Food and Nutrition Security** **Programming**

The Farmer Field and Business Schools (FFBS), an integrated service delivery model, are a product of the CARE Pathways program focusing on a learning-by-doing approach, putting farmers at the heart of learning and decision-making around new agricultural techniques. The strength of the model is that it integrates multiple components – including sustainable agriculture practices, market engagement, gender and equity, food and nutrition security, group empowerment, and monitoring and evaluation – to build the knowledge, skills, and practices of women farmers. Integration also strengthens results across the spectrum of food and nutrition security work.

Within the gender component, CARE's Social Analysis and Action (SAA) tool was designed to address social, economic, climate, environmental and cultural factors by taking CARE and partner staff and the community through a journey of self-reflection and assessment. The SAA approach aims to challenge social norms, starting with staff self-reflection and facilitated dialogues in the communities, on people's own biases and behaviors that might contribute to social stigma, discrimination and social conditions; particularly in identifying social and cultural norms that contribute to food and nutrition insecurity. SAA then gives the entire group – development workers included – the means to incorporate social norms and practices into regular dialogue that breaks down barriers that stem from social factors. It enables development workers to successfully work with communities to identify links between social factors, gender roles, food insecurity and nutrition, and then determine how to address them.

## Agriculture, Value Chains, and Markets

Beyond the resource gap, women farmers are routinely paid less than men for their agricultural labor; carry a disproportionate share of household workloads; are often excluded from agricultural decision-making; and are under-represented in agricultural organizations. The net impact of these barriers is a systemic gap between women's potential contributions to food security and household resilience and what they are able to achieve today. CARE's programs build on and are inspired by the vital roles that women play in small-scale agriculture around the world: meeting the food needs of their households, contributing to the development and growth of livelihoods, and working toward sustainable futures for their households and communities.

CARE's FFBS draws on the standard farmer field school participatory approach to improving agriculture productivity, but has been adapted specifically to address the gender, nutrition, and business-skill gaps in standard extension systems. Additionally, SFtW promotes sustainable agriculture practices that allow women small-scale producers to respond in the face of a continually changing environment. The characteristics at the core of CARE's definition of sustainable agriculture are that it: 1) is grounded in healthy ecosystem management practices; 2) is supported by stable and accountable institutions and inclusive governance; and 3) provides access to financial services, quality inputs and other business development services on equitable terms to promote small-scale producer income and profitability.

SFtW promotes the need for improved [access to markets for women](#) to unlock greater production, profits on small-scale agriculture, and food security. It also promotes women small-scale producers' ability to participate and make decisions in market systems. Throughout 120 projects working with markets in FY19, CARE and partners apply a gender transformative market systems and value-chain lens to our agricultural programming with the aim of enhancing food and nutrition security. We ensure that thorough gender and market systems analyses are at the forefront of selection and engagement in selected [value chains](#). This includes looking upstream to ensure producers can access agricultural inputs—including credit—and services, and downstream to connect producers to more profitable market opportunities.

In Honduras's [Cargill project](#), 28 producer associations representing 1,213 producers (55% women) sold products from different value chains, including: maize, grains, coffee, banana, tomatoes, lettuce, red and green pepper, avocado, tilapia and pork to formal markets. Many small-scale producers formed new producer associations to combine their efforts and sell their products on a competitive and sustainable basis. These producers sold their products at a profit because they are connected to buyers. When the project ends, producers will have developed solid links to end-markets so they can continue selling to formal markets and significantly increasing their incomes, productivity and nutrition.

Within fragile and conflict affected contexts, food value chains and market systems undergo significant destruction to agriculture assets, energy, water resources, and infrastructure. At the same time, market system actors, including farmers and consumers, may get displaced. [Resilient food market systems](#) are critical means for people to generate income, earn livelihoods, buy and sell food, as well as exercise more control over their situation and build dignity, social capital, and self-worth, while also reducing dependency on imported food and/or food aid. A little over 40% of CARE's food and nutrition security and climate change resilience projects, 228 of 560, operated in fragile (humanitarian or humanitarian *and* development) contexts in FY19.

