



**Ensuring Sustainability:** Designing food and nutrition security programs for results that last





## Introduction

Development cooperation is, by nature, results-driven. In CARE, we assess how **effective** we are in implementing our programs by measuring, by the end of each intervention, to which extent we have fulfilled foreseen results or indeed unforeseen results: if yields have increased, if income has improved, if infant stunting has reduced, if diets are more nutritious and diversified, if small-scale women farmers are empowered, if advisory services to farmers are more efficient.

Beyond the immediate effects of each program, CARE also seeks transformative change: a long standing wider positive impact to broader development goals. In our **2020 Strategy**,<sup>i</sup> we committed to improve the nutrition, food security and the resilience to climate change of at least 50 million people world-wide.

In order to achieve this ambitious target, it is not enough to deliver positive results only during the life of the programs we work on. We also need to make sure that these results will last after the program ends. In other words, we seek to ensure that the results and the impact will be **sustainable**.

Sustainability has been defined as the ‘likelihood of a continuation in the stream of benefits produced by a project or program after the period of external support has ended’.<sup>ii</sup> Despite its enormous importance, for decades many development actors prioritized sustainability last among five main for measuring success of development programs: (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability). During program design and implementation, projects paid little actual attention to determining which factors were most likely to have lasting positive effects after the project ended.

Nevertheless, sustainability is becoming an increasingly important topic in development debates. There is general consensus that seriously planning for sustainability in projects early and throughout the life of a project increases the chances of sustained impact.<sup>iii</sup> The development community has also started to study which actions are likely to make project impacts more sustainable. This research has demonstrated many key factors that increase the likelihood of sustainability, including: participant ownership; strong local institutions delivering work; spaces for civil society to engage with governments; institutional management capacity; use of appropriate technology; economic and financial viability, as well as gender equity and socio-cultural issues.

This report draws from the Food for Peace Sustainability Strategies report conducted by Tufts University, and uses the framework it provides to lay out different necessary elements for sustainability: Sustained Resources, Sustained Capacity, Sustained Motivation, and Sustained Linkages.<sup>iv</sup> Given CARE’s particular focus on resilience as part of its food and nutrition security programming, we have added the additional consideration of environmental sustainability to our presentation of projects and results.

This report looks at each of these key factors and provides concrete examples from CARE’s food and nutrition security portfolio on project impacts and lessons learned on how to support the communities we work with to maintain the benefits triggered by our assistance after programs end.

Sustainability is at the core of the way we work on food security and nutrition at CARE. This includes environmental, social, and economic sustainability. We promote sustainable agriculture systems that address climate and environmental impacts, and which are grounded in healthy ecosystems; driven by stable, accountable and capable institutions and policies; and based on social and economic policies that promote sustainable progress.

We prioritize sustainability in our programs, by promoting community and government ownership of our interventions and participatory monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that communities can see and maintain positive changes. CARE’s Governance Programming Framework outlines 2 main ways to promote impact and sustainability through good governance: 1) Support communities’ voice, capacity to engage with and influence governments and hold them to

account. 2) Support governments to be more inclusive and responsive to poor people demands; support spaces for citizens and governments to meet and negotiate.

We also know that the likelihood for sustaining the positive results of all our programs increases massively when our investments prioritize the redress of gender inequality.

Still, there are lots of questions related to sustainability where further evidence and debate is required. For instance: can all results of a program be truly sustainable after completion or should we focus our emphasis on ensuring the sustainability of those results where the likelihood of long term positive impacts is higher? What should be the role of the public institutions and the market forces in ensuring the financial sustainability of food security and nutrition results? How do we work through existing institutions from the beginning to promote ownership? Is having a good exit strategy enough to ensure better sustainability? By making rural communities more resilient to shocks, are we making the results of our projects more sustainable?

We know that we cannot find all the answers by ourselves. With this report, our intention is to contribute further to the global ongoing debate on sustainability in food security and nutrition, and share some of the lessons learned out of our programs in order to, together with our partners, peer NGOs and the development community at large, continue pursuing a world where equality and justice prevail over hunger and poverty.

**Juan Echanove**  
*Senior Director*  
*Food and Nutrition Security*  
*CARE USA*



## Methodology

In Fiscal Year 2016, CARE had 619 projects in its portfolio on food and nutrition security and climate change resilience. These projects reached 28.6 million people directly in 62 countries. We are constantly aiming to improve our results in these programs, and so we took a retrospective look at our work to see where we have built programs for sustainability in order to improve our current portfolio.

This report draws from 193 evaluations across the CARE world between 2013-2017 to examine the best of our results in sustainability. Using the categories and ideas in the Food For Peace Sustainability review,<sup>v</sup> we have mapped our results against the 4 categories in that strategy to better understand how we are performing against those results. The examples drawn for this report feature 18 projects in 17 countries that help us better understand how sustainability works in CARE's programs.

