



LEARNING TO LISTEN

A Learning Review of CARE's Impact Growth Strategies

August, 2021



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INTRODUCTION

How does a global organization that seeks to multiply its impact at significant scale fulfil that ambition? How can it leverage its extensive reach of over a hundred countries to truly pull its weight as a global organization? And how do you do that while trying to localize power and diversify your organization in a time of diminishing aid resources? These were questions that many in CARE asked themselves as they reflected on the commitments in their Program Strategy 2020. While there was much success to celebrate around the world, there wasn't a clear path to significantly scale impact beyond national boundaries. There was a growing sense of a missing middle between global teams focused on their conceptual core, and country offices trying to maximize impact through projects on the ground amidst challenges to stay effective and viable in rapidly changing contexts. The connections between these two levels were often inconsistent and tenuous, relying on personal networks and people's generosity of their time.

"You could go back to the same donor and get more money to do it again, or extend it a bit... next door. But the idea of having some vehicle where you could systematically do it 10 times or 100 times bigger, beyond a country didn't exist at the time. We were trying to address this." [RMU staff]

In 2016, CARE USA attempted to address some of these questions by investing unrestricted resources in regions to build the capability to multiply impact beyond national boundaries. The intent was to offer an initial investment in promising regional initiatives that were investment ready, while working with fundraising teams to create a pooled fund (of restricted but highly flexible resources) that would later replace unrestricted funds, which could then be invested in new initiatives and ideas. And so, the Impact Growth Strategies (IGS) were born. Five initiatives were funded through this mechanism. This review covers four of them described below, that have now been implemented over the past five years in collaboration with several country offices, CMPs, global teams and external partners at national, regional, and global levels. A mid-term review conducted in 2019 concluded that from work done until the end of FY18, the IGS had started to deliver significant value for CARE in terms of impact, resources, mobilized and wider organizational benefits. It recommended that CARE continue to invest in the IGS, with a set of adjustments and course corrections.

The **Equal Value Equal Rights (EVER)** IGS aims to positively impact the lives of 10 million domestic workers in the LAC region by 2030, working across six countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico) and at regional and global levels to enable domestic workers in the region to have access to decent jobs as described in ILO Convention 189. CARE works with more than 40 domestic worker unions and organizations across the six countries as well as with the Confederation of LAC domestic workers that include 18 unions in 13 countries and the International Federation of domestic workers. This work grew from a long period of listening and gaining the trust of feminist leaders in the region, on whose recommendation CARE began to work closely with the domestic workers' movement in the region.



Working across seven countries in West Africa (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo), the **Women on the Move (WoM)** IGS aims to influence positive change in the lives of 8 million women and girls in the region, mobilizing and supporting existing savings groups/ VSLAs to serve as a platform for women and girls to claim their rights. The initial focus of work was on financial inclusion. But as the power of these solidarity groups to strengthen women's collective voice became increasingly clear, the focus of the IGS widened beyond financial inclusion to networking and connecting these groups and supporting their legitimacy and credibility to build strategic alliances with local and national CSOs to collectively raise their voices for fulfilment of their rights. This shift in emphasis of the IGS was also based on the learning that as CARE we can do more by ceding our power and supporting women in setting and pursuing their own agendas.

Her Harvest, Our Future (HHOF) in Southern Africa is built on the assumption that the scale of impact we seek will come primarily through working in partnership and influencing the actions of others, including governments, private sector, civil society, and donors. Working across six countries in the region (Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe), HHOF aims to transform the lives of more than 10 million poor and vulnerable people in the region through improved food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change. The IGS was created at a time when the region was hit by the worst regional droughts in decades and over the course of the past five years there have been devastating tropical storms in the region, resulting in humanitarian assistance being an essential part of this IGS.



Working across ten countries in Asia (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam) and in Ethiopia, the **Made by Women** IGS seeks to economically empower 8 million women garment workers through dignified work. To do so, the IGS engages with women, businesses, governments, and civil society partners along the global garment supply chain to address some of the most fundamental barriers to women accessing their rights in the garment industry. An important part of this work has been advocacy for the passing of ILO Convention 190 to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work, and its ratification and implementation by governments in Asia.

This final review of the initial five-year period was conducted between April and June 2021 and is intended as a learning review, building on the lessons and recommendations from the mid-term review. The central question it seeks to address is: **What difference are the IGS making to our impact, what we do, and how we work? Where do we go from here?** The methodology included a review of documentation from the four IGS and global teams related to efforts to multiply impact or craft global strategy and design; A survey of key internal CARE stakeholders with 32 respondents; Interviews with 40 people from IGS teams, partner organizations, country and regional teams, CARE USA and other CMP/ affiliates/ candidates, and the CI Secretariat; A review of PIIRS, resource mobilization, and cost data; and IGS team reflections on their trajectories. There are some limitations in this methodology: We conducted the review at what was the height of the pandemic in many parts of the world. It was a disruptive time, and teams were extremely busy. We had initially wanted to organize some cross-IGS reflections with CARE teams and partners, however, it proved impossible to do in the timeframe for the review. This is still something that may be useful. Several of the recommendations from this review, speak to learning processes that may be useful in the future.

This document is the final review report. Beyond a review of what has been achieved and learned, it is an attempt to tell the story of the IGS, which are currently not well understood across the organization. There is much to learn from the IGS to propel work toward fulfilling Vision 2030. This report is organized in nine sections, each focused on a specific question at the heart of the review: 1) What impact and what nature of impact did the regional impact growth strategies contribute? 2) What are we learning about scaling pathways and strategies for impact at scale? 3) How are the IGS changing the way we collaborate with others, and what are we learning from this collaboration? 4) What have we learned about resourcing regional impact growth strategies? 5) How are the IGS influencing program quality? 6) How are the IGS regional platforms changing the way we organize and collaborate within CARE? 7) What other institutional benefits do we observe from the IGS, beyond the regions? 8) How may we imagine the future of regional platforms at CARE? 9) What kind of scaffolding may best support regional platforms? Eight recommendations surface through the body of the report, and are summarized at the end. An **Executive Summary** and a **slide deck** are available as a separate accompanying documents.

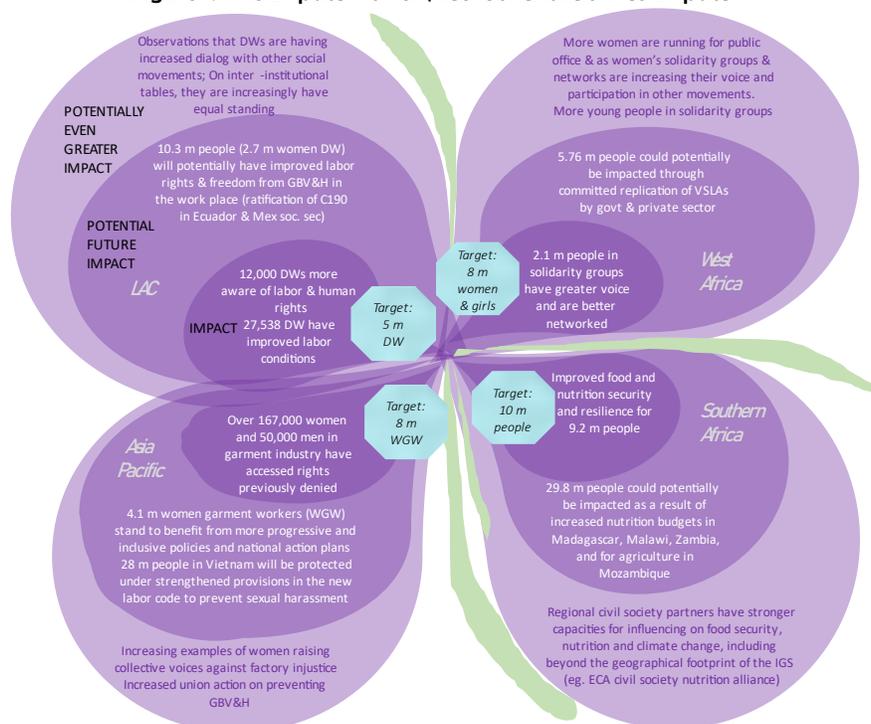
1. What impact and what nature of impact did the regional impact growth strategies contribute?