- In West Bank and Gaza, by leveraging cooperatives, 100 [social enterprises](#) created economies of scale for scattered farmers to (1) improve efficiency of production through the creation of aggregation hubs for seeds, sheep and goat dairy, cold storage, etc.; and (2) build the negotiation power of small-scale farmers thus increasing their supply power relative to large private sector buyers.
- The SEED project in Sudan increased market linkages between farmers and pastoralists. 56% of people reported that there is more and better quality food available in the market, 42% had higher incomes, and 51% were able to access more natural resources because of the project.





CARE's experience points to massive market disruptions and food security as a result of COVID-19 quarantines, restrictions on mobility, and a sudden diversion of all additional resources into immediate pandemic response. The COVID-19 response must minimize disruptions to markets and support agricultural livelihoods by ensuring that small-scale farmers, especially women and girls, can access key resources such as inputs, information, storage, and market linkages. Currently, CARE is using its [agro-source frame-work](#) that addresses four key domains of systemic constraints, namely, availability, access, use, and enabling environments; adapting programs to address supply and demand shortages across agricultural input markets; and using models from previous programming that address these constraints.

## Water

By 2050, farmers will have to produce 70% more food to feed a growing global population projected to reach 9.7 billion – all without exceeding current levels of water withdrawals. The vast majority of the world's farmers are small-scale farmers: those that farm just a few acres, or less, of land. These farmers will need to increase food production while facing accelerating climate change and increasing rainfall variability, recurrent dry spells and droughts, low water availability, and degrading soil health. A deliberate focus on women smallholder farmers is needed in order to ensure they have access to the water, land, knowledge and resources needed to contribute not only to the food and nutrition security of their household, but also increase the food security of their communities and the global food supply.

Women's access to water for agricultural and productive uses has a significant impact on household incomes and food security. Water is a key agricultural input; production cannot scale without it. In arid environments and areas affected by climate change, this means looking beyond 'blue water' sources (traditional surface and groundwater sources), to ensuring use of 'green water' – water that is stored in the soil as moisture. CARE's Water Smart Agriculture (WaSA) tools build on conservation agriculture and integrated natural resource management, and contextualizes those concepts into specific water management practices that sustainably increase productivity, and ensure that farmers are able to use both blue and green water sources for more efficient water use for food production. WaSA specifically focuses on empowering women through reducing the time needed to collect water - since crops need less water when WaSA techniques are adopted. WaSA practices are especially important in resource poor areas that rely on rainfed agriculture, and are prone to drought, flooding, unpredictable rainfall and the ongoing effects of climate change. WaSA interventions are classified into three categories:



1. **Soil smart:** enhancing soil health and capacity to hold moisture;
2. **Rainfall smart:** enhancing rainwater infiltration and enhance rainwater capture for irrigation;
3. **Irrigation smart:** using blue water efficiently and at small-scale to enhance or go beyond rain-fed production.

Technologies and practices which are soil smart and rainfall smart should be selected and promoted depending on the crop, whereas irrigation smart practices depend on the socio-ecological context. WaSA contributes to increased resilience of small-scale farmers by helping farmers in varying agricultural contexts to protect their harvests against climate risks. It also contributes to increased incomes by enabling dry season agriculture and cultivation of high-value crops during the off-season, while protecting water sources for other uses. Another key feature of WaSA, which often overlaps with benefits of FFBS, is that women form collectives, pooling money and resources for accessing markets, setting prices or obtaining agricultural inputs, allowing women farmers to gain confidence and independence. WaSA serves as a guiding framework for both farmers and governments, seeking to invest in technologies and practices, including water source protection, that will sustainably increase agricultural production without deepening water scarcity.