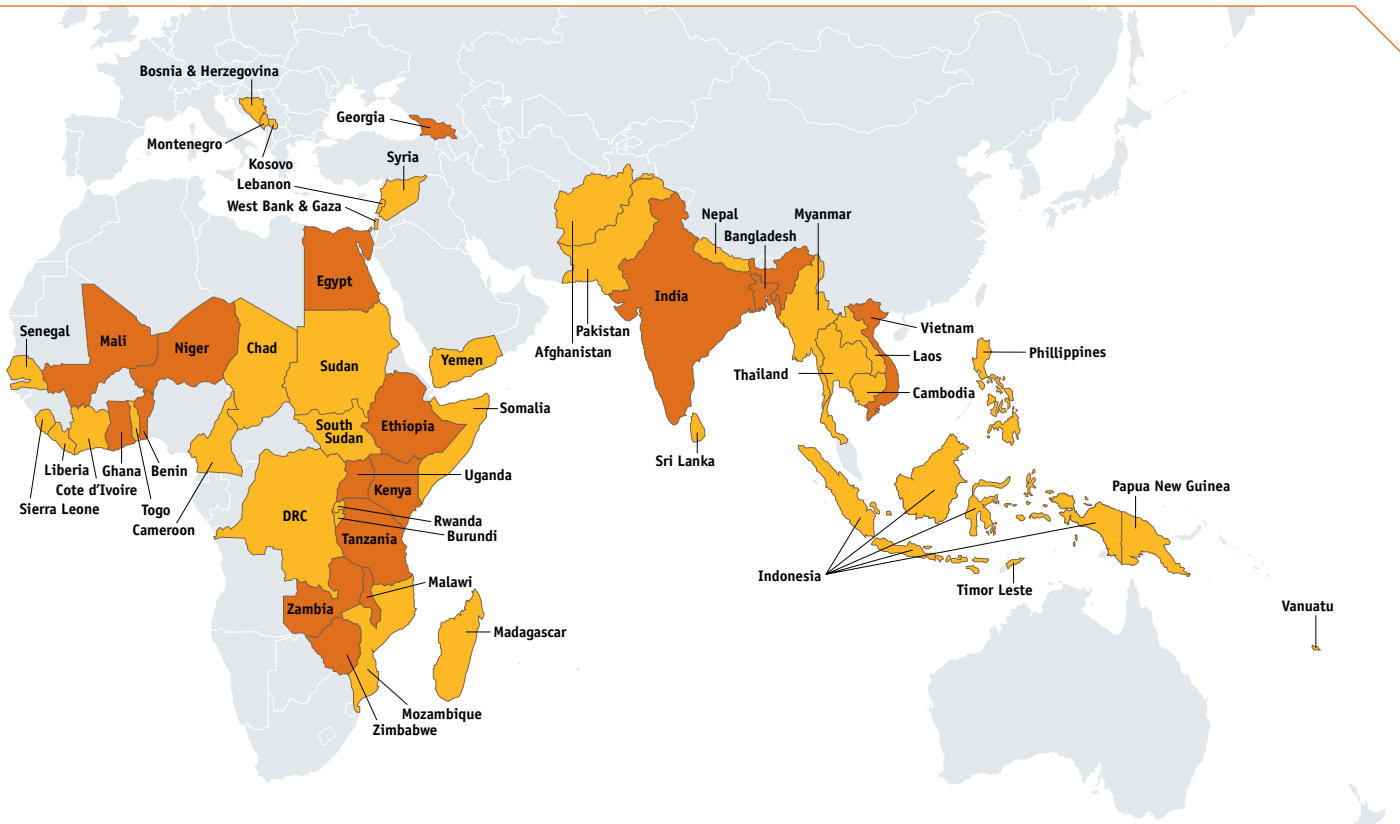
**619** PROJECTS  
**FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY & CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE**

**REACHED 28.6 MILLION PEOPLE IN 62 COUNTRIES**



**18** PROJECTS in  
**17** COUNTRIES

**Helps us to better understand how sustainability works**



# Building Sustainability Through Better Financial and Market Linkages

## THE THEORY

*Sustained Resources: “By the time the projects withdrew, a sustained source of resources for each input previously provided by the project was required for sustainability... Resources in the form of profits ... or income from user fees ... encouraged sustained (e.g., agriculture and livestock practices requiring purchased inputs) to be maintained. Required resources also included a continued source of technical support and training to ensure that capacity was maintained.”*

(Food for Peace Sustainability Framework, p.23)

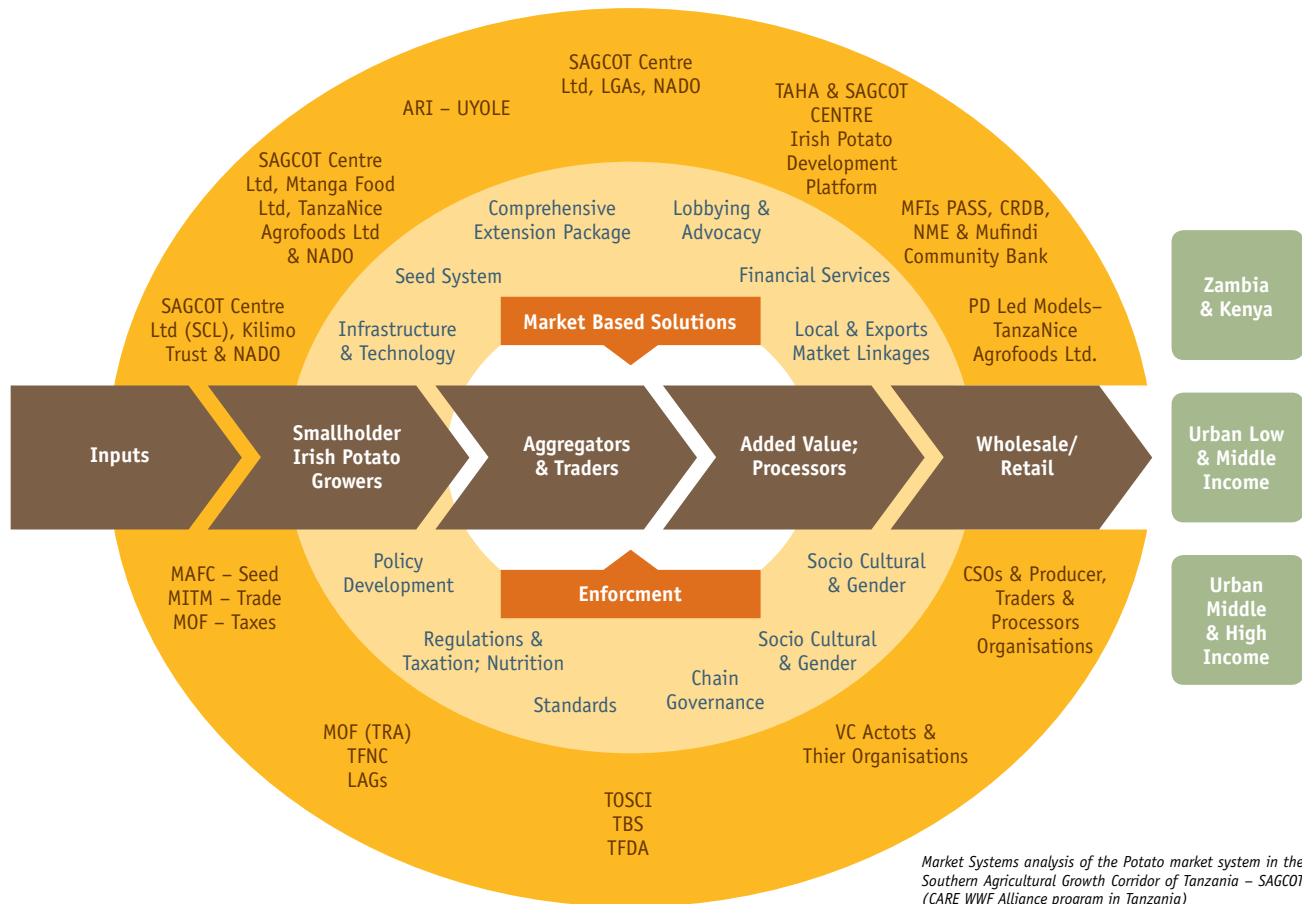
Market Systems development is a proven approach to achieving sustainable impact at scale. Through Market systems development, organizations seek to ensure that their work builds markets that are competitive, inclusive, and resilient. In order to build SuPER food systems, (those that are Sustainable, Productive (including profitable and nutrition-sensitive), Equitable, and Resilient), the Food and Nutrition Security team has worked to foster inclusive market systems development. For a long time organizations have worked on value chain development focusing on making value chains more competitive and connecting actors. CARE explicitly focused on making markets work for the poor, and focusing on creating market linkages.<sup>vi</sup>