The Impact Growth Strategies were established with the intent to multiply impact. We begin this report with an overview of their contributions to impact.

As of June 2020, the four IGS report contribution to **impact in the lives of 12 million people**¹ (8.3 million women)². Some of the achievements that make up this impact include: greater awareness of labor and human rights, improved labor conditions and fulfillment of rights previously denied, improved food and nutrition security and resilience, improved collective capability to claim rights, greater responsiveness of power holders, and better access to health and gender-based violence services and economic support during the Covid-19 crisis.

In addition, largely through successful advocacy and influence on policies and programs such as increases in nutrition budgets, policies for legal protections (eg. through the ILO convention 190), stronger laws against sexual harassment, the four IGS included in this review project the possibility of **potential future impact in the lives of 78 million people**³ (58.3 million women) in CARE’s impact populations, contributing to CARE’s 2030 global goal of supporting 150 million people from the most vulnerable and excluded communities to overcome poverty and social injustice. The surrounding context is important here – in some cases, realizing these future impacts may require significant continued investments from CARE. In other contexts, there may already be sufficient momentum for these impacts to unfold, and may not require significant CARE engagement. The impact flower in Figure 1 describes the nature of impact to which the IGS are contributing.

Figure 1: The Impact Flower | IGS Contributions to Impact



¹ This includes 39,358 people in LAC, 2.1 million in West Africa, 9.2 million in Southern Africa, and 643,000 in Asia.

² The [mid-term review of the IGS conducted in 2019](#) had reported contribution of impact in the lives of 6.2 million people towards CARE’s global goal. This included additional impact that would have occurred through projects and been reported anyway through PIIRS, impact that may have occurred anyway but may not have been reported but for the IGSs, and actual additional impact. Now, two years on, these distinctions are less relevant as regional IGS and their constituent projects are more intimately linked and interdependent, and the existence of several of these projects is based on IGS learning and design.

³ This includes 10.3 million people in LAC, 5.75 million in West Africa, 29.8 million in Southern Africa, and 32.1 million in Asia.

What about the Impact Targets?

The IGS represented an important “first” for CARE in attempting to think about regional impact targets. While several of the targets (in the pale blue octagons in Figure 1) may have been unrealistic given the level of resources and timeframe available, they provoked an ambition that inspired out-of-the-box thinking and different ways of working in striving to contribute significantly higher levels of impact than in the past, and certainly more than just what may be achieved by aggregating individual project contributions to impact. For example, these ambitious impact targets made it important to find a way to influence impact in Brazil, which is home to seven of 18 million domestic workers in LAC, even though CARE did not have a physical presence in the country. As in the wider organization, having targets also challenged IGS teams to improve their abilities to measure contributions to impact.

Any statements on achievements against targets must take into account the variations in the way targets were set and in the expectations around depth of impact. We must also take into account the fact that some of these targets were too ambitious for an initial 5-year timeframe. It is for these reasons that the focus for this review was on learning from the nature of different kinds of impact to which CARE contributed, rather than achievements of numbers impacted against targets. There are nevertheless, some useful observations related to the impact targets.

Building on a significant body of existing work, Southern Africa is the only IGS that came close to reaching its target for contributions to impact (although some may argue that these impacts would have been achieved anyway). All four IGS project significant potential future impacts (the second layer in the impact flower), beyond the targets set, however, realizing this contribution to impact will be dependent on a number of variables listed below. It will be important to factor these variables into our planning and impact monitoring over the coming years:

- The complexity and dynamism of the system they are trying to influence
- The momentum the work has gained across the ecosystem and level of maturation of ecosystem relationships
- The extent to which additional CARE investment may be required and to which there is appetite, stamina, and opportunity within CARE to sustain investment for these purposes. For example, there is a long path from national government ratification of ILO C-190 commitments to policy enactments to implementation. If CARE stopped investing, would gains be lost, or would the work continue toward realizing future impacts projected?
- The extent to which impacts may erode, especially in the current time of disruption when many development gains are threatened due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other disasters.

In seeking to multiply impact the IGS have had a **strong focus on underlying structures and the interplay between relations and structures**⁴. They have been instrumental in strengthening our advocacy capability and have led the way in progressing how we systematically understand contributions to structural impact through changes in formal structures (laws, policies, programs, and processes). This was made possible through the innovation of the AIIR tool⁵, which was initially developed within HHOF, and then adapted and used across the organization to understand and capture CARE’s contributions to advocacy outcomes.

Beyond formal structures, colleagues observe several **promising changes in informal structures, norms, and relations in the public domain**, including shifts in the nature of interactions in civil society. Examples of these changes include:

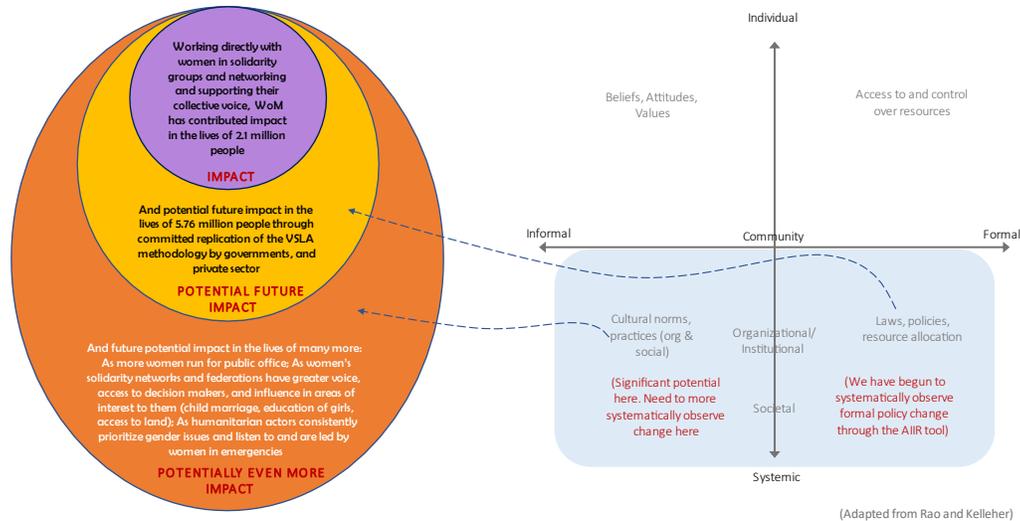
- Colleagues from WoM report a surge in women candidates running for commune, region, and national political office. As of December 2020, nearly 400 women from solidarity groups in Niger were candidates for public office elections. This represents growing aspirations of women themselves and shifts in wider perceptions of their role and influence in society.
- On the inter-institutional tables convened by EVER, colleagues are observing increasing acceptance of domestic workers in these multi-stakeholder forums on equal footing with other players.

