

Inquiry into the role of development partnerships in agriculture and agribusiness in promoting prosperity, reducing poverty and enhancing stability in the Indo-Pacific region

CARE Australia Submission

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Given the important role of agriculture across countries of the Indo-Pacific, investments by development partners have the potential to support significant economic advancement and development gains. CARE partners with agribusiness and with communities in a wide range of agricultural development programs, and we welcome the Australian parliamentary interest in this agenda. We believe the benefit of such investments is maximised if they are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, emphasising dignified livelihoods for producers, especially small-scale producers and women, and resilience to the impacts of climate change. To ensure a holistic approach to agriculture and agri-business, donors, development organisations and the private sector should:

- **Promote gender equality throughout the agricultural value chain.** Women's work accounts for 60% to 80% of food production in developing countries, however women have unequal access to, and title, over land, and unequal access to the information, resources and training that enables them to safely engage in agri-business and access markets. Addressing gender inequalities throughout the agricultural value chain in any agriculture or agri-business partnership will enhance the economic potential for the 1.5 billion people who live in smallholder agriculture households.
- **Build inclusive markets and pro-poor agri-business partnerships.** The world's poor come into contact with markets and companies as producers, workers, entrepreneurs or consumers on a daily basis. However, they are often exploited, or unable to participate fully in the opportunities that could enable them to work their way out of poverty. More inclusive approaches will help realise the potential of poor communities, through measures such as promoting discussion and negotiation between workers, managers and authorities, and the development of partnerships with the private sector that promote inclusive and sustainable approaches to agriculture, market access and agri-business.
- **Invest in sustainable agricultural practices and partnerships that consider environmental, economic and social sustainability.** In a rapidly changing global climate, a fifth of cropland has been so degraded it is no longer suitable for farming, while 90 percent of fisheries are fished at or above capacity. Solutions to nutrition and food security need to look beyond simply increasing production and also consider holistic approaches that diversify agrosystems and support resilience.

Promoting gender equality throughout the value chain

Of the 2.5 billion people in poor countries living directly from the food and agriculture sector, 1.5 billion people live in smallholder agriculture households and over 40 per cent of these are women, who are mostly unpaid, undervalued workers¹. Women account for 60% to 80% of food production in developing countries, and yet only between 10 to 20 percent of all landholders are women, and women only receive five percent of agricultural extension services worldwide², such as training in agriculture techniques and livestock vaccination programs.

Ensuring that women's contribution to agriculture is acknowledged and recognised and women are better able to share in the returns from agricultural production needs more than increasing women's access to education and training. Women farmers also need to be able to participate in decision-making processes, i.e. leadership, in businesses and in their communities. For this to occur, structural and policy barriers need to be addressed.

To address these barriers CARE and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) have identified specific **Levers for Change**³ for women in agriculture including addressing;

- **Land and property rights and contractual rights** - increasing women's access to land title that allows them to use their land productively and sustainably.
- **Gendered division of labour** - reducing the significant and unequal burden on women to undertake both productive and reproductive work.
- **Gendered control over labour and products of labour** - increasing women's representation in decision making that directly effects their work and productive efforts.
- **Access to and control of water** - increasing remote and marginalised community members, including women's, access to and decision making over water and water usage, thereby increasing their ability to use their land productively.
- **Attention to gender equality by institutional systems** - increasing the efforts of policy makers and institutions to consider gender in all agriculture and agri-business policies.

Across the globe CARE works with individuals, women and collectives to gain access to contextually appropriate **land titling that enables them to make productive use of agricultural land** and agribusiness opportunities. In Tanzania for example CARE works with rural marginalised women, working on smallholder farming, raising cattle, or raising income through fishing or mining. These women are overloaded with productive and reproductive responsibilities, but have little access to the resources they produce. They own no farmland; in the pastoralist/agro-pastoralist communities they own no cattle or grazing land; and in the fishing communities they own no fishing gear. In contexts like these CARE works with women, governments and partners to improve the rates of land ownership by women to increase their ability to productively use the land.

A recent thematic evaluation of CARE's Women's Economic Empowerment initiatives in this region, identified the **success of women's groups in enhancing economic advancement**, often addressing some of the more pressing barriers that women face when trying to earn an income. They found that cooperatives for example, or the formation of group based businesses, demonstrated the potential for enhancing efficiencies, creating bulk and access to markets for small producers. In Malawi for example women working together as a group of farmers have

now become price setters in the market, ensuring they receive fair prices for their crops⁴. In Sri Lankan Tea Plantations CARE has supported the development of Community Development Forums that give workers access to forums alongside estate managers where they can jointly learn to discuss and negotiate issues in a non-confrontational way.