In Mali, CARE's WaSA approach resulted in women farmers restoring over 91 hectares of land that was previously degraded and reducing water needed for crops by 38%, meaning that women could now collect water every other day for their crops instead of daily.



In Ghana, WaSA has reached more than 13,000 smallholder farmers (10,299 women) across 87 communities and a 31% decrease in production costs during the 2017 rainy season due to increased crop yields and decreased inputs.



In Malawi WaSA has resulted in a 27% increase in income for women farmers from crop sales and over 2800 hectares of land integrating Water Smart Agriculture techniques for soil and water conservation.

Hygiene and thorough handwashing are the first line of defense against the spread of COVID-19. For many families of the world, this is their only defense. All water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)-related response activities should comply with “do no harm” principles. Thus, hygiene promotion for COVID-19 response may require adapted strategies to avoid facilitating group gatherings that increases the risk of COVID transmission. Where possible, WASH-related response should help to strengthen existing WASH systems and, at minimum, should not undermine existing WASH systems. Additionally, women and girls are often responsible for water collection, which means more time spent outside the home collecting water, usually at places where there are others congregating. Women and girls are also most responsible for health and hygiene within households, and are often primary care-takers – both formally (as nurses, cleaners, etc), and informally (within households) and therefore at greater risk of being exposed to the virus.

As of August 2020, 76 CARE country offices have conducted WASH programming, facilitated access to water supply and hand-washing infrastructure, and promoted hygiene messages to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 outbreaks. This constituted CARE's largest sectoral response to the pandemic. In Madagascar, CARE reinforced rural water supply systems and commune government capacity to ensure continuity of services in vulnerable areas, and distributed hand-washing stations to rural clinics. In Zambia, CARE supported the Ministry of Water to develop WASH and COVID guidelines that prioritized WASH investments to areas most vulnerable to spread of the disease. In Kenya, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Rwanda, CARE supported WASH facilities in refugee camps, shelters, and community centers hosting families displaced by floods – all communities particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

**In FY19, 250 projects report conducting water, sanitation or hygiene activities – 162 humanitarian and 88 development – contributing to CARE's increase of access to water, sanitation, and hygiene for 5 million people.**

## COVID-19 RESPONSE WASH IMPACT



**2.6 million**  
provided increased  
access to  
clean water



Nearly  
**1.8 million**  
provided with  
hygiene kits



**48,000**  
handwashing stations  
installed (with soap  
and water)



Just over  
**10 million** people  
reached with risk and  
prevention messaging,  
including handwashing

## Nutrition

Increased food availability and higher incomes are not enough if they do not deliver improved nutrition outcomes. Chronic malnutrition in children under two impairs their physical and cognitive development, restricting their learning and later earning potential and feeding a vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty. In the face of climate change, ensuring the world's most vulnerable people have access to healthy and nutritious foods is more important than ever.

Reduced chronic malnutrition (also referred to as “stunting”) is one of CARE’s main measures of success for our work in food and nutrition security. As a proxy for many aspects of well-being, freedom from stunting reflects success on many fronts: food systems, health systems, education, availability and use of WASH infrastructure, safety nets, and gender equality, to name a few. Thus, CARE’s programming goes beyond nutrition-specific programming to promote the integration of nutrition-sensitive approaches into our work - particularly ensuring agriculture programs and WASH programs contribute to positive nutrition outcomes for mothers and children.

**In FY19, CARE contributed to 1,191,258 children under 5 escaping stunting, and increased the food, water, and nutrition security of over 2,635,000 people with 23 projects across 16 countries.** Of these, the projects with the most impact on stunting

**Nutrition at the Center** in **Bangladesh** resulted in a 14.2 % drop in stunting and an 11.8% reduction in the number of children who are too thin for their age, enabling 21,821 children under 5 to escape stunting. As an extension of Nutrition at the Center, CARE’s multi-country **Collective Impact for Nutrition** (CI4N), is facilitating a successful multi-sectoral approach, with continued national and local Government uptake, to improve the capacity of local stakeholders and increase advocacy efforts for improved nutrition – having the potential to help 5.4 million children escape stunting.