⁴ Advancing gender equality is at the core of CARE’s theory of change and CARE believes that it can only be done through progress in three domains: Building agency; Changing relations; and Transforming structures. [Vision 2030](#) offers a description of these domains.

⁵ The Advocacy and Influencing Impact Reporting tool is designed to understand the significance of advocacy wins, the level of CARE and partner contributions, and evidence to support potential impact claims. The tool relies on self-reporting by CARE staff.

- Colleagues from MbW observe more women applying for promotions and being elected as worker representatives on committees.

Figure 2: Understanding the impact we contribute | Women on the Move in West Africa



The two axes on the right in Figure 2 above (individual to systemic change and formal to informal change) create four quadrants or domains of change that must be tackled for sustainable transformations in gender and social power⁶. Most of the observations above from colleagues (and there are many more) are of informal changes in the public domain (the bottom left quadrant). They may include changes in attitudes, behaviors, exclusionary or inclusive practices, and norms that are deeply embedded in culture, civil society, and society at large. These kinds of changes are critical for social change (which is impact at large scale), because they represent the institutionalization of formal structural changes in day-to-day life. The observations of our colleagues are extremely valuable as they point to potential success in *scaling deep*⁷ and they signal even greater impact in the future (the outermost layer of petals in our impact flower). They show us where to look for change. Current monitoring and evaluation systems do not yet systematically capture or process these kinds of observations. Without systematic attention to them, we are **likely to underestimate our contributions to impact**, or even worse, fail to notice backlash or unintended harms. As we move beyond the numbers and enhance our ability to systematically observe these perceptible, qualitative and often informal shifts, guided by women in our impact populations, we will better understand the paths to significant impact at scale⁸.

During the course of this review, work had already begun to develop an *AIIR-type of tool* (that is being used to capture formal structural change through advocacy) in order to capture informal structural change. This is a step in the right direction and will be valuable. However, ideally learning processes related to informal structural change should go beyond a CARE self-reporting tool to also include some kind of **light-weight periodic and systematic learning and reflection process**. Such a process may be based on an action research methodology with impact population representatives and CARE and partner colleagues as the main inquirers. These processes may occur within regions as well as across regions. Areas of inquiry that surfaced during the review included inquiry around the evolution of collective action, social movement trajectories and leadership, the nature and shifts of power in inter-

⁶ Rao and Kelleher (July 2005). 'Is there life after gender mainstreaming?' in *Gender and Development* Vol 13, No. 2.

⁷ CARE's approach to scaling focuses on three types of scaling – scaling out (impacting greater numbers), scaling up (impacting laws and policies), and scaling deep (impacting cultural roots)

⁸ Vision 2030 Indicator 16 "Number and description of positive shifts in informal structures (social norms, culture, beliefs, etc.) as defined and influenced by movements and/or activists supported by CARE" will be helpful in systematizing this kind of learning

institutional spaces. Learning processes of this kind may draw inspiration from processes such as the ‘[Curiosity Collective](#)’ in West Africa and work done in LAC to reflect on the [CARE – movement relationship](#).

For CARE’s global MEL systems, there is a growing sense that it would be useful to go beyond aggregating project level data for regional learning, **building the capability to capture and process regional data** emerging from the IGS. This would help improve the visibility of IGS in the organization and the quality of analysis around the IGS investment. This capability would also support learning around scaling pathways and changes in structure and relations – formal and informal. Two kinds of regional level data emerged as being potentially useful: i) Basic platform data, for example on levels and types of investments committed and additional resources being generated, types of partners and partnership configurations and their basic characteristics, and ii) Data related to the use of scaling pathways, such as the level of emphasis on different pathways, key data points in engaging social movements and networks, and forms of collective action being supported. **It will only make sense to expand the regional level focus of the global MEL platform if there is clear organizational commitment and support to continue to invest at this level.** There will also need to be some basic agreements and shared goals and modalities for the use of this data, or it would not be worth the effort.

Recommendation 1 | Understanding impact

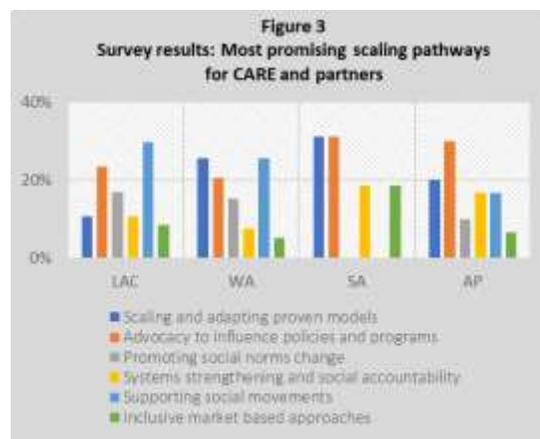
- a) Leveraging the *scaling deep* work of IGS, invest in learning processes and MEL systems to systematically understand outcomes related to shifts in informal structures/ culture/ norms in the public domain.
- b) Extend global MEL systems to support regional data gathering and analysis, focused on learning and contributing to impact at scale toward Vision 2030.

2. What are we learning about scaling pathways and strategies for impact at scale?

“I aspire to the day, when women around the world join forces in a global movement to assume their rightful leadership roles.” – Salam Kanaan, Country Director, CARE Palestine (WBG)

Promising scaling pathways

To better understand how the IGS went about *multiplying impact* we drew on the six complementary, non-exclusive and mutually reinforcing scaling pathways in the guidance note on [CARE’s approach to Impact at Scale \(2019\)](#). As this work draws substantially from the work of the IGS, it presents a good basis for analysis. Survey responses indicate the following three pathways as the most promising for CARE and partners in contributing to impact at scale: *Advocacy to influence policies and programs*, *Supporting social movements*, and *Scaling and adapting proven models*. These pathways also appeared to be the best understood among survey respondents, and are those in which the IGS have built significant capacity.

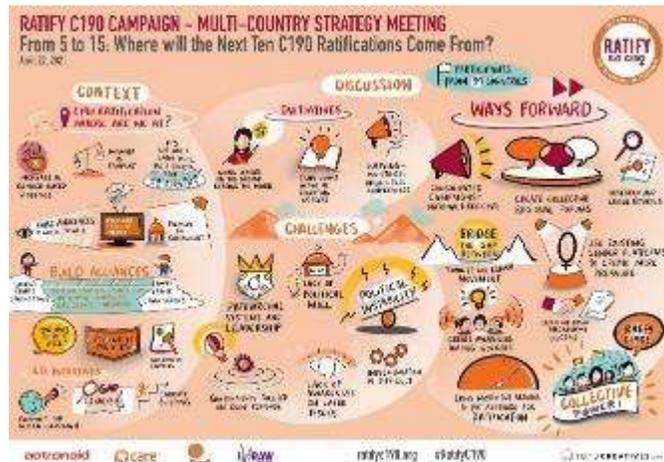


Advocacy to influence policies and programs | As pointed out in the mid-term review, all the IGS focused on advocacy as a key scaling pathway. Most of this work was targeted at national level, but it also included regional and global levels where policy commitments have the potential to trigger national level change. Beyond specific advocacy successes, the work of the IGS along this pathway has been **influential in CARE**, raising the bar for CARE’s ability to come together to wield influence as a global organization. The most obvious example of this was CARE’s global campaign (#ThisIsNotWorking in 2017 and #March4Women campaigns and social media action in 2018 and 2019) for the adoption of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. The original proposal for CARE to campaign for C-190 arose from the MbW and EVER IGS, that were both instrumental in making the connection between national level and global advocacy on the proposed convention. Another example of IGS influence on **vertical integration across levels for advocacy** is from the CoP23 climate change negotiations in 2017. Drawing significantly on the work of HHOF, CARE helped influence the decision of countries to consider food security, socio-economic issues, and vulnerability in agriculture, thus

influencing the possibility for improvements in the lives of hundreds of millions of small-scale food producers, especially women.