CARE pioneered the a **Push-Pull** approach, which looks at interventions that build producers’ ability to participate in markets (push factors) and changes to the market that make it more possible for small-scale producers to participate in markets (pull factors).<sup>vii</sup> Examples of push factors include: building agricultural skills, helping farmers organize collectives for group action, connecting small-scale food producers to market actors and information, and helping farmers get access to credit. Pull factors include getting market actors to develop procedures to source from small local producer groups, supporting businesses to test models for reaching poor producers, strengthening input supply systems, and getting services available closer to the producers.

CARE is now expanding its work to include a focus on market systems. Market systems are complex systems of interlinked and interrelated actors – some working with each other and some working independently – but all operating within the wider context. Understanding all these players and their influence within a system is important in enabling us to develop sustainable and long lasting interventions. Markets may not always be the correct solution to a problem, but when they are, it is important to look at the entire market system.

In complex situations, where there is neither agreement on the needed change nor certainty about how to achieve it, implementation flexibility and ongoing learning are essential. Projects may need to pilot multiple “best guess” interventions to observe emerging patterns, and then scale up interventions that appear to be contributing to the desired change. Effective interventions are generally grounded on the capacity and interests of market actors, and different sets of coherent interventions are often needed to create a convergence of interest that can lay the groundwork for the change process (USAID LEO Project).

## An example of a Market Systems analysis for Irish potatoes in Tanzania



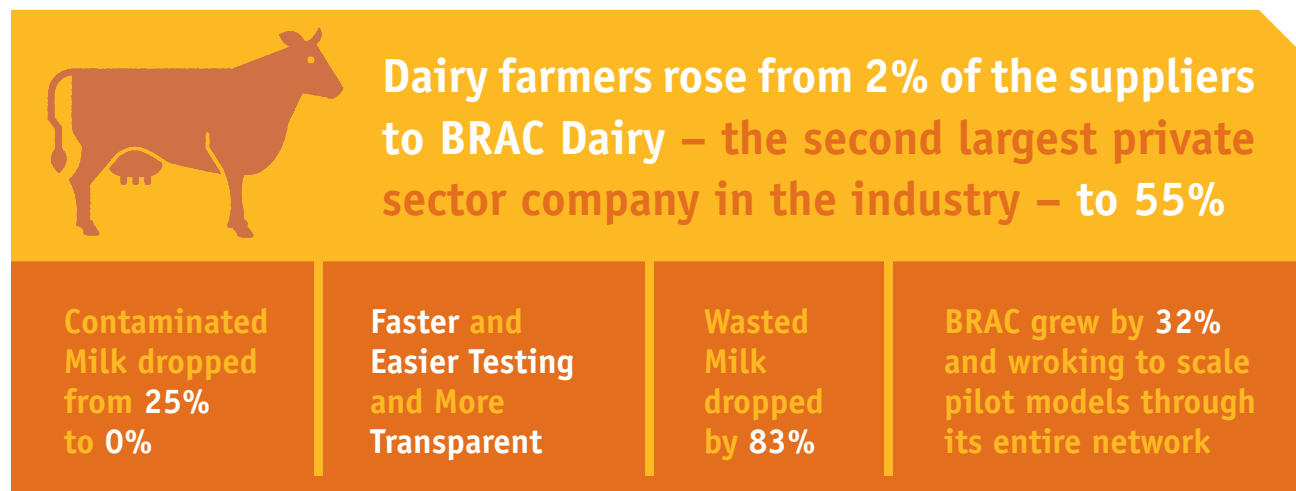
To inform the design of interventions that will catalyze change processes resulting in a more inclusive market system, analysis needs to include a specific focus on i) who is traditionally excluded, and why; ii) which excluded actors – if included – would have the most catalytic impact on poverty reduction, women’s empowerment, or other inclusion goal; and iii) where there are opportunities to align competitiveness, natural resource management (or ‘environmental sustainability’) and inclusion objectives.

CARE has employed market systems analysis as a guiding approach to program design ensuring that interventions are addressing systemic constraints that inhibit markets. Through this approach we have been able to transform the lives of millions of small-scale farmers. CARE puts women producers at the heart of its initiatives, ensuring that they have access to productive resources, skills, knowledge and resources in order to improve and shape their lives. **The Farmers’ Field and Business School** ([www.care.org/ffbs](http://www.care.org/ffbs)) and other market facilitation and engagement tools and practices support small-scale women producers. Projects also build on **Village Savings and Loan Associations** to ensure that producers have access to finances and linkages to other service providers and financial institutions.

### THE PROOF

**Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain**<sup>viii</sup> is a CARE project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that works not only create a more pro-poor market system in Bangladesh that offers advantages for the poorest dairy producers, but also to create sustainable links to markets by building business incentives. Between 2011 and 2016, the poorest dairy farmers in north-west Bangladesh went from 2% of the suppliers to BRAC Dairy – the second largest private sector company in the industry – to 55%.

The rate of contaminated milk went from 25% to effectively zero because testing is faster, easier and more transparent, and milk wasted in the system dropped by 83%. At the same time, BRAC grew its business by 32%, and is working to scale pilot models through its entire network. This will double the reach of SDVC's successful models. What made the change? A dedication to social change and a compelling business case that working with poor producers benefits BRAC's business. CARE conducted pilots and helped BRAC figure out ways to bridge the gap between poor – mostly women – producers and the formal market. This market connection and advantages to the poor and the private sector will carry the impacts forward beyond project close.