**Mali’s Nutrition and Hygiene project** has improved the nutritional status of 481,364 children under 5, including reduced stunting for 61,999 ; as well as provided access to an improved sanitation facility for 277,838 people and saw an increase in productivity and improved food security through the application of new technologies or learned management practices of more than 9,000 farmers.

**Siaya Maternal and Child Nutrition Nawiri** in **Kenya**, which aimed to contribute to improving maternal, infant, and young child nutrition through increased commitment and coordination across state health actors, helped 43,163 children under 5 escape stunting.

**SHOUHARDO**, a CARE implemented food safety net program in **Bangladesh**, contributed to reducing stunting by 21%, enabling 25,249 children under the age of 5 to escape stunting.

Lead by CARE and scaled through the government, **Peru’s Child Malnutrition Initiative** contributed to a 50% reduction in stunting in seven years – between 2007 and 2014, stunting fell from 28% to 14%, reaching 2.32 million – with most of the impact happening in the rural areas where malnutrition was highest.





Nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices and policies ensure increased incomes and sustainable increases in productivity, as well as food and nutrition security:

- **SHOUHARDO** in Bangladesh, one of the largest non-emergency food security programs in the world, reduced food insecurity for 1.50 million including a 281% increase in the number of households growing vegetables and 81% increase in household dietary diversity.
- Bangladesh's **Food Security for the Ultra Poor** project worked specifically with adolescent girls to grow gardens, and saw that girls had an additional \$10.50 to spend during the growing season, as well as 3.7 more kilograms of vegetables for home consumption.
- **Suaahara II** reduced food insecurity for 1.19 million in Nepal by supporting the Government to expand health and nutrition services that target adolescents, addressing anemia and food diversity.
- The **Growing Nutrition for Mothers and Children (GROW)**, implemented in Ethiopia, and the **Southern African Nutrition Initiative (SANI)** programs aim to improve the nutritional health of women of reproductive age and children under five through increasing access to WASH facilities, focusing on working with local health authorities and communities to strengthen governance and accountability of gender-equitable nutrition policies and programs.
- Zimbabwe's **Emergency Cash-First Response to Drought-Affected Communities** reached 73,718 households, improving the food and nutrition security for 200,140 individuals in the southern provinces despite a severe drought, national cash crisis, and significant lack of physical cash. The cash transfers met 87.5% of food needs, including an increase in meals by 29.2% children and 18.6% for adults, and 21.7% reduction in negative coping strategies. With over one million mobile transfers, CARE's response was the largest ever humanitarian cash transfer project to be carried out in the country.

Malnutrition (over-nutrition, under-nutrition, and micronutrient deficiency) continues to be a major problem around the world. Since delivering adequate nutrition is not in the most basic function of a food system, current food systems clearly are failing. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted serious inequities globally, and widespread malnutrition is one of them. Malnutrition greatly increases vulnerability to infection and disease, and to withstand future disease threats food systems must meet the challenge of providing good nutrition—not just of providing better livelihoods. CARE must hold itself, governments, donors, researchers, and other partners accountable for ensuring nutrition-sensitive food systems that provide adequate nutrition for all.

## Climate Change and Resilience

Climate change threatens to undo progress against hunger and malnutrition—and make the stakes for success that much higher. Climate change impacts all aspects of food security: reducing crop yields, increasing water scarcity, exacerbating unequal access to food, destabilizing food supplies and prices, and hampering individuals' ability to absorb nutrients from food. Research is also beginning to show that climate change will decrease the nutritional value of some crops.<sup>1</sup> Malnutrition will result from climate change impacts on access to clean water, conflict and violence, hygiene and sanitation conditions, and poorer health and caregiving practices often due to displacement. Through SFTW, CARE prioritizes building the resilience of small-scale food producers in the face of climate change.

