

Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP



Reflections from civil society-led reviews of GAFSP projects across seven countries:

A briefing for the 2026 GAFSP Knowledge Forum

In line with its commitment to inclusivity, accountability, and learning, GAFSP commissioned a consortium of civil society organisations—the Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP (CSOs4GAFSP)¹—to undertake participatory reviews of ongoing projects across seven countries.

The reviews, conducted between November 2025 and March 2026 in Burundi, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Lao PDR, Liberia, and Tanzania, used qualitative and participatory approaches to document lessons, highlight promising approaches, and identify challenges to inform future programming and scaling. Three of the projects are country-led (DRC, Lao PDR, Liberia), while four are producer organisation-led (Burundi, Cambodia, Haiti, Tanzania).

In order to inform discussions at the 2026 GAFSP Knowledge Forum, this briefing paper offers insights into the findings of the reviews, aligned to the event’s specific session topics. The full consolidated report, and seven country reports, will be released in May-June 2026.

1. Monitoring and Evaluation Lessons	2
2. Supporting Agrifood Systems in Fragile and Conflict Contexts	3
3. Effective Collaboration Between Governments, POs, CSOs, Private Sector & Financial Institutions.....	4
4. Role of Producer Organisations in Empowering Farmers	8
5. Integrating Climate, Gender and Nutrition in Agrifood Investments	11
5.1 Climate	12
5.2 Nutrition	14
5.3 Women’s Empowerment	15
List of projects reviewed	16

¹ The civil society consortium – Civil Society Partnership for GAFSP (the Partnership) -- is led by ActionAid International, together with the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF), Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRRRA) and Coordination pour des Actions en Santé et en Développement d’Haïti (COSADH).

1. Monitoring and Evaluation Lessons

Session 4: Measuring What Matters – M&E Challenges.

Commissioning CSOs for participatory monitoring within GAFSP projects strengthens accountability and enriches evaluation by collecting results beyond efficiency metrics.

- Such assessments capture lived realities and externalities, positive and negative, while highlighting impacts on livelihoods, food security, and women's empowerment. This broader, transformative lens ensures projects are judged not only by outputs but by the real changes experienced by communities.

Integrate and finance robust monitoring systems with explicit indicators that set measurable benchmarks to inform and track outcomes of interventions on nutrition, climate resilient and sustainable agricultural practices (including agroecology), and women's empowerment.

- The reviewed projects use contextually relevant activities to promote access to healthy and diversified diets, focused on improving nutrition by increasing the variety of foods consumed, promoting the growing and consumption of biofortified crops, enhancing how foods are prepared, and changing eating patterns. Monitoring of **nutrition outcomes**, however, remains a challenge. In Lao PDR, facilitators from the Ministry of Women's Affairs noted that training activities often lack sufficient follow-up. Similarly, in the DRC, the project manager highlighted difficulties in tracking the progress of households cultivating biofortified crops for the first time.
- Across all seven countries, the review found that projects' integration of **agroecology principles, including climate resilient, sustainable agricultural practices** (even where not explicitly recognised as such) has contributed to increased production, improved soil health, and more nutritious and diversified diets. Implementation and tracking of such practices, however, lacks a clear framework. Development of a GAFSP framework and indicators would ensure the results of such practices can be clearly tracked across interventions.
- Future projects should integrate transformative **gender empowerment** indicators to capture structural change, not just participation. Across most reviewed projects, gender is primarily framed in terms of participation and inclusion, rather than through explicitly transformative activities. Except in Lao PDR, Haiti, and Cambodia, projects lack activities and indicators that capture structural change such as redistribution of unpaid care work, tackling gender-based violence, or shifting restrictive social norms. While women's access and inclusion are supported, projects in Burundi, Liberia, DRC, and Tanzania illustrate the gap where empowerment is measured by presence not transformation. This highlights the

need for gender-transformative indicators that go beyond counting participation to track deeper shifts in agency, equity, and resilience.