With support from the Swiss Development Cooperation, and in partnership with WorldFish, CARE Egypt ran the **Improving Employment and Income Through the Development of Egypt's Aquaculture Sector (IEIDEAS)**<sup>ix</sup> from 2011-2015. Based on project costs and profits in the long term, the project had a \$5.86 return for every \$1 invested. Women retailers in the project earned on average \$10 a day, compared to the \$1 that non-participants made. That was 4.6 times higher than what they were earning at baseline. More connections to markets didn't just improve incomes, they improved business profitability, which helps support the sustainability of project impacts. Fish farms earned on average \$16,000 more profit per farm – \$28 million more for the whole economy – because of more efficient production practices. That's a 34% increase in profitability. IEIDEAS' final report estimates that the project will have added 10,000 jobs to Egypt's economy in the next 5 years, if trends continue as they have been since 2011.



With the support of the Finn Brooks Family Foundation, the **Krishi Utsho**<sup>x</sup> project has been working since 2012 to improve access to goods for the poorest families in Bangladesh. Krishi Utsho helps local farmers set up small businesses to bring agricultural inputs closer to small-scale farmers in quantities that better meet those farmers' needs and promote agricultural inputs that are environmentally sustainable. By building those farmer's connections to Bangladeshi input supply companies, they serve as a vital link that used to be missing from the market system in Bangladesh, and have





sustainable funding for the future. Farmers in areas covered by Krishi Utsho had a 31% increase in their incomes, and vendors were able to earn \$1,394 per month. That's more than 8 times what the average farmer makes in a month, so being a vendor is an attractive option. Because the shops are closer to home, farmers cut the time they spent going to get inputs in half (a 58% reduction), and dropped their cost on items like feed by 92%. So people have more money to spend from income, but also on savings from the goods.

Funded by the European Union, the **European Neighbor Program for Agriculture and Rural Development**, implemented by CARE in the Caucasus jointly with other international organizations and public organizations, worked to support small scale farmers in Georgia who were unable to place production in the market due to their limited yields and hence, inability to produce enough (and of enough quality) to reach the demand regularly. ENPARD promoted the development of hundreds of smallholder's cooperatives across the country, by enhancing the farmer's skills and providing capital investment for the newly establish coops to consolidate production, via better storage, transportation means and processing equipment.

# Building Sustainability Through Local Actors

## Technical and Managerial Capacity

### THE THEORY

***Sustained Capacity:** “Building high-quality technical and managerial capacity throughout the service delivery chain and ensuring mechanisms to maintain that capacity was also of the utmost importance, enabling, for example, water committees to manage their finances and farmers individually or in PAs to negotiate contracts. Capacity building among individual beneficiaries – to implement improved child care, hygiene, or agricultural practices, and to manage their resources to do so – was similarly critical to sustained behavior change.”*

(Food for Peace Sustainability Framework, p.24)

For any development project CARE designs and implements, a core objective is maintaining and strengthening links with service delivery providers (whether private or public) after the project ends. For services providers, it is necessary to strengthen their technical and managerial capacities to continue providing similar services after the end of the project. CARE programming always seeks to partner with strong local organizations who have the potential to continue delivering high quality technical and managerial services in the future.

To accomplish these two core goals for sustainability, CARE institutes systematic approaches and programming mechanisms that gradually enable the capacity of partner service deliverers and targeted participants to both adopt and maintain the improved practices and tools that the project introduced or enhanced. This means ensuring local community and farmer organizations, for example, learn to manage their finances, negotiate contracts, and express their needs with service providers, and therefore no longer require CARE’s intervention in training and service provision. Among individual beneficiaries, especially women, it also means ensuring sustained behavioral changes and capacities in the adoption of improved child care, hygiene, or agricultural practices, in addition to accessing and managing the limited resources to do so.

CARE’s community savings and loan interventions (VSLAs) and Farmers’ Field and Business Schools offer an excellent example of the sustainability benefits of a gradual, systematic approach to graduation from the intervention and exit of the project. In Kenya, for example, CARE incrementally built the capacity of community savings mobilization groups in a manner that explicitly made it clear from the outset that the groups would eventually have to operate on their own at the end of the project.<sup>xi</sup> As part of this, participants were “graduated” to operate independently after completing year-long training activities in self- management. CARE deliberately withdrew gradually, serving as a technical resource after the first few year’s savings cycle and before leaving the groups to operate on their own. This phased out approach enabled participants to take ownership of their groups while still being able to access the technical assistance of CARE and its local partners during the final years of project implementation. Another key dimension that contributed to the project’s success is that the model was designed from the outset to rely little on outside capital but generate its own resources.

At the community level, a study by Datta also emphasizes the importance of building on the tacit knowledge embedded among experienced partners and beneficiaries. The style, passion, humor, energy, relationships, processes, cultural context, and other intangibles are a critical part for motivating and instilling local ownership. Datta also points to trust and leadership as an especially relevant precondition for organizational sustainability.<sup>xiii</sup> A community’s trust in

an organization can come from two sources: their performance and accountability in the community. By working to strengthen internal technical and management systems, CARE can help contribute to establishing accountability among local community organizations. Additionally, by working with strong community leaders who value greater transparency and accountability in decision making, especially in ensuring women's participation, CARE helps ensure longer term sustainability long after the project ends.

## THE PROOF

Focusing on social sustainability among civil society, **PROGRES II**,<sup>xiv</sup> funded by CARE Denmark from 2013-2017 is working with 3 key national partners (AREN, RBM, and DEMI-E), and taking a back seat to let those partners set the priorities. CARE provides support, coaching, and capacity building to help partners accomplish their own goals. The impacts of focusing on building stronger institutions have been impressive. With support from CARE, the partners have expanded their membership by 6 times, and including thousands more people in their processes. RBM was able to build 9 new offices to influence local governments, and has extended its reach to other countries in West Africa. Including more women has been a critical part of the process. The partners have added several women to their own leadership boards, and are focusing on having women involved all along the way. 47% of new members are female.



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Partners are also stepping up their links with government. From a base of zero, these partners have created 10 advocacy campaigns, and quadrupled the number of groups who are active in these advocacy movements. With support from CARE, the partners have now conducted more than 10 studies on pastoralist and water rights to sway government decision-making. In addition to the studies, AREN has also created a new system that tracks pastoralist situations and reaches more than 40,000 pastoralists – all of whom can access the data on their mobile phones. These are building to long-term changes. The government has passed new water rights laws, and the president included natural resource management NRM concerns in his speech before the UN, partly as a result of pressure from these groups. National and local governments are now routinely reaching out to our partners looking for evidence that will help them make better decisions.