CARE and partners aim to strengthen women producers' capacities to deal with shocks and stresses, manage risks, and transform their lives in response to new hazards and opportunities. Simultaneously, SFTW seeks to address the underlying causes of vulnerability of marginalized groups, and improve the social, economic and ecological systems and structures that support them. CARE's **Resilience Guidance Note** outlines how resilience goes beyond the ability to recover from shocks by addressing the context that makes people vulnerable, such as tackling unequal access to resources and participation in adaptation planning, creating an enabling policy environment for climate action, as well as reducing the drivers of risks such as greenhouse gas emissions. This includes four key capacities, for communities and individuals:

1 <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/srccl/>



Peter Caton/CARE

- **Anticipatory Capacity:** Increasing capacity to plan and adapt to shocks/stressors, including [Participatory Scenario Planning \(PSP\)](#);
- **Absorptive Capacity:** Building savings, stocks and using shock responsive agriculture (i.e. short cycle crops) to help households & communities absorb shocks;
- **Adaptive Capacity:** Improving adaptive capacity in climate resilient and Water-Smart agriculture, and improving non-agricultural livelihood options to improve coping, both in the short term and long term; and
- **Transformative Capacity:** Functional government safety-nets that provide opportunities for graduation, empowerment and more durable reduction in vulnerability; meaning that a household is able to make a permanent change in its livelihoods system to cope with any significant, permanent environmental or contextual change.

The [Nampula Adaptation to Climate Change \(NACC\)](#) project, implemented by CARE in Mozambique, aimed at both economic and social empowerment through integrated gender-responsive actions which resulted in families being able to grow more food, better respond to crises, and save more money. The project's overall objective was about enhancing capacity to adapt to climate change with the expectation that this would lead to improved food and nutrition security, which is exactly what we saw. Farmers were over six times more likely to use climate-smart agriculture with 88% of farmers adopting at least two climate change adaptation practices, compared to 15% at baseline. Families increased the diversity of their diets, were 60% more likely to have adequate diets, and were more than twice as likely to have enough food to last 10 months at the end of the project. On average, these interventions added an additional 1.42 months of food security.

CARE's [Livelihoods for Resilience \(L4R\)](#) project works with 97,900 households in Ethiopia within the government safety net program, applying adaptation and livelihood approaches to build assets and create links to financial services and markets. Building on the best practices of its predecessor [GRAD](#), L4R integrates gender-equality messages with the creation of economic opportunities, using localised groups of Village Economic Savings Associations (VESA). By establishing that all household members need to participate equally in livelihoods activities, enhance their adaptive capacities and transform social norms, communities are now better equipped to adapt to climate change. Giving women access to microfinance through the VESA platform has enabled more adaptation measures and built social capital; in addition to an increase in average household income from USD 148 at GRAD's baseline to USD 771 (84%) at endline, and an average household savings increase from USD 12 to USD 141 (1,075%).



Implemented in consortium with World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), and the Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN), [Hariyo Ban](#) utilized gender equality and social inclusion actions to benefit communities and reduce threats to ecosystems. The program approach integrated biodiversity conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, and increasing climate resilience with community stewardship and mobilization hinging on gender equality and social inclusion. In Phase 1 of the project, 34,830 people benefitted from gender equality and social inclusion interventions, including 29,104 women, 6,510 Dalits, and 16,012 Janajatis. Anti-gender based violence measures were integrated in local natural resource management policies and 398 climate adaptation plans were implemented. It is estimated that 4.9 million tons of carbon emissions were avoided, some of which was achieved by promoting more efficient use of firewood and alternative energy such as biogas, significantly improving women's lives as well as reducing threats to forests from overharvesting of firewood.



# Ensuring Equity and Equality in Food Systems

The need for fundamental transformation in our food systems is clear – but in order for that transformation to leave no one behind, we must ensure everyone’s meaningful participation in it and approaches that take into account the cross-sectoral nature of food systems. CARE prioritizes robust efforts not only to address gender inequality but also to directly engage women and men, boys and girls in planning and decision-making and to work across sectors to enhance all outcomes of food systems.