2. Supporting Agrifood Systems in Fragile and Conflict Contexts

Session 5: From Fragility to Opportunity

Fragility arises from conflict and political instability, and it is exacerbated by climate-related disasters. Although only DRC, Haiti and Liberia are officially regarded by GAFSP as fragile and conflict-affected (FCA) states, support for building social cohesion and community participation has been the cornerstone of enhancing inclusive food systems in all seven countries. The reviews provided insights into the strategies projects have used to operate within such environments. [For climate related resilience strategies, see the Climate section of this briefing].

Financial inclusion through community-led groups strengthens resilience and cohesion, particularly in contexts with limited formal banking infrastructure.

- Community-based savings and lending mechanisms (MUSO, VSLA), across all seven countries, are allowing farmers to collectively save money and access credit, which they use for farming inputs, emergencies and health insurance, promoting community-based financial resilience. By reducing financial stress, especially during periods of climate and market shocks, such efforts also reduce household and community conflict and promote cohesion.
- The home garden grants in *Lao PDR*, the mutual solidarity fund (MUSO MISO MITAN) in *Haiti*, and the VSLA/AVEC model in the *DRC* demonstrate effective approaches to ring-fencing funds for women (and in Haiti, for youth) within projects.
- In *Burundi*, *DRC* and *Liberia*, however, farmers expressed need for additional farming equipment and power tools to expand the area cultivated and volumes of commodities processed without incurring unsustainable labour costs. Matching grants to POs, such as in *Cambodia* and *Lao PDR*, could assist with supporting this need.
- Financial literacy training, however, is also essential to ensure farmers avoid becoming burdened by debt.

Local groups act as governance platforms and strengthen peace and cohesion – they become the ‘resilience floor’ in the face of conflict.

- Local groups, such as Dimitra Clubs in *DRC*, and grievance redress committees in *Liberia*, function as key platforms for conflict resolution, accountability and continuity during crises. In *DRC*, for example, following training on conflict resolution, club members resolved complex land-use disputes between herders and farmers without external mediation, marking a significant leap in local institutional maturity.

- Also in the *DRC*, the project works through a three-tier structure, involving CSOs (implementing partners), community structures (Dimitra Clubs, FFS, VSLA), and the small-scale producers. Such layering allows for high-frequency engagement and stable intervention. Strong local POs and CSOs are much better positioned than outside agencies to act quickly and decisively in a crisis. In addition to their keen understanding of community needs, they typically remain in the communities, acting as the ‘resilience floor’ when international NGOs or government agencies pull back amid conflict.

Increased yields of diverse foods have boosted household resilience and food security and nutrition in all countries. However, without structured market access, particularly in the FCA countries reviewed, income gains remain limited.

- Where concrete linkages with markets have not been established, farmers have struggled to access markets, despite improved yields. In the *DRC*, insecurity and transport constraints, limited market access, requiring further investment in organised collection points or establishment of cooperatives to increase bargaining power. Whereas, in *Liberia*, unmet project commitments to construct mechanisation facilities, storage centres, and hubs for processing rice and cassava, and failure to facilitate rice farmers’ access to seed on the commercial market, farmers’ access to rice and cassava value chains remains limited. In *Haiti*, market mechanisms remain fragile and often dependent on project support through the PO as an intermediary, requiring formalised contracts and sustainable partnerships with multiple buyers for sustainability.

Project responsiveness to local conditions and needs of partners (particularly POs and CSOs) facilitates implementation.

- Project implementation must navigate climate shocks (all), fuel shortages (all), national inflation and global price fluctuations (all), power shortages (all), poor road infrastructure (all), security risks on transportation routes (Haiti, DRC), and hostile action by armed groups (DRC).
- In response, project budgets should incorporate contingency funds to absorb price fluctuations and budgets should be regularly updated to reflect market changes. Such contingency funds are particularly important for locally based CSOs and POs, who remain in communities during shocks, to allow them to proactively respond to emergencies.

3. Effective Collaboration Between Governments, POs, CSOs, Private Sector & Financial Institutions

Session 8: Breaking Silos – Coordinating GAFSP Projects for Greater Impact

Session 10C (parallel session): Connecting Smallholder Farmers to Knowledge, Finance, and Markets: Role of Governments in Creating an Enabling Environment for Agricultural Development

Session 9: Mobilizing Private Capital for Smallholder Agriculture.