Beyond vertical integration across CARE, the review surfaced over ten tactics used by the IGS along the advocacy pathway, including: Supporting the **advocacy capacity of impact populations’ own organizations and networks** (a key strategy in EVER and WoM); Building **evidence and analysis** through joint research across the region (for example, in Southern Africa on nutrition or in LAC on the implementation of ILO C-189); **Collective submissions to inter-governmental panels** and forums, and participating in civil society fringe activities building up to CoP23 in 2017 and the International Labor Conference 2019; Convening/ supporting **multi-institutional spaces and platforms** (such as national inter-institutional tables in LAC or Climate-smart agriculture platforms in Southern Africa); **Lobbying decision makers** in governments or private sector (including global brands) for policy change or strengthening their implementation; **Innovation diffusion** by advocating and partnering with stakeholders to adapt and apply promising methods and approaches that disrupt exclusion, poverty, and injustice; **Participating in or convening public forums and events**; Cultivating **strategic partnerships** (such as with

the Graça Machel Trust or FANRPAN in Southern Africa) to connect to policy forums and decision makers; **Supporting, participating in, or co-convening campaigns** at different levels, digital and non-digital (for example, [Ratify C190!](#) in Asia or multiple campaigns in LAC); **Surfacing voices and testimonies of impact populations** on international platforms (for example, women from solidarity groups in West Africa participating in UN CSW forums); Making **small but flexible advocacy grants** to country teams to support innovative national level advocacy actions aligned with regional advocacy strategies (for example, in Asia for C-190 related advocacy actions⁹). Almost all of



these tactics depended on engagement with stakeholders at different levels across the ecosystem and strong collaboration within CARE between the global advocacy team, IGS teams, country offices, and global outcome/ approach teams in some cases.

Scaling and adapting proven models | The review surfaced several **examples of the integration of promising models and approaches** through government or private sector policies and programs. Both WoM and HHOF had early success in influencing the integration of savings groups into national financial inclusion strategies or economic empowerment policies and programs (in Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Tanzania, Zambia). WoM was also successful in influencing the African Development Bank to include the VSLA model as part of the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative. In the private sector realm, in addition to expanding the partnership between Mars and CARE beyond Côte d'Ivoire to several other countries, WoM influenced their commitment to integrate VSLAs into their supply chain, which is already influencing other actors in the cocoa sector. In Asia, models to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in factories that grew from CARE's STOP project in the Mekong region are contributing to industry-wide change in addressing violence and harassment through the adoption of Standard Operating Procedures for garment businesses. There are also examples of partnerships with governments to integrate the use of various CARE tools, such as CARE's gender analysis tools in Zimbabwe or DRR tools in Madagascar.

The IGS platforms also offered the opportunity for learning from and **adapting promising models within CARE**, for example, CARE Bangladesh's EKATA women's collective action model that is being adapted in Vietnam and Indonesia, or the Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE) approach that is being adapted by women's solidarity groups in West Africa as part of the regional emergency response. Further, by engaging across an ecosystem of diverse players, the IGS are able to **facilitate the adaptation of innovations and models developed by other**

⁹ Similar to these grants, in FY21 MbW also ran a series of COVID-19 grants alongside the advocacy grants.

organizations for greater impact. For example, EVER supported the adaptation of the *Laudelina* app initially developed by THEMIS (CARE’s partner in Brazil) to scale in Mexico and Colombia to defend the rights of domestic workers. EVER, through its regional partner the Regional Confederation of Domestic Workers for Latin America and the Caribbean, also facilitated an exchange between Costa Rica and Mexico to draw lessons from Costa Rica for the design of a similar social security program in Mexico. All these examples of adapting and scaling promising models and approaches relied on innovative partnerships and alliances with a wide range of organizations and networks spread across levels.

Survey responses and interviews highlighted several **advantages regional platforms offer for scaling and adapting promising models and approaches**. They offer the possibility to adapt models across different contexts that may have some common influences and stakeholders, or that may be united by regional policy commitments. Also, regional platforms hold a dynamic set of relationships and networks across levels into which they are able to tap easily, in order to generate interest in adapting promising models or approaches. Internally within CARE too, regional platforms are well placed to connect global, regional and country level colleagues and partners around this kind of innovation and adaptation.

There is ongoing discussion among some colleagues about the focus of this pathway, and concern that it is sometimes interpreted too narrowly – as simply identifying technical solutions and advocating for their uptake. While this is a part of the work, addressing agency, relations, and structural constraints for gender justice demand **context specific adaptation of approaches and models**. The reach and web of relationships of regional platforms positions them well to **sense opportunities and readiness to adapt an approach or model**, and to collaborate with partners across a region to pursue these opportunities. The emerging [Empower@Work collaborative](#) is an example of such a collaborative effort that has emerged through MbW’s engagement with global garment supply chain actors around gender equality issues in the supply chain.

This review also surfaced an appetite across the IGS to focus greater attention on **scaling promising approaches and models related to the scaling pathways** themselves, for example, collaborative approaches to shift social norms, or approaches for accompanying and supporting social movements. The IGS platforms offer the possibility for systematization and rigor on adapting, combining, and learning from the application of promising scaling pathways.

Supporting social movements | CARE’s work in LAC with the domestic workers’ movement, and in West Africa with women’s solidarity groups contributed significantly to the development of the [CARE International’s Position Paper on Supporting Women’s Social Movements and Collective Actions](#). EVER and WoM built on this work and continue to inspire and push boundaries for CARE on working with social movements and through this work, supporting women’s voice and leadership in public life and decision making. In Asia, MbW’s partnership with the International Trade Union Confederation (Asia Pacific) has been instrumental in helping us learn how to work with trade unions and to increase women garment workers’ voice and participation in them. For HHOF in Southern Africa, supporting social movements has not been a prominent pathway to date, but there is growing interest to work more closely with rural women’s assemblies and coalitions of farmer groups, linking their experience to CAADP commitments.

“LAC IGS has been significant in working with social movements in a way that we have not matched anywhere else in CARE. The work was specific in its target, humble in its approach, and impactful in the gains achieved and the ongoing potential from its work.” [CI/ CMP respondent]

EVER and WoM built on this work and continue to inspire and push boundaries for CARE on working with social movements and through this work, supporting women’s voice and leadership in public life and decision making. In Asia, MbW’s partnership with the International Trade Union Confederation (Asia Pacific) has been instrumental in helping us learn how to work with trade unions and to increase women garment workers’ voice and participation in them. For HHOF in Southern Africa, supporting social movements has not been a prominent pathway to date, but there is growing interest to work more closely with rural women’s assemblies and coalitions of farmer groups, linking their experience to CAADP commitments.