## Prioritize Addressing Gender Inequality

Advancing gender equality and empowering women must be core principles of all approaches to transforming food systems. Integrating gender starts with rigorous analysis, before policies are made, priorities are set and programs are designed. Policies and interventions – implemented or supported by governments, the private sector, or practitioners – should target barriers to gender equality and address unequal labor burdens and access to resources. Empowering women and girls means engaging men and boys to ensure women’s and men’s knowledge and priorities are included in plans, to foster appreciation of respective roles, and to understand how policies and programs impact men and women differently. Goals related to gender equality must be set and evaluated, and the results must be shared publicly—by donors, practitioners, governments, and the private sector.

Our projects stimulate participatory dialogue to challenge negative power, gender and social norms around nutrition, through CARE’s [Social Analysis and Action \(SAA\) for FNS approach](#). In Bangladesh, this model is known as Empowerment, Knowledge, and Transformative Action (EKATA), and focuses on asset control, decision making, community engagement – including men, boys, youth, and religious leaders – to identify the root causes of gender-based issues and collectively find solutions. At midterm, [SHOUHARDO III](#) had reached more than 30,000 women and adolescent girls through the EKATA model, having a profound impact on raising women’s status, tackling inequalities between women and men and reducing poverty.

In [Burundi](#), between 2016 and 2019, CARE and partners tested how the EKATA model improves empowerment, gender equality, food security, nutrition and economic well-being and found that a gender transformative approach, specifically the EKATA against a conventional gender approach, has benefits for both agriculture productivity and the empowerment of women. EKATA group members reported shorter periods of food deficit during lean seasons and women reported greater satisfaction with division of both domestic and agricultural tasks and with access to extension services and inputs. Specifically for household food security and economic well-being, project households that went through the EKATA process more than doubled their rice production from 158 kilograms per household to more than 360; which subsequently increased their amount of rice sold by 167% as well as the quantity of rice consumed at home from the season’s harvest rose by 124%. Additionally, there was an increase in those owning small livestock and a decline in proportions of male and female household members owning large livestock. The proportion of respondents in EKATA who owned and cultivated land rose from 80 percent to 92 percent. All the women in the EKATA groups considered themselves leaders and rated spousal support as significant. This evidence demonstrates that participatory gender analysis and integration, that builds empowerment pathways from household and community levels – while simultaneously working to influence the social environment in which movement along those pathways can be realized – is the route to both increased gender equality and improved food and nutrition security in food systems.

## Prioritize Participatory Approaches

One of CARE’s key pathways to addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice is through the promotion of inclusive governance. If marginalized citizens are empowered, if power-holders are effective, accountable and responsive, and if spaces for negotiation are created, expanded, effective and inclusive, then sustainable and equitable development can be achieved, particularly for marginalized women and girls. CARE’s [Inclusive Governance Guidance Note](#) highlights CARE’s main proven approaches, including Community Action Planning (CAP), and social accountability tools such as the Community Score Card ([CSC](#)).



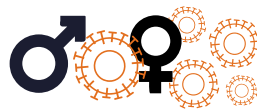


## COVID 19: LEFT OUT AND LEFT BEHIND

Whether intentionally or by omission, global responses to COVID-19 and related hunger crises are either ignoring women and girls or treating them as victims who have no role in addressing the problems they face. [CARE's new analysis of 73 global reports](#) proposing solutions to the hunger pandemic shows that:



**Nearly half of the reports—46%—do not refer to women and girls at all.**



**None of the reports consistently analyze or reflect the gendered effects of the pandemic and hunger crises.**

**5/73**

**Only 5 reports—less than 7%—propose concrete actions to resolve the gender inequalities crippling food systems. The rest overlook or ignore women and girls.**

CARE's [PSP](#) model brings together local communities, farmers, scientists, and officials to develop plans for multiple weather scenarios. The process not only ensures inclusion of farmer and community voices but also connects them to local officials, builds all parties' capacity to collaborate, and disseminates important and relevant climate information back to community farmers. The process provides small-scale food producers with equitable access not only to information and resources but also to local government and planning processes.