Session 10B: Role of Agribusinesses and Financial Intermediaries in Connecting Farmers to Knowledge, Finance, and Markets

The reviews found that collaboration between supervising entities, government, CSOs, POs and private companies promotes accountability and coordination – in both government and PO-led projects.

Poor coordination among supervising entities, line ministries and implementing partners results in uneven and delayed implementation, seasonal misalignment, sub-standard infrastructure and gaps along value chains.

- Fragmented governance and unsynchronised disbursements dilute impact and erode farmer trust. This was evident in all projects, but most acute in country-led projects in DRC and Liberia, which involve coordination between multiple government ministries and institutions, combined with implementing partners and UN agencies and development banks. The following examples were reported: *delays in supply of seeds* (arrival at end of rainy season in Burundi, or shortages in DRC), *delays in the installation of machinery* (bottling facility in Burundi awaiting assembly by Italian company; construction of processing plant in Haiti delayed due to disbursements), or *sub-standard workmanship* (poor construction of irrigation and storage facilities by contractors in Liberia), *delayed funding disbursements* (funding arriving via IITA in Nigeria for Burundi; MoA delaying payments to other entities in Liberia, postponing farmer training, discouraging local seed multiplication, and preventing implementation of WFP school feeding schemes), or *sudden withdrawal of funding* (abrupt cessation of VSLA acceleration fund grants in the DRC).
- Interestingly, in the *DRC*, as the initiative is funded through two projects, national interviewees noted different disbursement cycles have led to fragmented implementation; however, at the community level, participants rarely distinguished between the projects, suggesting a high level of operational coherence at the point of delivery.
- To address administrative coordination challenges, review participants in *Liberia* recommended that the main supervising entity should play a more active coordination role to ensure adherence to plans and budgets, particularly where there are multiple institutions supporting project implementation. Community-level joint monitoring and grievance mechanisms can also ensure projects flag and address concerns timeously.

- While early in implementation, the *Lao PDR* project offers a promising example of a well-coordinated system, where government, NGOs and development partners reinforce each other's efforts while avoiding duplication. Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) broker formal partnerships (contracts) between local producers' groups and private/public entities, while project district-level nutrition councils serve as the mechanism through which village plans on nutrition and food production are integrated upward to provincial and national levels.

Engaging smallholder farmers, POs and CSOs as core partners in projects – across design, implementation and monitoring – rather than passive beneficiaries, enhances strong local ownership, accountability and long-term sustainability.

- Across the seven projects, where local farmers and CSOs are involved in the governance, design, implementation and monitoring, there is a greater sense of ownership, allowing issues to be flagged and resolved more timeously and appropriately. For example:
- In *Burundi*, cooperatives participated in needs assessments and beneficiary selection as well as choice of the crops, and the areas to place the farmer field schools, ensuring inclusivity and local relevance. While in *Lao PDR*, participatory planning and multi-sectoral platforms bring together government, civil society, private sector and farmers to plan activities and align efforts.
- In *Burundi, Cambodia, Haiti* and *Tanzania* local level project steering committees oversee implementation and monitoring. Farmers groups also contribute data, feedback and reflections through regular review meetings, joint field monitoring and community-level assessments, assessing results and identifying challenges and lessons learned, ensuring accountability and timely improvement.
- Where there have been challenges with procurement and substandard construction, such as in *Liberia*, review participants suggested this could have been prevented through greater involvement of farmers, CSOs and local extension officers in joint monitoring of project activities.

Private sector can complement, and build the sustainability of government and PO-led market linkage initiatives

- By facilitating collective marketing and inclusive business partnerships, POs have helped their members to gain stronger bargaining power, reduce their transaction costs, and create more stable income streams. In *Haiti*, however, the review noted that market mechanisms remain fragile and often dependent on project support through the PO as an intermediary. Formalised contracts and sustainable partnerships with multiple buyers, arranged through the PO – such as PO-negotiated contract arrangements with buyers in *Cambodia*, and with the banana processing plant in *Burundi* – contribute to long-term sustainability.