The review surfaced the following IGS strategies as valuable for this scaling pathway:

- Creating opportunities to strengthen women’s leadership and organizing ability in their organizations, including through the use of digital tools which have become essential during the pandemic;
- Brokering links, connections, friendships between groups, movements, and movement leaders
- Creating or supporting women-only spaces to strategize and dream together
- Establishing and supporting multi-institutional spaces that shift power in favor of impact populations
- Accompanying, listening, standing in solidarity, bearing witness, being there – their agenda not ours
- Supporting the advocacy actions of women’s organizations

Reflecting on the four roles for CARE (Convenor, Ally, Resource partner, Amplifier) suggested in the CI Gender Network's Position Paper and Guidance Note on supporting women's social movements and collective action, these strategies primarily seem to arise from **CARE's role as an 'Ally' accompanying movements, and sometimes in a 'Convenor' role or 'Resource Partner'**. However, what we see from the work of the IGS is that CARE navigates multiple roles – our role is fluid and changing, and usually plays out in collaboration with other players through multilateral relationships, depending on how the context evolves. We will explore this more in Section 3 on collaboration.

Two insights emerged in the course of these discussions: The first was about the many ways in which **CARE is learning and being enriched by working with movement actors**, as listed here: Becoming more comfortable with uncertainty and complexity, which movement actors navigate more naturally; Gaining a better understanding of intersectionality in practice – being more aware of the multiple identities of our impact populations and the power and challenges they bring; More purposefully centering power in our work; Building and holding trust as the basis of informal relationships; Understanding that accompaniment and solidarity is just as important as support, and possibly more empowering; and Learning to listen and be led by the agenda of women (which inspired the title of this report).

A second insight relates to the tensions that arise within movements or in interactions with movements. **Friction and tension are important to the growth and maturation of movements and networks.** Being able to process contradictions and tensions can help clarify purpose and deepen support for a movement and its cause among wider stakeholders. In case of networks, tensions can be useful in growing the network or used to filter out unwanted elements. But realizing these benefits demands the skills to create spaces to work with tension in a generative way. This is an emerging area of learning which could benefit from greater attention and support. Any work with friction and tensions will need to take into account CARE's role in supporting social movements. In the case of EVER, CARE has already shown that it is willing to understand conflict within the domestic worker movement and help facilitate processes of conflict resolution¹⁰. Tensions may also arise from competing discourses on social change that are emerging through the increasing engagement of large corporates and philanthropists in the issues raised by movements. These actors may bring a more technocratic approach to social transformation. In its role as Ally or Convenor, linking social movements to some of these actors, CARE will need to be thoughtful about how to navigate this tension. Silence or the avoidance of these kinds of emerging tensions may signal CARE's positioning with more technocratic actors¹¹.

"Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment." Bell Hooks

Leveraging the power of networks for scaling impact

In the course of our discussions, a seventh possible scaling pathway emerged – focused on networks and the power of networks to scale, including the potential for network effects¹². The IGS have a significant body of work around connecting women's organizations and groups to each other, to larger movements, and other players. For example, in WoM, linking and federating solidarity groups and linking them to national movements; In EVER, partnering with and supporting the regional network – the LAC Confederation of Domestic Workers (CONLACTRAHO) and linking unions to other actors on inter-institutional tables; In MbW, connecting trade unions and home-based and factory worker women's collectives to wider civil society platforms in their countries and to each other.

¹⁰ See summary of practices that CARE has developed and strived for in its relationship with the LAC domestic workers' movement in the [July 2017 report on CARE and the Latin America Domestic Workers' Movement](#) (Page 19).

¹¹ See for example this 2014 piece by Amy Schiller on ['The case for hard: why social transformation demands lots of social friction.'](#)

¹² Network effects refer to the scaling potential of networks. It is a phenomenon whereby increased numbers of people or participants improve the value of a service or the network itself. For example, as increasing number of networked entities in the global garment supply chain start to use and feed into the Standard Operating Procedures for garment businesses to deal with violence and harassment, it becomes more valuable to all users and the supply chain as a whole.

The focus on cultivating or supporting networks is not surprising since networks may play significant roles in several of the scaling pathways. They are especially important to the work of social movements, many of which rely on networks. But networks may be important in their own right as a scaling pathway that links to other pathways. They may have a strong influence on interactions in civil society or on institutional culture, enabling impact populations' experience, creativity, knowledge to flourish. They are therefore, also important to collaboration on the IGS regional platforms themselves.

But networks may also be harmful. They may be taken over by powerful actors for purposes that do not align well with the interests of impact populations, or they may be used to silence certain voices. In work to shift power, the quality of connections on a network are just as important as the number of connections and the types of entities that are connected. In addition, the pace of network growth matters. If the network grows too fast, the quality of interactions or value generated may suffer and people may lose interest, or the voices of those with least visible power may be drowned out. Also, there may be times when networks are used to scale certain impacts which may be in tension with deep social change. An example of such a tension that is playing out in many parts of the world occurs when politically connected corporate actors use networks that are important for land and labor rights movements to scale contract farming opportunities. While creating economic opportunity, they may silence the demand for land rights or unwittingly diminish the hard-won negotiating power of women smallholder farmers participating in these networks. But this is not to say that more powerful actors with diverse agendas should not connect to these networks, but rather that it be more mindfully negotiated, with attention to how power is shifting.

There is growing energy around network weaving or working with existing networks among the IGS teams, and colleagues are very articulate about the value of networks and the actors who may usefully be connected. They are less articulate about the quality of connections and may not yet have the tools to understand network characteristics, potential risks, or how power may shift across networks. Also, there is still work to be done to more clearly articulate possible roles for CARE in working with networks, to avoid being the powerful actor that dampens the leadership or voices of others. Currently, many colleagues see the work with networks as subsumed within the scaling pathway on strengthening social movements. But the specific activities, skills required, and nature of monitoring and learning for weaving networks, while relevant to work with social movements, may be quite distinct and are also relevant to other pathways. This review makes the case for greater attention to understanding and working with networks. It would be helpful to **explore leveraging networks as a separate scaling pathway or as a specific learning agenda within multiple pathways.**

Enabling factors and challenges to engage scaling pathways

Beyond the specific successes and learning from each of these promising pathways, the IGS serve as **learning grounds for how different scaling pathways may intersect and combine in coherent scaling strategies** to scale gender justice. The connections and influences the pathways have on each other are meaningful, as highlighted by colleagues in the following examples: In the way that advocacy tactics are used to influence interest of policy makers in adapting and scaling promising approaches; In how work with social movements in inter-institutional spaces is used to shift social and institutional norms in their favour; In how strengthening social movements and voice and leadership of women can help create scalable market based approaches that are aligned with their interests and principles, as is being done by engaging domestic worker unions in LAC in developing social businesses. Most importantly, the IGS demonstrate how innovative partnerships help combine different scaling pathways to create coherent scaling strategies.

Other enablers to engaging scaling pathways that the IGS bring include: The possibility for **long term engagement and investment**, allowing us to sustain advocacy and other scaling efforts beyond and across project timeframes; The availability of **flexible resources** at the appropriate level; The ability to **combine diverse strategies and scaling pathways** suitable to the context; Flexible **systems to support innovative partnerships** not limited to short-term projects; Awareness and **ability to shift power** in relationships; and Connections to a compelling body of work across

"If we want to achieve scale, we have to be able to act in the moments where there is opportunity and political will to change a system or introduce something new for scale. That also means we need to be flexible to seize opportunities (which will almost always require resources and expertise at local and regional levels), learn about what is working and what opportunities exist in order to be effective. [CI/ CMP respondent]"

countries and CARE’s strong credibility in the regions on which to build. In addition to all these factors, several colleagues pointed to an underlying factor for effective scaling – a **collaborative mindset**. The IGS were at their best when we worked with a collective mindset drawing on our collective resources, relationships, genius to influence change. They were least effective when seen as parallel initiatives in competition with country programs and global teams for limited resources.