CARE's SFtW framework also adopts participatory approaches for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL), as fundamental for mapping comprehensive outcomes and ensuring accountability. Participatory MEL facilitates behavior change that CARE and partners promote in the communities by putting project participants in charge of assessing their own behaviors, identifying gaps, and finding solutions to address those. To promote participatory MEL, CARE has developed simple tools that communities can understand and use for their own course corrections. At the same time, this helps project staff to generate data and analyze both at the local as well as global level to identify and adapt to trends:

- **Participatory Performance Tracker (PPT):** CARE's [PPT](#) tool enables producer groups to self-assess progress, create transparency, as well as put social pressure to ensure practice adoption. PPT was developed for a Dairy Value Chain project in Bangladesh and was used in the six-country Pathways to Secure Livelihoods program reaching more than 50,000 women small-scale farmers.
- **Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning in community-based adaptation (PMERL),** to provide community members a platform for community-based adaptation (CBA) initiatives, articulating their own needs, priorities and vision of change around climate change.
- CARE's **Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)**, which was adapted from IFPRI's Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index. This captures changes in women's mobility, decision-making control, men's and women's attitudes towards gender-equitable roles in family life, women's participation in public life, and men's participation in domestic tasks – along with changes in women's productivity, incomes, and access to and control over resources, markets and services. CARE also places heavy emphasis on identifying differential factors – such as age, ethnicity, caste, marital status – that intersect with and exacerbate gender-based inequities.
- **Outcome Mapping** has proven a powerful and participatory tool for tracking progress: for a set of categories of change (such as workload sharing, control of income, self-confidence, and intimacy and harmony in the relationship), project participants define the changes they would expect, like and love to see, and collectively track the progress they are making towards these “progress markers”.

## Prioritize Multisectoral Approaches

Food systems must deliver on livelihoods, nutrition, and sustainability not just for a portion of the population, but for all. A systems approach calls for action across sectors to foster coordination and coherence, to address potential trade offs, and to ensure that outcomes are equitable. CARE's She Feeds the World framework unifies our work across multiple sectors – from agriculture to markets, nutrition to water, and resilience to gender. Underpinning that framework are CARE's SuPER principles for food and agriculture systems, which go beyond how and how much food is produced to incorporate crucial and often neglected elements that are necessary to alleviate hunger and poverty while protecting the environment, improving gender equity, and creating a more just food system.

CARE used an integrated multi-sectoral approach in our **Nutrition and Hygiene project** in Mali by educating communities on healthy behaviors for nutrition and improving community-based treatment of malnutrition, while also preventing infectious diseases that can cause or worsen malnutrition through activities to improve hygiene sanitation and clean drinking water. Caretakers were also taught the importance of latrines, maintaining community water systems and growing and cooking nutritious foods for home consumption. And in Nepal, **Suaahara II** supports the Government in expanding health and nutrition services that target adolescents – to address anemia, menstrual hygiene, food diversity, health service utilization and social attitudes towards delayed marriage and pregnancy – through an integrated approach promoting key Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) practices with an intensive behavior change strategy; enhancing water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions; improving the consumption of nutritious food through increased production, improved harvest storage, and dietary diversity (especially for women); and strengthening coordination on health and nutrition between government and other stakeholders.



Marie-Eve Bertrand / CARE





# The Way Forward

Transforming food systems under a changing climate – to ensure food and nutrition security for all – demands action from all actors. To deliver for small-scale food producers and chronically hungry populations, solutions must address gender and other inequalities. Policy change can guide and catalyse that action but requires political and public will and a shift in mindsets toward a more collective and shared approach.