- Multistakeholder platforms (MSPs), such as those being formed in *Lao PDR*, broker formal partnerships (contracts) between producers' groups and private/public entities. Through MSP-managed matching grants to local producers' groups, farmers are supported to improve access to market infrastructure, and support agribusinesses in processing and storage. Such measures are designed to ensure that as production increases, farmers and producer groups will be able to connect more effectively with buyers and sustain income growth.

Inclusive approaches to agricultural extension – involving complementary support from government, POs and private sector – equip farmers with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to sustainably improve practices and boost productivity. Critically, capacity building and empowering of government extension services – across funding tracks – promotes accountability, a wider reach and sustainability.

- Across the seven projects, farmers are benefitting from the complementarities between POs, government extension services and private sector support. In all four PO-led projects (*Burundi, Cambodia, Haiti, Tanzania*), farmers receive extension assistance directly from POs, complemented by CSOs, and government extension officers operating at county, departmental, district or ward levels. Private buyers, such as Amru Rice and Rice Tech in *Cambodia*, further strengthen this support by providing technical guidance and quality control under organic rice contract arrangements. The three country-led projects rely primarily on their respective agriculture ministries' provincial and local offices, with the *DRC* and *Haiti* integrating additional collaboration with NGOs to deliver extension and implementation support.
- While projects across the seven countries (both PO and country-led grants) have built the capacity of government extension workers, in the *DRC*, it was noted that provincial government officers lack logistical means (motorcycles, fuel) to monitor ongoing activities and ensure continued oversight beyond project cycles. In *Liberia*, review participants recommended that county and district agricultural officers should be given more responsibility for the implementation and supervision of project activities, particularly to monitor timely and satisfactory construction of infrastructure by external contractors.

While financial inclusion through PO-led groups strengthens incomes and household resilience, POs can also play a role in facilitating access to larger, external sources of finance.

- The projects reviewed supported financial inclusion through establishing community and PO-led savings and loans groups. POs are better placed than individual lending mechanisms so support smallholder farmers as they understand their members' needs, while collective approaches reduce risk and transaction

costs. Collective financial mechanisms—including cooperative credit systems, guarantee facilities and appropriate, well understood crop insurance programmes—enable POs to invest in infrastructure, production improvements and marketing coordination.

- Credit and insurance programmes can be problematic, however, if the burden of risk is placed on farmers, or if they are allowed to become burdened with debt. Where such mechanisms are introduced, financial literacy training is particularly important.
- For farmers aiming to expand beyond subsistence and small-scale marketing, such as noted by some cooperative members in *Burundi*, however, pathways to larger, fair and affordable finance may be required for enterprise growth. To facilitate this, projects can support POs to expand their mentoring and business development services to reach more members, and link them to larger, external sources of financial support.

4. Role of Producer Organisations in Empowering Farmers

Session 10A (parallel breakout session): Role of Producer Organisations in Empowering Farmers

The review found that projects that place POs and CSOs at the centre of project governance and implementation, across both the three country- and four PO-led projects, consistently provide the best results in productivity, inclusion, gender outcomes, market access and resilience. POs are playing active roles in delivering activities such as farmer-to-farmer learning, demonstration plots, peer mentoring and engagement with private sector and government actors. By facilitating transportation, aggregation and processing of farmers' products, as well as collective marketing and inclusive business partnerships, POs have helped their members to gain stronger bargaining power, reduce their transaction costs, and create more stable income streams. Support for local POs contributes to community cohesion and ensures sustainability of project results by creating strong support structures for farmers.

Support for strengthening POs – at multiple levels and across all funding tracks – improves their governance structures, ensures reliable operations, improves leadership and financial management, and facilitates access to peer-to-peer learning platforms

- The PO-led projects in *Burundi*, *Cambodia*, *Haiti* and *Tanzania* are expanding the lead POs' capacity to serve their members more effectively and sustainably, through training in governance, financial management and business planning; supporting reliable operations (providing computers, solar installations, technical staff), and for Cambodia, strengthening internal control systems for organic certification.