Two challenges to effectively engaging scaling pathways emerged from the IGS experience: the **pressure to deliver impact numbers quickly** to demonstrate return on investment of scarce unrestricted resources, especially given that several scaling pathways require us to play the long game; and the fact that some colleagues viewed the **IGS as separate stand-alone multi-country programs** disconnected from their “realm of influence” when in fact the scaling strategies relied on their engagement, learning, and support.

Colleagues who have engaged in the IGS regional platforms have gained a wealth of experience and new insights around social change and scaling impact in disruptive times. They are well positioned to offer **thought leadership around scaling pathways and CARE’s role, and they have interest to do so**. Ideally processes to fuel their thought leadership should go beyond just drawing from the IGS experience, to creating the possibility for IGS and partner colleagues to engage in and lead learning and reflection processes across regions. These processes may take the form of periodic *deep-dive co-labs*¹³ on various scaling topics which they may co-design and facilitate, or sign up to.

Recommendation 2 | Thought leadership around pathways for impact at scale

Beyond drawing from their work, engage IGS colleagues and partners in designing, leading and co-facilitating learning and thought leadership around pathways toward impact at scale

3. How are Impact Growth Strategies changing the way we collaborate with others? What are we learning?

Understanding IGS as ecosystem platforms

The Impact Growth Strategies are not one kind of thing, and they are not all the same. There are significant differences in their focus, their programming base, types of relationships, and levels at which they are resourced. They have each had different trajectories over the past four years, and are differently understood and described across the organization. Many colleagues described them as “platforms,” and as the review progressed, it became increasingly clear that they resemble ecosystem platforms. While most existing literature on platforms may not hold the complexity of CARE’s IGS, it is helpful to describe them as ecosystem platforms as it allows us to create a language to understand their potential, relationships, and future possibilities.

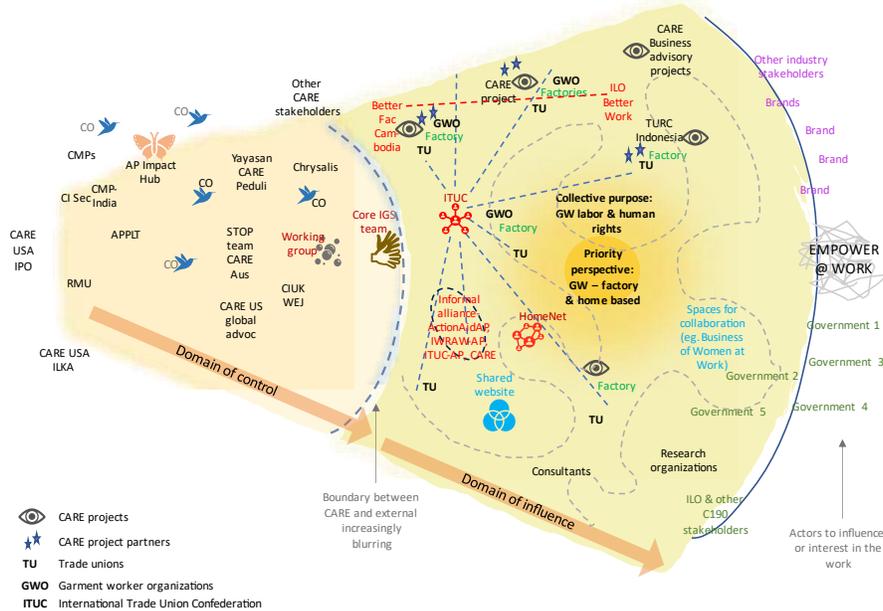
In an effort to significantly ‘*multiply impact*’ and achieve the ambitious impact targets they set, colleagues working with the IGS attempted to engage a wide range of actors across their ecosystems (within and external to CARE). They designed their theories of change and strategies in collaboration with these diverse actors. This process was a departure from the past.

Figure 4 below is an attempt to depict the Made by Women IGS as an ecosystem platform as seen from a CARE perspective. The IGS platform (depicted as the conical yellow shaded area) is not a structure, but **a way of engaging** with players in the external ecosystem (depicted towards the right) as well as within CARE (on the left side of the

¹³ The term co-lab here is coined to refer to a space created for collaborative learning and experimentation or problem solving that may allow participants to do deep dive learning into particular issues that emerge from their work with scaling impact. We are particularly referring to a space that is co-designed with colleagues who are engaged in these scaling experiments (not centrally designed) and the learning agenda is clearly and collaboratively framed. Co-labs may be of varying periods of time (a few weeks to months, but not indefinite), allowing for the co-lab team to connect with each other multiple times and disperse in the course of their work allowing them to process together as well as separately research or get additional inputs from others around the issue.

figure). The platform attracts organizations, individuals, networks, movements at multiple levels that have a stake in the work; It facilitates interaction, learning, and joint action, **sharing resources and creating shared value** in support of a collective purpose. The dotted curve across the middle depicts a **boundary between the internal and external realms of the platform that is increasingly blurring** by working through an ecosystem approach. So, on the left we have CARE players at multiple levels engaged in the platform; On the right we have external players; On the far right we have players that those on the platform may seek to influence or attract to this work. On the CARE side (left), we have a core IGS team (depicted by the pair of hands) and a small IGS working group. They are drawn near the boundary with external players, as they are instrumental in engaging both internal and external players.

Figure 4: Made by Women as an ecosystem platform... seen from CARE's perspective



Clarity of focus for work on the IGS platforms seems to come from two elements represented by the darker shaded circle in the center. This area is enlarged in the drawing on the right to depict the two elements that clarify focus: a) **collective purpose** that attracts diverse organizations to collaborate, and b) the **prioritization of particular perspectives and points of view**. The perspectives prioritized in Made by Women are those of formal and informal women workers in the garment supply chain. In WoM, the perspectives of women in solidarity groups are prioritized, and in EVER, it is women domestic workers. In HHOF (which is currently the least like an ecosystem platform) the collective purpose is clear, but whose perspective is prioritized is not yet so clear¹⁴. The collective purpose around which the platform organizes may shift over time, broadening or becoming more focused based on context and specific windows of opportunity. The prioritized perspective is more stable and serves as an anchor, driving priorities, decisions, and positions on the platform. When tensions or contradictions arise, this perspective helps navigate a path forward.

Achieving Clarity of Focus on Platforms



The platform is dynamic with players coming in and moving out as the work and their interests and relationships evolve and align. However, there seem to be a **small set of partners who work together consistently and closely to help shape the platform**. In the case of MbW they may be the Asia Pacific office of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) that have trade union affiliates across the region. HomeNet and ILO Better Work and the

¹⁴ These may be women smallholder farmers. But if that were the case, we would expect stronger engagement in farmer solidarity groups and networks.

informal alliance between ITUC-AP, IWRAP-AP, Action Aid-AP and CARE, and may also be platform shapers. In EVER, the LAC Confederation of Domestic Workers (CONLECTRAHO) may be among the platform shapers¹⁵. Within CARE, the Working Group or Steering Committee may be considered internal platform shapers.

This description of the IGS helps us have a more coherent conversation about these regional platforms, how we work on them, and how they have changed the way we work. It is important to remember that the **platforms may not have a clear identity outside of the organization**, depending on the complexity of the operating environment, the number of players, and CARE's role. They are nevertheless useful in helping us understand how we engage actors across an ecosystem. The accompanying slide deck includes a bit more detail on platform working and the platform shaping function, as well as diagrams of the other regions.