Working in more than 80 countries, including Fragile and Conflict Affected States, CARE's experience in value chain work has led to a deeper understanding of local markets with international impacts. Our commitment to women's empowerment within value chains in partnership with private and public sector partners has created innovative and scalable solutions. A first important step is ensuring that a **Gendered Value Chain Analysis** is undertaken to determine existing vulnerabilities and risks but also opportunities for greater participation and distribution of value.

Creating shared value: working with the coffee sector in PNG to promote gender equality

Despite working longer hours than men in coffee gardens, less than 3 per cent of women in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea receive training in coffee extension services (compared with 40 per cent of men) and women participate less in decision-making. CARE works with the coffee industry to improve women's representation and address barriers to economic security for women, whilst at the same time boosting productivity in the coffee industry. The project works to increase women's income, improve women's skills and support women's economic participation. Meanwhile, the project provides incentives and business skills needed to boost productivity, while empowering women with greater control over their income and increased influence in managing household tasks.

PNG's main coffee traders, the government coffee agency (the CIC) and local civil society organisations recognise the value of this approach to their business bottom line and their communities. As a result, existing extension services in the Highlands have now become accessible to women, and women's participation in extension offered by CARE's partners has increased from less than 5% to more than 30% of all participants.

CARE is partnering with the Australian National University (ANU) to undertake further research into the impact of social and household dynamics on women's economic empowerment, including their ability to engage in agribusiness opportunities, exploring how best to support women's engagement in a sustainable and safe way that provides real economic benefits.

Recommendations

In developing new regional initiatives and partnerships in agriculture, CARE recommends that the Australian government:

1. **Commit to and promote equity all along the supply chain.** Small-scale food producers play a vital role in local food systems, and their access to and ownership of natural resources, especially land and water, must be respected. All partners and policy makers play a role in ensuring that agri-business partnerships undertake **gendered value chain analysis**, and adhere to frameworks and guidelines that promote good practice, reduce risk for women and increase their ability to benefit.

2. **Promote gender-sensitive policies and legislation** not only in agriculture, food security or nutrition but related issues such as property/land rights, access to productive resources, social protection and basic services. This includes **reforming policies that restrict women's access to resources such as land and credit**. Women must be able to own land, access resources, and benefit from financial services as individuals.
3. **Ensure small-scale food producers' and women's participation in planning, policy, and budget processes**. Transparent, consultative processes for developing policies, setting budget priorities, and establishing plans and strategies promotes accountability and helps ensure that interventions are targeted and resources are directed where they are most needed. Participatory processes are key for inclusion of small-scale food producers' and women's priorities, and they ensure that valuable local perspectives and knowledge on opportunities and constraints are available to make interventions more effective.

Partnerships that promote inclusive markets and pro-poor business models

The world's poor come into contact with markets and companies as producers, workers, entrepreneurs or consumers on a daily basis. However, they are often exploited, or unable to participate fully in the opportunities that could enable them to work their way out of poverty⁵. CARE partners with private and public stakeholders along and around the value chain to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability and co-create opportunities for poor and marginalised people to have better access to goods, services and livelihoods – on fairer terms. CARE recognises that the private sector has the potential to either facilitate sustainable economic growth and development, or to reinforce unequal and uneven wealth distribution. With the private sector's increasing role and influence in the region comes a greater **responsibility to respect and promote human rights, quality work opportunities and women's empowerment**.

Partnerships need to recognise that poor and marginalised groups, particularly women, often lack the bargaining power, status, connections and information that would enable them to get a decent return for their efforts. Planning for these partnerships need to consider inclusive approaches based on sound gender analysis. This requires **equitable access to information and resources**, in recognition that marginalised and vulnerable groups often receive less access to critical information about markets and access to the right connections and resources to create sustainable business.

Inclusive approaches also need participatory planning. CARE has found success in the **Participatory Scenario Planning model**⁶, which brings together local communities, farmers, scientists, and officials to develop plans for multiple weather scenarios. The process not only ensures inclusion of farmer and community voices but also connects them to local officials, builds all parties' capacity to collaborate, and disseminates important and relevant climate information back to community farmers. The process provides small-scale food producers with equitable access not only to information and resources but also to local government and planning processes.

Experience has also shown that different approaches on inclusive markets need to be developed and trialled to match the varying and dynamic contexts across the region. A commitment to innovation should recognise the need to experiment and learn **‘from direct experience, from experimentation, from trial and error’**⁷.