- While the lead POs in *Burundi*, *Cambodia* and *Tanzania* are cascading the training to their smaller member POs, and providing technical staff and office equipment, the local producer groups in *Haiti* have not received the same level of direct training as the lead PO, but have requested such direct training support to allow them to sustainably support their members in the long run.
- Where POs did not yet exist, or lacked formality – in country-led projects in *DRC*, *Lao PDR* and *Liberia* – farmers have been successfully encouraged to join or form groups; however, increased support for organisational strengthening could ensure more sustainable results. In the *DRC*, for example, the farmer field school approach has supported individual farmers to form groups to collectively manage demonstration fields, encouraging them to transition into technical cooperatives. Further strengthening of these informal groups to establish organised collection points or cooperatives would allow farmers to overcome their current high transport costs and lack of bargaining power.

Funding levels and modalities should be responsive to the needs and operating conditions of POs

- PO representatives recommended that the grant amount available from GAFSP be increased to allow them to expand their reach to more areas and build the capacity of their local member organisations. For example, in *Haiti*, project is active in only 2 out of 12 communes in Jérémie and Rousseau; in *Burundi*, the project is only serving 9 out of CAPAD’s 400 member cooperatives and in Cambodia the project serves 6 out of its 46 cooperative members.
- The reviews found that supervising entity fiduciary requirements are often not suitable to the operating contexts of POs. Slow procurement processes have delayed processing facility construction in *Haiti* and *Burundi*, while funding disbursements in *Haiti* require implementing partners to pre-finance, limiting their implementation.
- Additionally, the institutional strengthening of POs often require longer, flexible funding windows to ensure their organisations can mature over time. In *Burundi*, for example, through the lead PO’s targeted capacity-building interventions, seven out of its nine targeted cooperatives have reached the highest level of formalisation by the end of the project cycle (2023-2026), reflecting strong governance, organisational maturity and operational efficiency, while the remaining two require additional support.

PO-managed transportation, aggregation, storage and processing improve farmers income, while equitably sharing benefits

- PO-led transport coordination, storage and processing infrastructure are reducing farmers’ post-harvest losses, reducing costs, and negotiating better and more stable prices. Such investments are especially important for women producers,

who are often concentrated in processing and marketing roles but face the greatest constraints in accessing infrastructure and services.

- The reviewed projects showcase diverse models, each contributing to improved livelihoods and advancing food systems transformation. The processing hubs in *Cambodia*, *Haiti* (soon to be operational) and *Tanzania* are run by the POs, but in *Burundi*, SOCOPA is a private sector partner. While both PO and private company models are increasing farmers' incomes, PO-run processing hubs tend to more equitably share dividends with the farmer members. In *Tanzania*, for example, the PO is paying back to the farmers when the organisation offtakes the farmers' products and later sells them at a higher price and then shares profits with the farmers. PO-run processing hubs in *Cambodia* have created diversified income streams and local employment opportunities, generating local jobs in rice drying, cleaning, grading and transportation.

Collective marketing through POs reduces dependence on intermediaries, improves price negotiation, facilitates access to local and nearby regional markets and has increased household incomes.

- POs are also playing a critical role in increasing bargaining power and facilitating collective marketing to meet the requirements of larger buyers. In all four PO-led projects, the lead POs are facilitating collective transportation to product aggregation centres, coordinating processing (*Haiti*, *Cambodia*, *Tanzania*), and selling onwards to buyers. Collective selling through POs has reduced farmers' reliance on brokers and enabled collective negotiation with buyers. Cooperative marketing channels have also reduced vulnerability to climate and market shocks, allowing farmers to better sustain their livelihoods by selling vegetables, small livestock, and processed products even during periods of erratic rainfall.
- In *Burundi* and *Cambodia*, the POs have secured contracts with private sector buyers (including processing, in *Burundi*), ensuring a reliable market. While in *Haiti* and *Tanzania*, the POs sell in multiple markets, in an arrangement more susceptible to market conditions, dependent on the availability of individual buyers, resulting in delayed payment to farmers if the POs are unable to secure buyers.
- In the country-led projects in *Liberia* and *Lao PDR*, local POs (agricultural producers' groups or local cooperatives), facilitate processing, aggregation, storage and collective marketing for local markets – unlike the PO-led projects, which centralise collective marketing at the national or regional levels.
- Although still at a modest scale, projects in *Cambodia* and *Burundi* are beginning to leverage technology and digital platforms to connect farmers directly with markets, streamline transactions, and reduce costs.