Changes in partnerships

By engaging with an ecosystem as described above, CARE engages with many more players at different levels through different parts of our organization. We may not explicitly partner with all of them, but we do build partnerships with specific organizations, networks, movements, alliances in this ecosystem. 86% of IGS core team/ country office/ RMU survey respondents, and 70% of CI/ CMP respondents believe that the IGS are shifting or expanding the way we collaborate to a very high or significant degree. Clearly, IGS partnerships have been an area of great change, creativity and learning. We examined the nature of change in four areas, described below¹⁶:

The **purposes for which we partner** are increasingly guided by the views of our impact populations (whose perspectives are prioritized on the platform) and more focused on shifting formal and informal structures and relations. Greater attention to listening to women is shifting the purposes for which we partner. Some of the newer purposes that colleagues described include:

- To accompany, stand in solidarity with, and draw support to impact populations and their formal and informal organizations, movements, and networks in their pursuit of justice and fulfilment of their rights
- To support the transformative leadership and greater representation of impact populations in civil society and other public domains
- To grow movement networks and build connections between various stakeholders in support of impact population collective agendas
- To reach out to key stakeholders in the ecosystem, whom we may not have been able to attract or interest on our own (for example, the collaboration with ITUC helps us engage trade union affiliates in many more countries; Collaborating with the Graça Machel Trust and FANRPAN helps access regional level policy stakeholders)
- To influence impact in countries where CARE does not have a physical presence (for example, the partnership with CACEH in Mexico or THEMIS in Brazil)
- For collective learning, innovation, collaborative research to build credible evidence for advocacy
- To shift power and attitudes in civil society in support of impact populations and their organizations (eg. collaboration around the inter-institutional tables in LAC)

"It is a very complex ecosystem. That is part of what made it such a compelling idea to have a partnership with CARE. We both have different strengths and entry points, and different relationships in the garment industry and beyond. We are realizing the synergy from bringing together our efforts." [MbW partner]

"We looked for organizations that complemented our capacities. In the case of southern Africa, the value of a regional political figure like Graça Machel complemented CARE's grassroots presence and produced credible evidence that got the attention of political decision makers." [IGS team member]

¹⁵ Note that these are not formal functions articulated within the IGS. It is an observation emerging from this review.

¹⁶ While there is a lot changing in the way we partner, there are also relationships on the IGS that are fairly traditional and familiar. However, for the purpose of this discussion, we are trying to shed light on what is shifting.

- To collaboratively adapt and scale promising approaches and models across different contexts.

We are partnering with more diverse **types of organizations and groups** at different levels across the ecosystem, including several regional and global actors. As a result, CARE has been engaging with a wider range of organizations, covering all eight organization types listed in the [Partnership in CARE \(2021\) paper](#). Some types of organizations that the regional platforms are helping us engage with more closely are: Social movements, worker unions and associations, women’s solidarity collectives and their networks; Regional, continental, and global networks and alliances such as the pan-African Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), The West Africa Civil society Initiative (WACSI), the International Domestic Workers Federation in LAC (IDWF); Global brands that have supply chains that run through Asia; Feminist-oriented organizations. Several of these organizations may have been reticent to engage with organizations like CARE in the past or been hard for CARE to reach and vice versa.

Some colleagues and partners reflected on the value generated from the ability to cultivate regional partnerships. A strong partnership at the regional level can open the door for a more trusting relationship at national level. The distance between global and national levels may be too wide to realize this benefit. An example here is the close partnership with ITUC’s Asia Pacific office which has provided a framework for stronger relationships with their trade union affiliates in various countries, who may not usually be inclined to work with INGOs. An example here is the collaboration with the Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar around advocacy activities.

“In LAC, CARE’s role is very different from our traditional role - we are not implementing projects or trying to drive an agenda, instead we are accompanying the domestic workers’ movement in their struggle for the rights of domestic workers. [IGS team member]”

CARE’s role in partnership is becoming more relational. It is less about what we want to do, and more about the value we contribute and the kinds of relationships that enable us to fulfil collective purpose. The following are some emerging roles that surfaced in the course of our conversations:

Mutual learning and supporting roles | Accompanying and standing in solidarity with (as an ally); Supporting effective leadership to flourish; Network weaving roles; Strengthening organizing capabilities; Knowledge management; Facilitating collaborative research, learning and analysis; Co-crafting shared positions in alliance with others; Mobilizing and leveraging resources for movement actors

Connecting and platform shaping roles | Opening or convening spaces for diverse stakeholders and perspectives to interact; Facilitating dialog; Facilitating shifts in power and greater accountability to impact populations; Outreach to stakeholders on the margins of the ecosystem; Connecting impact population groups to other organizations, networks, movements; Amplifying voices and visibility of impact populations; Strengthening the quality of connections and relationships; Mobilizing and leveraging resources

Thought leadership and advisory roles | Curating knowledge around issues of importance to the collective purpose (on the platform); Advising stakeholders on gender related issues; Bringing new or overlooked issues to the table; Surfacing models and approaches that multiply and deepen impact.

What is interesting about the way CARE’s role is evolving is that while stepping back from the mechanics of group formation and their activities and training to a more macro level of support suitable to a global organization, we are listening more to them and are more thoughtful about our relationships to them and how we add value.

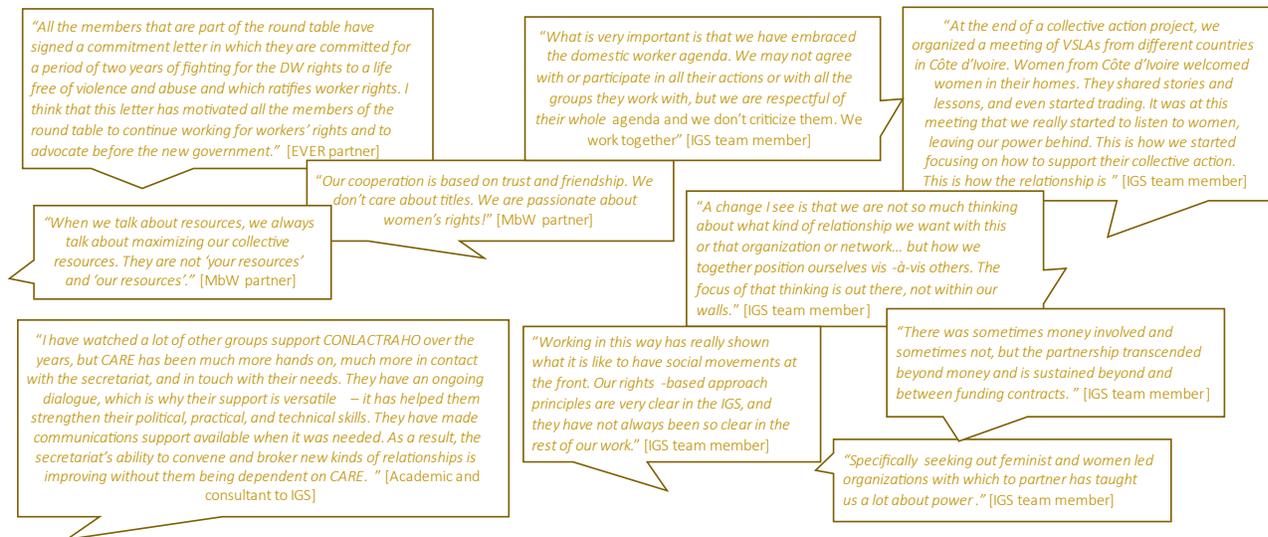
In response to shifts in purposes for which we partner, relationships with more diverse types of organizations, and CARE’s changing roles, **modalities for collaboration** (formal and informal) on the IGS are spontaneously expanding.