From 1998-2005, DFID funded the Program of Support for Poverty Elimination and Community Transformation (**PROSPECT**)<sup>xv</sup> in Zambia that built water systems in areas outside Lusaka. From 2001-2005, CARE worked with communities to set up water trusts--bodies owned and managed by communities, with local boards and agreements with the local government. By charging a small amount for water, the Water Trusts are able to pay for repairs and expanding services to new customers. In 2014, a post-project evaluation<sup>xvi</sup> showed that the sustainability of these groups was impressive. Community ownership and the capacity to correctly manage water systems led to great results in the long term. In 2014, all 12 water trusts were still running at a profit. From 2009-2013, the water trusts collectively earned \$109,415 in profits that they were able to re-invest in services and put into savings for future repairs. 10 years after the project stopped supporting them, the services are not only working, but growing. None of the systems managed through water trusts has gone longer than 3 days without providing water to its consumers. The water trusts provide 19% of water to

peri-urban Lusaka, and 40% of the paid water supply. In addition, they serve more than 120,000 people a day – 31% more than they were serving when CARE stopped working with them. All 12 trusts have used their revenues to expand service and infrastructure. The water trusts serve 66-100% of the population in their service areas, and all of them are providing higher quality water to more people with less water wasted than the national average. 2 out of 3 water trusts are exceeding the national service provision standards.

## PROSPECT

- > **19% of water to peri-urban Lusaka and 40% of the paid water supply.**
- > **120,000 people served per day—31% more than they were serving when CARE stopped working with them.**
- > **All 12 trusts have used their revenues to expand service and infrastructure.**
- > **The water trusts serve 66-100% of the population in their service areas.**

In 2013, Datu research worked with CARE’s **Village Savings and Loan Association** program in Uganda conducted a post-project review to see if local groups lasted and were able to replicate after project close.<sup>xviii</sup> For every VSLA that an NGO starts in Uganda, communities start contributing 1.99 on their own or with agent support. That’s nearly double what the development sector is able to reach. Why do they replicate on their own? Because communities interact with VSLA members, and can immediately see how this helps them. In fact, VSLA members get a 30-35% return on savings. 63% of participants were using their share outs for productive investments like land or livestock. 80% of the groups NGOs started were still running 3 years after their projects closed. An important part of the model’s success comes from building local capacity. Members in existing VSLAs are confident of their abilities to not only run their own groups, but also to help others. They were happy to interact with others and explain the benefits of a VSLA and explain how to start one. 85% of members in groups were satisfied with their groups, and felt that they had learned about how to



save from the VSLA experience. Supporting this capacity early on is critical. CARE uses agents to help support groups in their first 2 years, and those agents supported the creation and supported more than 60% of the non-project groups.

## Building Social Sustainability by Motivating Participants and Service Providers

### THE THEORY

***Sustained Motivation:** “Ensuring a continued source of motivation for service providers and beneficiaries alike was imperative. The study found that financial incentives and in-kind benefits were the most successful motivators for service providers... For beneficiaries, the recognition of a tangible and immediate benefit provided the most effective motivation to continue making use of services or applying practices learned during the project.”*

(Food for Peace Sustainability Framework, p.24)

Socially sustainable development depends on the empowerment of civil society, with respect for and integration of socially diverse groups, and quality of life improvements for all.<sup>xviii</sup> CARE ensures social sustainability by focusing our work on the food and nutrition security of the poorest, and by empowering socially disadvantaged groups like girls and women. Importantly, our work fosters inclusive and accountable governance that creates structures and institutions able to respond to and serve these social sustainability aims.

CARE’s projects also focus on social norms<sup>xix</sup> and patterns that can prevent communities from adopting and continuing behaviors that they learn during projects. There is a special focus on women’s empowerment, because that can unlock so many social changes.<sup>xx</sup> CARE recognizes that a woman with access to land; with support from the government, her family and community leaders; and with information from extension agents; represents a big return. She is able to invest in her community, her children, her family’s nutrition and the local economy. She is also able to participate in savings and insurance schemes that mitigate her family’s and community’s risk during bad harvests, severe weather conditions caused by climate change, or conflict, as well as other risks.

### THE PROOF

The **Pathways<sup>xxii</sup>** program provides an example of how CARE transforms the social milieu of women. Pathways has created its **Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS)** approach. This is a participatory, women-focused extension approach that builds skills necessary to increase production, to access markets and sell at competitive prices, to collaborate with other members of the community, and to engage in beneficial and efficient decision making. It transforms the status and recognition of women by providing the support they require to be successful farmers, business-people, leaders, and agents of change. Evidence shows that participation in the FFBS builds women’s self-confidence and expands their autonomy, reduces gender-based violence, and engenders respect from their families and communities. Importantly, Pathways also provides a framework to engage men and boys, raising questions with them about their role in more equal relationships that benefit everyone in the community. The approach has paid off. For every \$1 invested in FFBS, research shows that there is a \$31 return to communities.

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Improved governance is key to social sustainability efforts under CARE's **Nutrition at the Center (N@C)**<sup>xxi</sup> project as well. N@C uniquely integrates agriculture, food security, and WASH, with all of these supporting nutrition as one program, and with multiple levels of accountable governance. Taking the example of N@C Zambia, community health volunteers (CHVs) and Nutrition Support Group Leaders (NSGLs) meet on a monthly basis at the community level with Nutrition Support Groups (NSG) comprised of pregnant and lactating girls and women, and mothers with young children under two years. These NSGs provide a space to share practical information and experiences, create a network of community support, and encourage discussion among participants – and between participants and facilitators – to work through issues or barriers to the adoption of nutrition-positive practices. Governance structures at the provincial and district level exist through Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Livestock, and Local Government, and other players in the nutrition sector who meet on a quarterly basis during Provincial Nutrition Coordinating Committees (PNCCs) and District Nutrition Coordinating Committees (DNCCs).

The impact of this intentional collaboration and accountability has been widespread. Agriculture sector staff are now aware of the importance of nutrition in food production and promote the cultivation of nutritious crops across Zambia's Eastern Province. CHVs are aware of the foods to promote each season during household visits of gardens and through educational sessions. Health facility staff and agriculture extension officers work together to conduct home visits, while the ministry of local government and housing promote the use of grey-water in homestead gardening as a climate-smart agriculture practice.

CARE's "**social analysis and action**" (SAA)<sup>xxiii</sup> approach begins by leading staff through a process of examining their own beliefs and values, preparing them to adequately and appropriately address the values and beliefs of those with whom they are working (whose beliefs often are the same or similar). Building on their own newfound critical abilities, CARE staff in turn lead dialogue with community members, exploring how social norms and factors influence food and nutrition security, weighing both barriers and facilitators, and addressing conflict. Together, CARE facilitators and community members create and implement plans to address social realities and inequities.