As the number of chronically hungry people continues to rise and as we start the final decade to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must accelerate the pace of change – of transformation – in our food systems. Transforming food systems and tackling the inherent inequality that traps millions, particularly women, in poverty requires action by all actors—from governments, UN bodies, civil society, and practitioners to the private sector and individuals.

In 2021, the UN will convene a high-level Food Systems Summit to raise awareness and catalyze action to transform food systems. The Summit will draw attention to the actions needed to ensure healthy, nutritious food for all; shift consumption patterns to support healthy diets; promote food production that enhances rather than degrades the natural environment; advance equitable livelihoods throughout food systems; and build resilience to shocks and stresses like climate change and conflict. The Summit is a critical moment for governments, the private sector, UN agencies, civil society, and philanthropy to make ambitious commitments to transform food systems to support healthy, sustainable diets, advance gender equality, and enable everyone to realize the right to food.



Below are key actions to drive a gender-just transformation in food systems.

## All Actors

**Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:** In the face of inequality in food systems, policy, practice, and investment must proactively tackle gender inequality and prioritize women's empowerment. Integrating gender starts with rigorous analysis, before policies are made, priorities are set and programs are designed. Policies and interventions should target barriers to gender equality and address unequal labor burdens and access to resources. Goals related to gender equality must be set and evaluated, and the results must be shared publicly – by donors, practitioners, governments, and the private sector.

**Participatory Approaches:** Transparent and inclusive decision-making processes – for program design, policy making, or setting national budget priorities – enable vulnerable or marginalized populations to voice their priorities and share their local knowledge. Participatory processes also foster greater ownership and sustainability of efforts to transform food systems and promote accountability among all actors. A critical element of tackling gender inequality is ensuring that women and girls, including women-led and women's rights organizations, have a seat at decision-making tables.

**Multisectoral Approaches:** The complexity of food systems calls for policy, practice, and investment that supports multi-sectoral approaches. Rigorous analysis must underpin programs and policies. Government planning processes should engage all relevant ministries and levels of government and enable participation of all relevant sectors, including civil society and the private sector. This enhances actors' ability to capitalize on synergies and ensure that interventions or actions in one area do not undermine another.

**Policymakers:** Governments must create national food systems policies that support small-scale food producers and women; tackle the barriers they face to food and nutrition security in a changing climate; target positive nutrition outcomes; and prioritize sustainable, resilient approaches. Policymakers at all levels must commit to ambitious efforts to tackle the climate crisis; enact and enforce policies for secure tenure and/or user access to land, water, and other natural resources, particularly for women and marginalized populations; and reform policies that restrict women's access to resources such as land, markets, and credit.

**Donors and National Governments:** Ending hunger and malnutrition—and transforming food systems—will require significant increases in investment. The best program approaches and policies cannot deliver for small-scale food producers and women if there are not adequate resources to implement them. Donors and national governments must scale up finance and domestic resources for holistic food systems approaches to tackle hunger and malnutrition, with attention to addressing inequality and prioritizing small-scale farmers, particularly women.

**Private Sector:** The private sector has exceptional power to create change for strengthened, equitable food systems. It is incumbent on the private sector to commit to and promote equality all along the supply chain; consider social and environmental impacts from local to global level across all aspects of work; promote nutrition and produce and market nutritious foods; adopt and promote sustainable agricultural approaches; and advocate to implement ambitious climate action, including integrating climate risks.

**Individuals:** We each play a role in the future of the planet and our food, and so it is critical that we take individual responsibility to educate ourselves and make sustainable consumption choices – know what you are eating and how, where, and by whom it was produced. Help create demand for healthy, nutritious and sustainably produced foods. Individuals have the power to call on governments to tackle gender inequality and commit to ambitious climate action. Together, we can celebrate International Women's Day, Earth Day and World Food Day as a way to inform ourselves and others. The more people know, the more we can all work together to achieve just and sustainable food systems.



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