POs play a central role in providing sustainable extension support for their members through farmer field schools and demonstration plots

- POs are playing a central role in providing extension services, particularly in scaling agroecological practices, particularly in the PO-led projects. POs are facilitating peer learning, organising training systems, supporting the multiplication and distribution of seeds and seedlings and coordinating territorial resource management strategies. They are collaborating with government extension workers and integrating them into project training sessions, helping ensure that knowledge can be spread beyond the project area.
- Strengthened POs remain after the project ends and can provide monitoring and ongoing support to farmers, helping them work through problems of agroecological transition and in the case of the *Cambodia* project, addressing the challenges of maintaining organic certification.

POs can lead the establishment and strengthening of local seed systems

- While each of the projects has distributed seeds and/or seedlings, those in *Burundi, Haiti, Lao PDR, Liberia* and *Tanzania* have supported farmer groups to strengthen their own local seed production capacities, both as a planned strategy to improve resilience by reducing reliance on external inputs, and as a response to the challenges faced in sourcing seed (including shortages and delays by suppliers). Such an approach has improved farmers' access to quality seed, freeing them from the unpredictability of external suppliers, while allowing them to increase their yield and the diversify their production at lower cost.
- Project collaborations with national public research institutes on local seed identification, multiplication and supply (*Burundi, DRC, Liberia*) – rather than imports of externally produced seed – also showed potential to build countries' food sovereignty and resilience.

5. Integrating Climate, Gender and Nutrition in Agrifood Investments

Session 13: Breakout Sessions – Women's Empowerment, Climate, and Nutrition

Session 14: Exploring the Nexus – From Silos to Synergies

The reviews focused specifically on how the crosscutting issues of women's empowerment, climate resilience and nutrition have been integrated across the seven projects.

Notably, while youth empowerment is not defined as a crosscutting issue by GAFSP, most project proposals indicate that they aim to reach young people in their programme. Despite these frequent references, however, most projects lacked targeted strategies, assets or leadership development for young people. While the project in *Tanzania* purposefully included young people as participants in agricultural trainings, youth entrepreneurship and production grants in *Haiti* and *Lao PDR*, represent a more concerted effort at inclusion.

5.1 Climate

The reviews assessed how the seven projects are contributing to strengthening community resilience to the impacts of climate change, including extreme and shifting weather patterns. Central to these efforts is the promotion and support of sustainable agricultural practices, with a particular focus on agroecological approaches.

Adoption of agroecological practices is strengthening soil health, reducing reliance on external inputs, increasing and stabilising yields under climate variability and supporting dietary diversification.

- Across all seven countries, the projects' integration of agroecological practices (even where not explicitly recognised as agroecology) has contributed to increased production, improved soil health, and more nutritious and diversified diets. Farmers trained on agroecological practices through farmer field schools reported significant improvement in crop management skills, adoption of better and climate-resilient seeds, use of organic manure and integrated pest management practices. Such approaches include diversification (intercropping, agroforestry, domestication of wild foods), landscaping (contour ridging), integrated practices (fish in rice, livestock) using compost and organic fertilisers, as well as biological pesticides.
- However, adoption varies widely between farmers' groups and individual farmers, reflecting the absence of an explicit agroecology strategy and uneven extension support. To inspire broader alignment, GAFSP should develop a framework that positions agroecology as a benchmark for progressive adoption. Such an approach, together with a requirement for projects to define their own agroecology strategies, would also ensure the results of agroecological practices can be clearly tracked across interventions.