The changes motivated through the SAA-FNS approach include:

- A new gender vision of labor and workload sharing where men contribute help to household tasks;
- Intra-household negotiation, communication and joint decision-making, with more joint decisions and women contributing to decisions about production;
- Increased control of income and productive assets for women; and
- Increased women's self-confidence, autonomy, and leadership, with decreased tolerance of gender-based violence.

The **ENSURE**<sup>xxiv</sup> project in Zimbabwe also has introduced the social analysis and action approach to take on gender-based violence, and to integrate gender in health and nutrition as well as in agriculture and livelihoods. The ENSURE project's approach began with an in-depth gender analysis, from which they learned that women have 5 fewer hours of free time every day than men, and that women did not have time to travel to the project's food distribution sites. Responding to these findings, they created new food distribution centers closer to home to accommodate women's needs. Introducing the SAA model as well as proactively involving men and boys, the project introduced robust community participatory models and tools to address women's heavy workloads, inability to participate in household decisions, and "last and least" access to the family food pot. ENSURE introduced "Gender Outcome Mapping" to create a context specific framework of standardized gender behavior change indicators allowing assessment of positive change. The progress markers are being used to measure, monitor and encourage positive changes in gender relations between community men and women, thereby contributing to the achievement of program outcomes on nutrition, agriculture and resilience.

While these positive steps to change women's role in improvements in community life are important, equally important are ENSURE's steps to create a governance structure supporting these changes. ENSURE created a policy plan and strategy, and presented its findings on gender to the Government to offer concrete steps forward. The data and tools

convinced the Zimbabwean Government to adopt ENSURE’s plans for use at provincial and district level. Reaching out to implementation partners, ENSURE conducted gender trainings with all of the project consortia partners and with many external stakeholders to raise the understanding of gender issues. Basing this on the findings of the gender analysis means that gender activities being undertaken by ENSURE are founded on locally appropriate evidence.

## Building Institutional Sustainability by Working with and Through Government, Private Sector, and Other Organizations

### THE THEORY

*Sustained Linkages: “This factor, especially vertical linkages (e.g., between community-based organizations or individuals and existing institutions or entities such as government ministries, NGOs, private sector commercial entities, or others), was usually critical for successful phase-over of responsibility for activities formerly supported by the projects.”*

(Food for Peace Sustainability Framework, p.24)

During the past few years, CARE has increasingly worked with governments and other organizations to ensure that project models are successful and sustainable. This route has many advantages. If government entities at national or regional levels adopt policies and provide on-going funding for effective FNS approaches, the results can be transformational. When CARE made a strategic decision to stop implementing food and nutrition security programs in Peru, and instead convened a coalition of national and international NGOs (who also agreed to stop implementing) to advocate for a National Nutrition Policy, subsequently adopted by national and regional level political candidates, stunting prevalence nationwide was cut in half within seven years. As a result of government investment and commitment, the long-term impact has been striking.





Of course, bringing about this type of effective government response is not easy, and it is not possible in all cases. A number of “preconditions” must exist in order to achieve these results including: (a) peace and security for citizens, (b) a somewhat functional government structure, and (c) a somewhat democratic system is in place. Quite often it is not possible to bring about change in government systems, or to expect institutional change. There are specific political windows that make institutional change more possible and meaningful.

Governments are not the only institutions that help build sustainability. The private sector, civil society organizations, and community structures like nutrition groups are all institutions that can help deliver programming and ensure sustainability. In cases where the government is not an obvious solution, or work with the government is slow, working with other organizations can help fill that gap. Even in cases where the government is functional and ready to change, it is worth examining when linking to the private sector or other institutions is more appropriate.

Nonetheless, CARE FNS programs have demonstrated that it is often possible to link to or build commitment and capacity within government systems that are themselves far from perfect. In fact, we may only be able to influence a small part of the system devoted to social protection, or to nutrition services to mothers of children under age two, or to providing extension services to farmers. Yet, building social accountability in one part of the system can spread out to other parts and bring about a general improvement in government or institutional commitment to effective approaches to poverty alleviation and/or accountable commitment to citizen well-being overall. Indeed, if governments begin to function more effectively and accountably in some areas, this can potentially “reset” the system.

Many CARE country offices are active members and creators of purpose-driven multi-stakeholder alliances for policy change. There are many types of policy changes where multi-stakeholder alliances can make a difference: incorporating the views of the civil society in a new public strategy; advocating for a bigger allocation of resources for specific activities in the State budget; jointly implementing pilot projects to demonstrate how a certain policy change may work in practice; mobilizing the public opinion; campaigning for a legislative reform, etc. Collaboration amongst different types of organizations can produce previously unimagined solutions and have an immense transformational power, especially when they are clearly purpose-oriented, inclusive, participatory and energized with enthusiasm and commitment.



Another critical precondition is that the NGO must itself be willing and able to give up ultimate responsibility for the development process. In order for the activity to be successfully institutionalized, everyone from the NGO headquarters leadership to the country level implementers must ultimately work their way out of a job and be willing to give up the funding for the activity. This is critical as it is all too easy to fall into the trap of perverse incentives: expecting the same level of funding for the same projects year after year. Rather we should define success in the opposite terms: when INGO funding decreases and funding for government-managed initiatives increases.

### THE PROOF

Between 2008 and 2013, the **Kasa**<sup>xxv</sup> project in Ghana worked with support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to coordinate a platform that brought together many networks of NGOs and harnessed their power to advocate for changing the rules on natural resources management. This group was able to convince the Government of Ghana to adopt a national climate change policy that was largely drafted by the commission of civil society partners CARE Ghana worked with. According to government and civil society stakeholders, Kasa was instrumental in driving changes to more than 10 key government laws and policies, including a clause in the draft constitution that people themselves own the land and natural resources. It's not just that laws have been enacted, but that people are actually able to hold the government and companies accountable. The government is reducing the number of logging permits allowed, and communities are challenging companies that destroy resources, and winning. For example, Newmont Ghana had to pay a fine of GH¢ 7million (about \$5 million) for water pollution from cyanide spillage, and affected communities accessed 45% of the fine for their community development needs.

