

Systems-Level Impact

This summary examines five CARE examples that produced systems-level change in Laos and Nepal, and traces U.S. policy to improving people’s lives in Bangladesh and Malawi.

Introduction

Across five contexts, external consultants assessed CARE’s systems-level change contributions and impact using CARE’s Systems-Level Impact (SLI) framework and its [six pathways to impact at scale](#): supporting and advancing social norms change, service system strengthening and social accountability, supporting social movements, inclusive market-based approaches, and advocacy for policy change.

CARE’s Contributions to Systems-Level Change

Some key patterns are evident especially in relation to policy, social norms transformation, accountability structures, and institutional adoption.

Policy and Institutional Transformation

Across all interventions, CARE successfully influenced policy change at multiple governance levels.

The most significant policy impacts were achieved when CARE:

- Successfully aligned interventions with existing government priorities and frameworks
- Built strong multi-stakeholder coalitions
- Provided robust evidence from field implementation
- Maintained sustained advocacy over extended periods

For example, in Nepal, the Farmer Identification Card (FID) system was incorporated into government policy after extensive piloting and advocacy, while in the U.S., CARE's advocacy contributed to fundamental changes in food aid policy through the 2018 Farm Bill. Similarly, in Laos, both the First 1000 Days and WERC projects successfully influenced national policies on health access and climate resilience, respectively.

Social Norms Transformation

A consistent theme across interventions was CARE's ability to catalyze changes in social norms, particularly around gender and marginalized groups' participation. This was achieved through:

- Community-based approaches that engaged both rights-holders and duty-bearers
- Economic empowerment initiatives like Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)
- Creation of inclusive decision-making spaces
- Demonstration effects from successful pilot initiatives

The five evaluations include:



[Famer ID \(FID\) Card in Nepal](#)



[Self-Applied Technique for Quality Health \(SATH\) Tool in Nepal](#)



[U.S. Govt 2018 Farm Bill impact in Bangladesh and Malawi](#)



[First 1,000 Days in Laos](#)



[Women Empowerment for Climate Resistance in Laos](#)

The re-envisioning of gender norms was particularly evident in the Laos projects, where women's participation in community decision-making increased significantly. In Nepal, the FID system helped break down caste-based discrimination in access to agricultural services.

Service Systems Strengthening and Social Accountability

CARE's interventions consistently strengthened service delivery systems and accountability mechanisms through:

- Capacity building of local institutions
- Development of monitoring and feedback mechanisms
- Creation of platforms for community participation
- Enhancement of data management systems

Impact on People's Lives

People's lives are better off as a result of these systems-level change outcomes. Across the five studies, meaningful improvement in people's lives looked like:

Categorization-based Farmer ID (FID) Card in Nepal

- **237,434 people in Nepal** have improved livelihoods, health, and social inclusion.
- Improved access to agricultural services and resources for marginalized farmers, including women and those from lower castes.
- Women reported significant increases in confidence and decision-making power.
- Reduced discrimination against marginalized farmers, including caste-based discrimination, and increased empowerment and social inclusion.

CARE Nepal's Self-Applied Technique for Quality Health (SATH) Tool

- **432,304 women** are participating in Healthy Mothers' Groups (HMGs) and have improved maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes. There have been **127,696 Skilled Birth Attendant deliveries**, and HMGs also supported **270,622 women** to make their own informed decisions regarding reproductive health care.
- Strengthened health systems through improved community engagement, enhancing social accountability in healthcare service delivery
- Transformation of social norms related to health-seeking behaviors
- Improved capacity of health workers and Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs)



Impact on People's Lives

237,437 people in Nepal

have improved livelihoods, health, and social inclusion.

432,304 women in Nepal

have improved maternal, newborn, and child health outcomes.

2.43 million people in Bangladesh

increased their food security.

1.29 million people in Malawi

increased their food security.

2018 U.S. Farm Bill

- CARE contributed to passing specific provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill that enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of Food for Peace.
- The reforms CARE championed had tangible effects on the ground. Food for Peace non-emergency programs are operating in 12 countries. We estimate that **3.7 million people** have improved food security and economic empowerment in Bangladesh and Malawi as a result of these policy changes.
 - Bangladesh: More than **2.43 million people** participated in Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs), with funding levels reaching \$51.89 million between 2019 and 2023.
 - Malawi: More than **1.29 million people** participated in RFSAs backed by \$72 million in funding during the same period.

First 1,000 Days in Laos

- Improved access to quality reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) services, with a 26% increase in health facility visits by women
- Empowerment of women in healthcare decision-making processes
- Increased awareness of nutrition and RMNCH services through community volunteers
- Improved access to healthcare services in rural, ethnic communities
- Enhanced capacity of health center staff through technical trainings

Women Empowerment for Climate Resilience (WECR) in Laos

- Improved climate resilience and food security for 1,800 ethnic minority women and 1,400 children through climate-smart agriculture practices
- Positive shifts in social norms related to women's participation in community decision-making and locally-led adaptation activities
- Strengthened capacity for climate adaptation in 20 ethnic communities through the development and implementation of community-based disaster risk management plans

What did we learn?

Continue fostering CARE's role as a key intermediary: Across contexts, CARE plays a key role as a “systems orchestrator.” In Laos, CARE’s leadership improved NGO alignment, agreement, and coordination. In the U.S, CARE was a key mediator between Congress and the NGO coalitions. CARE should continue bringing together a wide range of stakeholders and empowering diverse voices to broaden support and increase the legitimacy of CARE's advocacy agenda.

Strategic partnerships are essential: In Nepal, the institutional presence of the National Farmers Groups’ Federation had an influential role, changing the livelihoods of marginalized farmers with tangible benefits. In the U.S., partnerships with other NGOs are critical for identifying complementary expertise, resources, and networks; and defining tactics with expected outputs and outcomes, so that achievements can be monitored and impact measured.

Foster a continuous cycle of evidence-based advocacy: Maintain and promote CARE's position as a thought leader, which has proven to be one of our key differentiators, by consistently providing evidence-based insights and analysis. U.S. officials were receptive to data from CARE’s programming. Formal trainings and workshops, along with advocacy campaigns, effectively persuaded elected representatives and government officials in Nepal and Laos.

Bottom Up and Top Down: The synergy between enhanced supply-side responsiveness and empowered demand-side advocacy fostered a more effective and equitable healthcare system in Nepal. In the U.S., CARE focused on “grasstops” advocacy with Congressional leaders and “grassroots” advocacy to mobilize community members, ultimately leading to successful policy change. Similarly, Farmer ID implementation in Nepal is owned by both rights holders and duty bearers across communities, leading to sustainable change.