Bangladesh Sustainable Dairy Chain: Making Markets More Inclusive⁶

In Bangladesh CARE works with women engaged in agri-business to promote women’s leadership in agricultural input systems and services. This includes working with over 50,000 small-scale dairy farmers, most of them women, to increase milk production from their cows through veterinary support and agricultural inputs, and to combine in co-operatives to be able to sell their milk to Bangladesh’s largest dairy. The experience has influenced other value chains across Africa and beyond. The research Making Markets More Inclusive based on this experience in the Dairy Industry highlights key lessons on how to make markets work for some of the poorest people, including:

- Ensuring partnerships and approaches are designed for scale. Designing interventions from the start to harness market forces and leverage the existing interests of value chain participants helps achieve scale for new technologies and practices.
- Working along the entire value chain. Sometimes the intervention that helps farmers most doesn’t lie with the farmers themselves, but rather with other participants at other points along the chain. For example, even if farmers have all the knowledge and training they need, they still need access to productivity-enhancing inputs and access to markets and a transparent way of being paid for their milk. Through persistent information gathering and working with entrepreneurs and companies along the entire value chain, CARE helped remove the most important obstacles for farmers improving their incomes from dairy – but most of these improvements occurred at other points along the chain, beyond direct work with farmers.
- Making markets and value chains work for poor producers. From the dozens of market enhancements that CARE piloted and implemented through its dairy value chain programme in Bangladesh, patterns emerged about what makes markets work more effectively. Four characteristics of successful market enhancements stand out. First, markets work more effectively when power relationships are rebalanced in favour of poor producers. This includes enhancements (such as forming producer groups) that give them more freedom and choice. Second, markets work more effectively for poor producers when those producers have the information they need – both knowledge about dairying practices and information about market prices and opportunities. Third, markets work for poor producers when they have access to the productivity-enhancing inputs and technologies (such as artificial insemination) that they need to produce more with less. And fourth, markets work for poor producers when those markets contain lower risk and less uncertainty (both of which were observed in Bangladesh as a result of improved fat testing methods).

Recommendations

In developing new regional initiatives and partnerships in agriculture, CARE recommends that the Australian government:

4. Encourage and adopt a **value chain approach** that assesses the full range of interventions required to bring a product or service from inception to end users in a way that is both competitive and beneficial to the poor actors within the chain.
5. Encourage and promote **participatory approaches** that include small-scale farmers, particularly women, in planning processes, in extension services, and in decision making.
6. Ensure that **private sector partners are accountable to global principles and frameworks** guiding good practice and protecting vulnerable community members. This could be supported in the Australian context through the development of an Australian National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, providing a formal framework of corporate accountability and responsible behaviour for Australian companies operating in our region.

Environmental, economic and social sustainability in agriculture and food production

The recently released Report from Food Tank, CARE and partners, *Cultivating Equality*, highlights the issues small-scale farmers face with the impacts of climate change and reduced access to productive land. The report outlines that whilst solutions to hunger in this changing climate often emphasise increasing food production, simply increasing small-scale food producers' yields is not enough to end hunger.

To address hunger and malnutrition in the context of a changing climate, CARE has developed a set of principles entitled **SuPER: Sustainable, Profitable, Equitable and Resilient**. This approach goes beyond how and how much food is produced to incorporate crucial and often neglected elements that are necessary to alleviate hunger and poverty while protecting the environment, improving gender equity, and creating a more just food system. The approach also highlights that sustainable food systems needs consideration of environmental, economic and social sustainability. Food and agricultural production are not undertaken in a vacuum.

The SuPER approach requires:

- Promoting **sustainable** agricultural systems that address climate and environmental impacts and which are: grounded in healthy eco-systems; driven by stable, accountable

According to the IPCC, climate change will have a substantial impact on per capita calorie availability, malnutrition, and related child deaths in developing countries. Globally, 795 million people are chronically hungry; 161 million children under five are stunted. Yet we use 1.5 times the planet's resources every year, exhausting resources faster than the planet can naturally regenerate them. A fifth of cropland has been so degraded it is no longer suitable for farming, while 90 percent of fisheries are fished at or above capacity. At the same time, changes in climate in the last 30 years have already reduced global agricultural production 1 to 5 percent per decade and could reduce it by 2 percent per decade for the rest of the century. Up to 600 million more people could be at risk of hunger by 2080 as a result.
(Cultivating Equality, 2015)

and enduring institutions and policies; and based on sustainable social and economic policies and investments that prioritise the redress of gender inequality in agriculture.

- Promoting **productive** (including profitable and nutrition-sensitive) intensification that specifically addresses the needs of women producers; increases return on investment, including of labour, by farmers; and is climate smart.
- Promoting **equitable** outcomes in smallholder agriculture by: supporting the realisation of the Right to Food and other rights for the most vulnerable; enabling access to opportunities, resources, services and rewards for women farmers as well as men; and promoting access to affordable nutrition food by farm labourers and urban consumers.
- Building **resilience** for communities and systems to be able to withstand and recover from climate-induced shocks and stresses and other risks by: supporting community-based adaptation in agricultural communities; connecting institutions and collectives for better governance; and using market, technical and climate information to support farmer-led analysis, planning and risk management.