Strengthening national and local seed systems promotes productivity, while also supporting farmers' autonomy and climate resilience

- Timely provision of affordable, quality and locally adapted seed proved to be critical for farmer productivity and resilience across all projects. Reliance solely on externally procured seed in *Burundi, DRC, Haiti and Liberia*, however, contributed to delays.
- Where farmers, particularly through POs, were supported to multiply and manage their own seed (*Burundi, Tanzania, Haiti, Lao PDR, Liberia*), seed access became more reliable, costs fell, and autonomy increased—particularly under climate stress. Interestingly, in *Lao PDR*, where communities often harvest wild food from the forest, the project is supporting farmers to conduct field trials on domestication of wild food species; results will be shared after several cycles. Purposeful support for local, farmer-managed seed systems, including participatory plant breeding, could further strengthen communities' resilience across interventions.

- Collaborations with national public research institutes on local seed identification, multiplication and supply (*Burundi, DRC, Liberia*) – rather than imports of externally produced seed – also showed potential to build countries’ food sovereignty and resilience.

Reduced reliance on chemical inputs has dropped farmers’ production costs, while contributing to resilience amid climate shocks.

- Across all countries, farmers have adopted ecological methods for improving soil health and managing pests and diseases, without reliance on costly synthetic fertilisers and pesticides/herbicides. In *Burundi, DRC and Haiti*, farmers reported healthier and more fertile soil that retains moisture, and deters pests and diseases, allowing them to maintain their harvests despite erratic weather conditions.
- To further promote integrated practices, nutrition, manure availability, income diversification and resilience, projects should look to expand support to livestock and animal health. The projects in *Haiti* and *Lao PDR* are directly providing and supporting the rearing of animals (goats, pigs, chickens); however, farmers elsewhere are also proactively diversifying their crops with small livestock, including supported by home garden grants in *Cambodia*.

Reliable infrastructure (irrigation, storage, transport, energy) reduces post-harvest losses and ensures uninterrupted operations at processing plants and PO offices, improving overall resilience.

- Investments in small-scale irrigation and water harvesting systems are mitigating erratic rainfall in *Lao PDR and Liberia*; development and use of cold-chain infrastructure, refrigerated storage and transport facilities is adapting practices to rising temperatures in *Tanzania*; while investment in roads have decreased farmers’ costs in *Haiti*, reducing post-harvest losses and facilitating access to markets. Irrigation systems and storage facilities have been requested by farmers in *Haiti* and the *DRC*.
- Conversely, poorly located, constructed or weakly governed facilities (as is the case in *Liberia*) risk being under-utilised or inaccessible, particularly for women and remote farmers.
- Investing in community-managed energy systems, such as micro-solar grids for cooperatives and processing plants, projects could reduce dependency on fuel, increasing resilience. In *Burundi*, for example, frequent power outages and fuel shortages interrupted operations at the processing factory and at PO offices.

Support for early warning systems could further enable farmers to prepare for climate impacts.

- While investment in agroecological farming techniques supports adaptation and resilience in a changing climate, more frequent and intense weather and disasters

(drought, flooding, pests), require efforts to train and support community groups to lead early warning systems and disaster preparedness. In *Burundi*, for example, CAPAD collaborates with the national meteorological institute.

5.2 Nutrition

Projects are offering practical platforms for promotion, particularly by women, of community nutrition knowledge, improving household food consumption practices

- Concepts such as the Farmer Nutrition Schools in *Lao PDR* were observed as having similar approaches with Dimitra Clubs in *DRC* and Food-for-Family groups in *Cambodia* which complement social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) activities by providing practical platforms for households, particularly women, to apply nutrition knowledge and improve household food consumption practices. These groups bring families together to learn about producing, preparing, and consuming diverse and nutritious foods using locally available resources.

Linking agriculture interventions to health centres and school feeding programmes helps to target the most vulnerable, addressing both food availability and dietary quality.

- In *DRC*, health centres are functioning as convergence points for identification of malnourished children, nutrition education and access points for biofortified seeds. This creates a referral pathway where malnourished children identified at health centres are linked to households receiving biofortified seeds, creating a direct link between clinical health outcomes and agricultural production.
- In *Haiti*, WFP is purchasing local producers' groups produce for supply to schools. While a similar approach was planned by WFP in *Liberia*, project coordination challenges have delayed linkages with farmers.

Home gardens boost consumption of diverse foods, complementing biofortified crops and value chain-motivated approaches.