The **Global Water Initiative-East Africa**<sup>xxvi</sup> worked in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda from 2007 to 2015 with the support of the Howard G. Buffet Foundation. Besides changing on-farm practices, the project focused on getting farmer voices into policy conversations and using evidence to create more water-smart policies. In Ethiopia and Uganda, national governments changed their irrigation policies to include more sustainable water use through moisture retention and rainwater harvesting – techniques they had never promoted before. In Tanzania, the local government allocated \$12,500 for further testing with champion farmers. Ethiopia spent \$65,000 to implement more water-smart technologies. In Uganda, the government re-purposed an 8 million Euro grant to invest in water-smart technologies. These government investments were based on solid evidence. The project was able to demonstrate that technologies worked – repaying farmers' investment in 3 days to 6 months with crop sales. That's the information they brought to governments to encourage policy change. The project also focused on getting buy-in. GWI built Learning and Practice Alliances and Research Oversight Committees as a way to bring government, small-scale farmer, NGO, and academic partners together around the questions and research. So by the time the research came out, these partners felt ownership of and faith in the results. That means access to sustainable and new sources of financing was much more successful for these farmers.

**Global Water Initiative: East Africa**

- > **The local government allocated \$12,500 for further testing with champion farmers.**
- > **Ethiopia spent \$65,000 to implement more water-smart technologies.**
- > **In Uganda, the government re-purposed an 8 million Euro grant to invest in water-smart technologies.**

Working with the Haitian government, **Kore Lavi**,<sup>xxvii</sup> with generous funding from USAID's Food for Peace, has built a database of poor and vulnerable people that qualify for voucher assistance. Beneficiaries are interviewed to make sure that assistance is going to where it is needed most – particularly to families with children. Kore Lavi has also built a hotline



for people to bring up complaints if they think we got it wrong. People can hold Kore Lavi accountable to providing the services we promised to them, and we make sure tax-payer dollars are going to good use. From the beginning, Kore Lavi has been working with the government of Haiti to make sure that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor can run the program and understands it every step of the way. Local vendors have been vetted, and partner to provide this service to the community. The vision is that Kore Lavi will phase out over time and the Haitian government will take over. By implementing every aspect of the program in collaboration with local officials, Kore Lavi is building local capacity and fostering local ownership of the program – from farmers, to beneficiaries, to government officials – Kore Lavi is ensuring that the program can be taken over and carried forward. Kore Lavi has also connected to local markets to build more sustainable benefits. For a cash transfer of \$25 a month that goes to the poorest people, 96% of businesses that accept vouchers are seeing higher profits, 43% of farmers are increasing their productivity, and 61% of farmers have hired more labor – creating jobs the Haitian economy desperately needs.

## Kore Lavi

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Chronic malnutrition remains a fundamental threat to the sustainable economic development of Zambia. The government recognizes the importance of investing in nutrition as an integral part of national economic development and thus was among the first countries to participate in the **Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)**<sup>xviii</sup> Movement in early 2011. The same year, and in order to respond to the multi-sectorial dimension of malnutrition, the government, jointly with other key stakeholders, created the National Food and Nutrition Multi- Stakeholder Committee, a governance framework coordinated by the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC). This platform comprises senior officials from implementing agencies from various institutions including the key line ministries, bilateral agencies, UN agencies and NGOs. The Multi-Stakeholder Committee has been instrumental in bringing together partners across sectors to support Zambia’s First 1000 Most Critical Days Programme,

creating multi-sector synergies for effective nutrition response. The Committee has also provided a common platform for resource mobilization: The SUN fund, which is a pooling funding mechanisms for donors' contribution to nutrition. CARE and its partners, Concern Worldwide and the Nutrition Association of Zambia, are the management agents for the SUN Fund.

With ambitions to create change at a national level for the benefit of Kenya's schoolchildren, the **SWASH+**<sup>xxix</sup> project has focused on research and advocacy on the benefits of school WASH, and later, on solutions to keeping these services in place. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the project is a partnership of CARE, Emory University, Georgetown University and the Government of Kenya. It uses an action-research approach for testing innovations that can be spread widely. SWASH+ conducted rigorous research to point out to the Kenyan government and even global audiences that school WASH is tremendously important. SWASH+ research showed that access to WASH services in schools increased girls' attendance by up to 58%. Other research from the project revealed a reduction in diarrheal disease and intestinal worm infection and drew attention to the significant psychosocial stress experienced by adolescent schoolgirls when they lack the support and resources to manage their periods. The Government of Kenya's enthusiastic uptake of SWASH+' recommendation resulted in the doubling of government subsidies for public school WASH signaled recognition of its importance as a pillar of Kenya's School Health Policy. This change has impacted the approximately 22,000 public primary schools around the country and consequently millions of schoolchildren.



## Building Environmental Sustainability

### THE THEORY

In ecology, sustainability is the property of biological systems to remain diverse and productive indefinitely. CARE's development programs, be they in wetlands, drylands, forests, marine or mountain ecosystems or agricultural landscapes consider environmental sustainability as a key non-negotiable principle. Healthy ecosystems and environments are necessary for the survival of humans and other organisms and for the prosperity and safety of the world we live in. But human activity is having a significant and escalating impact on the biodiversity of our ecosystems, reducing both their resilience and bio-capacity and in this regard SDGs 13 (combating climate change) and 15 (protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests and halting land degradation and biodiversity loss) are inextricably linked.

In its FNS work and in agriculture in particular, CARE's approach to environmental sustainability implies the promotion of set a farming practices that includes: diversified cropping systems (not monoculture); crop rotation, including grasses to improve soil structure; use of cover crops; integrated pest management; use of manure to increase soil organic matter; planting legumes to boost nitrogen levels in the soil; improved storage of crops and seeds; using contour farming and other soil conservation practices to minimize loss of topsoil to erosion; minimum or no-till and water smart agriculture. Many of these practices fall under the broader headings of "agro-forestry" and "conservation agriculture" and have been promoted successfully in many developing countries. Community managed natural regeneration is an example of a specific practice that has been used successfully to restore degraded land in such challenging contexts as Niger and Ethiopia.

Research has shown that such approaches to agriculture can raise the income of poor farmers and more than double their yields.<sup>xxx</sup> CARE's pioneering **Community Based Adaptation (CBA)**<sup>xxxi</sup> model, which now includes **Participatory Scenario Planning** for farmers to understand and plan for climate change and variability, has enhanced our ability to build the capacity of vulnerable communities to adapt to change and uncertainty in their environment. Environmental sustainability will necessarily require communities to be able to constantly adapt to the risks and opportunities that they face.