This approach is reflected in CARE's Pathways to Empowerment Program, working with 50,000 women farmers, their families, and their communities in six countries (Bangladesh, India, Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, and Mali). The program aims to increase their food and nutrition security. CARE adopts a holistic approach where farmers are at the centre of learning and development activities and engage in training on sustainable agriculture practices, market engagement, gender and equity, nutrition, and group empowerment. The adoption of the SuPER approach in this case has led; to adoption of improved agricultural techniques, such as conservation agriculture, to ensure that the land farmers use will be productive for years to come; increases in yields up to 200 per cent, resulting in nearly 4 million USD in revenue for female farmers and businesses; women gaining access to 3762 hectares of land for production and increasing their decision-making power.

Sustainable and climate sensitive agricultural production requires **integrated approaches**. In Bangladesh, CARE'S SHOUHARDO II program has produced significant and sustainable outcomes through the integration of health and hygiene interventions, agricultural training to increase food production and incomes, and women's empowerment groups. This model is effective in providing sustainable nutrition security and has been successful in significantly reducing stunting in children.⁸

It also requires consideration for principles of agroecology and protecting and enhancing ecosystem services that nature provides, while still recognising that for small-scale food producers, increasing yields on existing plots is important. In doing this CARE works with partners and community members in many contexts to **diversify agrosystems** and develop crop mixes that support resilience. CARE's approach to increased productivity takes a low-external input approach to increasing yields and resilience. It also recognises that efforts to

increase productivity must explicitly address the quality of food produced in terms of calories, protein and micronutrients.

Integrated Approaches to Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

Poor rural residents of Liquiçá District in Timor Leste are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Traditional agricultural practices are unsustainable, highly reliant on ever more sporadic weather patterns and are exacerbating food insecurity. With food and agriculture systems so insecure, even minor climatic shifts can signal disaster for poor rural households. In order to ensure increased food security in a changing climate the “Maka’as” project, a partnership between CARE, WaterAid and local partners, promoted a combination of different practices in the food production chain to increase resilience of the whole food system to a variety of shocks and stressors. Key strategies included:

- The use of high productivity and climate hazard resistant crop varieties (Sele maize, for example). Enhancing yields, even in a changing climate, is essential to achieving sustainable food security.
- Ensuring an adequate and constant source of water to produce enough food year round, especially in the dry season. Protecting water sources, appropriate retention and storage techniques, and improving accessibility and efficiency are critical to sustainable agricultural practices.
- Improving agricultural production techniques to increase sustainability. Techniques like Sloping Agriculture Land Technology (SALT), conservation agriculture and permaculture help farmers to produce food while protecting the soil and local biodiversity.
- Ensuring produce is properly stored post-harvest to increase available food and income. Helping farmers to reduce produce and selected seed losses through better storage is a key factor in increasing local resilience. The use of air-tight metal storage drums has reduced losses and increased families' ability to cope with crop failures and market fluctuations. It also ensures families have sufficient high quality seeds for the next planting season.
- Increasing incomes through sales of surplus produce. Farmers have been able to increase yields using the above strategies and selling produce has increased incomes and helped create a financial buffer for times of crisis.

Recommendations

In developing new regional initiatives and partnerships in agriculture, CARE recommends that the Australian government:

7. Ensure that all approaches to food and nutrition security and agriculture **consider the impact of a changing climate**, supporting communities **to** increase production sustainably and equitably and to increase their resilience to climate impacts.
8. Invest in **research partnerships involving collaboration** among poor farming communities, extension services and agricultural scientists, to ensure research programmes examine what kinds of sustainable agricultural strategies, techniques, equipment and crops can most benefit women and marginalised communities.

End Notes

¹ UK Hunger Alliance, *Small Scale, Big Impact*, 2013

² Food Tank & CARE, *Cultivating Equality*, 2015

³ CARE, *A Place to Grow: Empowering Women in CARE's Agricultural Programming*, 2009,

⁴ Food Tank & CARE, *Cultivating Equality*, 2015

⁵ <http://insights.careinternational.org.uk/our-work/private-sector-engagement>

⁶ Food Tank & CARE, *Cultivating Equality*, 2015

⁷ CARE, *Making Markets More Inclusive: Lessons from CARE and the Future of Sustainability in Agriculture Value Chain Development*, 2015

⁸ Food Tank & CARE, *Cultivating Equality*, 2015, p21