- Home gardens emerged as a key pillar of local food systems for all seven reviewed projects, combining nutrition, women's empowerment and climate resilience. Linking home gardens to broader agricultural training platforms, such as farmer field schools, has enabled farmers (particularly women) to improve their access to affordable and nutritious diets, while also generating income through the sale of their surplus.
- Projects provided farmers with seeds and seedlings for vitamin A bananas (*Burundi*), vitamin A maize (*DRC*), vitamin A rice (*Liberia*), and iron beans (*Burundi*, *DRC*) -- the seeds are hybrid (not GMO), developed through conventional breeding methods. While it is unclear whether biofortification itself has boosted nutrition, as all interventions also encourage diverse food consumption through home gardens, their introduction has been well received in the communities.

Cooking demonstrations and food preparation training, particularly when women-focused, improve household nutrition practices

- In *Lao PDR* and *Cambodia*, SBCC approaches integrate food games and nutrition plans featuring cooking demonstrations and awareness sessions. While in *Haiti*, training is provided to women farmers on artisanal processing, preservation, and hygienic preparation. In *Burundi*, however, a value addition training on the use of banana for bread, doughnuts and porridge, did not target women, resulting in minimal onward training and adoption by households.

5.3 Women's Empowerment

The review assessed how the seven projects addressed the barriers facing women and encouraged transformational changes that provide women with resources, strengthen their agency and voice, and facilitate positive social norms change.

Gender-transformative approaches deliver stronger, sustainable outcomes

- Projects that have used deliberate gender transformative tools (*Cambodia, Haiti, Lao PDR, Tanzania*) to address gender norms and power relations achieved shifts in division of labour (on farm and at home), leadership, joint decision making and household wellbeing.
- Where interventions focused only on women's participation or income (*DRC, Liberia and Burundi*), without addressing underlying norms or the demands of domestic unpaid care work, gains remained partial and fragile, likely to decline with the end of project support—particularly where women lack land tenure and control over proceeds.

Labour-saving technologies are reducing agricultural workload and are saving women's time on unpaid care work, reducing gender inequalities within communities.

- The provision of processing machines for cassava in *Liberia* not only enhanced women's income opportunities through value-addition but offered time-savings gained through mechanisation sparing women and children to many hours of labour-intensive work. They, however, remain without protective clothing to ensure their safety while working in the rice swamps.
- Review participants in *Haiti*, shared that the project has reduced their domestic work through provision of appropriate labour-saving technologies, better consideration of women's time, and enhancing the broader participation of women in household decisions.

Farmers, particularly women are transforming their livelihoods through improving their financial planning and savings habits, and increased access to financial resources, including affordable credit

- Across all countries, community savings and loans societies are serving as critical community-managed safety nets and investment platforms, particularly for women.
- The home garden grants in *Lao PDR*, the Mutual Solidarity Fund (MUSO MISO MITAN) in *Haiti*, and the VSLA/AVEC model in the *DRC* demonstrate effective approaches to ring-fencing funds for women within projects.

Agricultural training has benefited women with enhanced practical skills and resources, improving their incomes

- Women’s training in agricultural techniques has been central to all seven projects, enhancing economic opportunity and social recognition. Training in agroecology and value addition directly increased their productivity and incomes. Access to quality inputs and participation in collective marketing also allowed women to move beyond subsistence farming into income generation.

List of projects reviewed

Burundi	Supporting Small-scale Family Farmers who are Members of CAPAD Cooperatives to be Resilient to the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic (PARE-COVID)
Cambodia	Building Back Better: Organic Agriculture for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Cambodia
DRC	Multisectoral Nutrition and Health Project (MNHP) & Resilience and Nutrition in the Great Lakes Region (RENUGL)
Haiti	Promotion of Resilient Agriculture through Agroforestry in Grand’Anse: Scaling up and professionalising small-scale initiatives to build back better (PARAGA)
Lao PDR	Agriculture for Nutrition (AFN) Phase II
Liberia	Smallholder Agriculture Development for Food and Nutrition Security (SADFONS)
Tanzania	Food Systems Supply Services in Rural Tanzania (F3SRT) - Baridi Sokoni