Finally, the financial viability of small-scale agriculture as a vehicle to help poor households lift themselves out of poverty is critical to CARE. If farmers have no access to critical inputs, or can only access them on unfavorable terms and become highly indebted, or if they are unable to find markets for their products or are forced to sell their crops at low prices at the time of harvest, small-scale agriculture becomes unsustainable. Interventions to enhance the access of small-scale producers to markets on favorable terms, including CARE's work on inclusive value chains and market engagement, are thus a critical complement to efforts to increase environmentally sustainable production.

## THE PROOF

CARE Vietnam's **Integrated Community Based Adaptation in the Mekong (ICAM)** ran from 2012 to 2015 with support from AusAid and focused on communities' ability to sustain results even in the face of climate change. The project built on the Community Based Adaptation methodology to bring communities and governments together to plan for the risks that households – and especially women – face with increased climate change and variability. CARE supported community groups to take concrete actions based on their planning – everything from giving children swimming classes in case of flooding to planting natural flood breaks that protect more than 6,500 hectares of land. These community groups have taken more than 480 independent actions, benefitting nearly 50,000 people. 85% of women in the program areas, and 97% of women directly involved in the project say that they have a better understanding of climate risks and impacts. 67% of women in the program feel better able to adapt to those changes than they were before. Local governments were so excited by the process that they replicated it in 5 additional communes – effectively doubling the project's scale – using their own resources, asking for just technical advice from CARE. 61% of beneficiaries say that project support has enabled them to earn more money. What do they do with the extra cash? 32% invest in climate-resilient agriculture practices, 32% in other kinds of agriculture, and 10% use it to build stronger houses to withstand climate shocks. CARE worked closely with the Vietnam Women's Union – including adding a project microfinance component at the suggestion of the partners – and others to convene the Southern Climate Change Working group – an advocacy and coordination platform that is now running without CARE's direct support. This helped them lobby actors like UNDP and GIZ to build on the project's approaches and success.

### Integrated Community Based Adaptation in the Mekong

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- > 32% invest in climate-resilient agriculture practices.
- > 32% invest in other kinds of agriculture.
- > 10% use it to build stronger houses to withstand climate shocks.

CARE **Tanzania's Hillside Conservation Agriculture Project**<sup>xxxii</sup> partnered with FAO's Mitigating Climate Change in Agriculture project and ICRAF. They worked with farmers from 2008 to 2014 to promote conservation agriculture to improve food security outcomes and reduce the environmental impact of climate change. How? By using conservation agriculture – and planting more diverse crops, like beans and sesame seeds. The project worked through 58 Farmers Field Schools and 37 VSLAs to teach 1,906 farmers improved practices for their fields. 84% of farmers adopted at least one



practice, and many of them said that they were motivated to change after seeing their peers improve yields with the new practices. And the benefits to the environment weren't the only advantage. Using the improved methods, farmers were able to double yields on crops like maize and beans relative to people who didn't participate in the project. Farmers told us that they earned an extra \$40 per year on income from their agricultural yields. That's an additional **6 months** of income for farmers in the program. It's also 33% higher income than farmers who weren't in the project. According to FAO's projections, the project will help sequester 827,396 tons of carbon out of the atmosphere relative to baseline. That's as much as nearly 2 million barrels of oil saved, or 175,000 cars fewer on the road in a year.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

### Tanzania's Hillside Conservation Agriculture Project

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- > That's as much as nearly 2 million barrels of oil saved,
- > Or 175,000 cars fewer on the road in a year.

In five years of CARE's **Forest Management Project** in Zanzibar<sup>xxxiv</sup> the total area of community forest under sustainable management increased by 67% from 27,650 to 84,754 hectares (upland and mangrove forest). A total of 45 village communities in Unguja and Pemba produced Community Forest Management Areas/Agreements that were approved by government and operationalized. The COFMA management arrangement resulted in increased women's participation in forest conservation from 5 percent to 36% during life-of project; with 39% of leadership positions in conservation committees taken by women (the Carbon Aggregation entity for the entire Zanzibar (JUMIJAZA) is chaired by a woman farmer). The total carbon stock of community forest area increased from 146,483 tons in 2010 to 951,284 tons in 2014 (549% increase) with a potential of generating USD \$4,756,000 for the community if sold on international markets. The project focus of reducing unsustainable wood consumption also proved successful with the adoption of improved cook stoves among rural households increasing by 20%.

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- <sup>ii</sup> European Union (2007). Strengthening project internal monitoring. EU.
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- <sup>vii</sup> <http://www.care.org/work/economic-development/markets/push-pull-model-graduates-families-out-poverty>
- <sup>viii</sup> [www.care.org/sdvc](http://www.care.org/sdvc)
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/IEDEAS Impact Assessment Egypt.pdf>
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- <sup>xiv</sup> <http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/Stabilité au Sahel Comment accompagner une parole citoyenne des sociétés pastorales.pdf>
- <sup>xv</sup> <http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/Zambia - Water Trust sustainability and equity review - 2014.pdf>
- <sup>xvi</sup> <http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/Zambia - Water Trust sustainability and equity review - 2014.pdf>
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- <sup>xviii</sup> [http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/UgandaReport\\_Post-Project Relocations of Savings Groups in Uganda.pdf](http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/UgandaReport_Post-Project Relocations of Savings Groups in Uganda.pdf)
- <sup>xix</sup> [http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/Social\\_Norms\\_Final.pdf](http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/Social_Norms_Final.pdf)
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- <sup>xxi</sup> [www.care.org/pathways](http://www.care.org/pathways)
- <sup>xxii</sup> <http://www.care.org/work/world-hunger/featured-food-and-nutrition-security-projects/nutrition-center>
- <sup>xxiii</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/COREGroup1/social-analysis-and-action-care>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> <http://www.care.org/work/world-hunger/ensure-womens-empowerment-nutrition-market-access-and-resilience>
- <sup>xxv</sup> <http://thevillage.care.org/fns/Document Library/Kasa II Final Evaluation.pdf>
- <sup>xxvi</sup> <http://www.gwieastafrica.org/>
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- <sup>xxxi</sup> <http://careclimatechange.org/publications/community-based-adaptation-in-practice/>
- <sup>xxxii</sup> <http://www.care.dk/focuscountries/tanzania-eng/the-hillside-conservation-agriculture-project/>
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- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Hifadhi ya Misitu ya Asili (HIMA – 2010-2014)





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Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year CARE worked in 87 countries and reached 82 million people around the world. To learn more, visit [www.care.org](http://www.care.org).