Indefinite period Memoranda of Understanding are sometimes being used to formalize flexible partnerships where funding is not involved. The flexibility here comes, not just from the nature of the agreement, but the process of entering into it. In speaking about the process, a colleague from ITUC Asia says, “CARE does a lot of work with companies and working with brands is not in our comfort zone. We had a really good process of developing the MOU, reaching the point where we could include our parameters in the document. We were very clear that we would not work with brands that would violate worker or human rights.”¹⁷ The interviews also revealed an appetite to explore different kinds of modalities such as Charters, Pledges, Signed Statements of Collective Purpose, Flexible Multilateral Agreements with shared principles.

We use the term *modalities* to include the agreements (formal or informal) that guide partnerships; the formal and informal spaces and forms of interaction with partners. Modalities may also include digital communication platforms or data sharing mechanisms. They may also include the strategy for building partnerships.

The definition does not matter, but it is important to note that we are not talking about one-off ad-hoc events or mechanisms, but evolving means of engaging partners or brokering the relationship.

A modality in working with social movements or impact population organizations that has emerged, is collaborating with organizations that have closer access to (and already established trust with) these groups. One reason to do so is to be able to reach them. But importantly, the IGS are not working with them as a “pass through” or sub-contractor as sometimes has been the case in project implementation, but working alongside, accompanying them, and supporting as needed. CONLACTRAHO in LAC and ITUC in Asia are good examples of this. Besides serving somewhat as brokers for these relationships, having this mix of actors helps balance power in the relationship. It allows groups with less visible power (such as trade union affiliates and domestic worker unions and groups) to more easily raise their concerns, which they may have otherwise found hard to do in a bilateral relationship with a resource-providing large NGO.



Beyond formal and informal agreements, modalities for interaction have also expanded, including a range of informal ‘touching base’ mechanisms. The frequency of interaction has increased in many cases and colleagues talk about convening ‘spaces where we don’t prescribe the agenda’ as an important partnership modality. In LAC, enabling domestic workers to come together in weekly workshops allowed them to regularly meet each other

¹⁷ To be clear, CARE also has their own due diligence processes in place for working with corporate partners.

during the pandemic and strategize around the disruption caused by Covid-19 to their movement agenda and future work, while also serving as a way to keep the partnership going.

Looking across the changes we have observed in purpose, types of organizations, CARE’s role in partnership, and modalities, we see a trend of increasingly joint ownership, responsibility, and shared resources alongside increasing scope (numbers of players, sectors, levels) and scale. This reflects a **trend in partnerships toward increasing mutuality** for greater impact at scale and **increasingly complex relationships**. We took this analysis a bit further to explore two types of relationships that we are seeing emerge in IGS platforms, depicted in Figure 5 (categories 3 and 4) as **Mutual learning and accompaniment relationships**, and **Platform shaping or transformative engagement relationships**. These relationships may help inform the work of the CI Partnership paper working groups and community of practice.

Emerging principles and competencies

Through interviews for this review, colleagues and partners reflected on the principles and competencies that are becoming more important in cultivating these partnerships (presented here as their emerging wisdom):

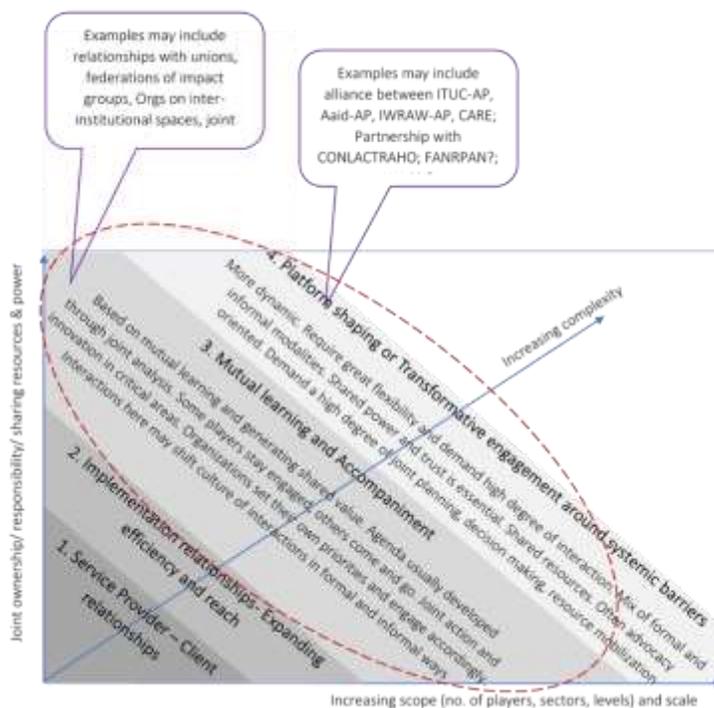
- Listen deeply, especially to those different to yourself
- Build trust and friendships and everything will follow – don’t only stay in your role
- Be flexible and willing to go beyond what is in writing to really look for solutions together
- Become more at ease with uncertainty – don’t pressure people to give you all the answers upfront
- Seek to maximize collective resources – even if this means you can’t take credit
- Learn to hold space to have respectful conversations around differences – these differences are valuable
- Pay attention to power and keep your attention on deep equity at the heart of the relationship – those who have fought together for justice and to protect their rights know well how to do this. Learn from them
- Acknowledge and celebrate different kinds of resources and contributions from all partners, including time, different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing, stories
- Build the confidence and mechanisms for backup support from your organization to be able to take some risks

Partnership challenges

A recurring challenge named by several partners that receive CARE funding was the annual nature of funding agreements and the annual **delays and interruptions** they have experienced in the work -- sometimes delays of several months for very small amounts of funding. While they appreciate that there is a lot of uncertainty in operating environments, they also express how challenging it is to start and stop this kind of work that requires a certain momentum, pace, and long-term commitment.

The most significant challenge identified by CARE colleagues was **partnership systems and protocols that have not kept pace with growing innovation** in partnerships. The different modalities emerging on IGS regional platforms may help inform ongoing work in CARE on partnership systems. Another challenge identified by some was lack of clarity about the **level at which approvals for partnerships are made** when they are formalized. As the IGS spans levels,

Figure 5: Emerging types of relationships on IGS platforms



some questions have arisen about where approval is granted, especially with organizations that also span multiple levels. Several survey respondents referred to **uneven-ness and dissonance in partnering capabilities**, suggesting that more needs to be done to upgrade (and recruit in) partnership competencies more broadly across the organization.

As our collaborative work on platforms is likely to enter more political space, especially in environments where the space for civil society is shrinking, there needs to be a way to understand and support decisions around risk taking. While colleagues feel well supported through their line of management, several of them suggest that given the complexity of relationships and contexts, it may be useful to have a space to reflect on partnerships across regional platforms, to share experiences, and to have the opportunity to problem-solve together, such as through Action Learning Sets¹⁸. This kind of reflection and learning may also be helpful to the wider CARE in the evolution of partnership systems. The newly formed Community of Practice with sub-groups on Knowledge Management and Learning and Telling Practical Stories of Diverse Partnerships may be best placed to help create such learning spaces.

Recommendation 3 | Partnering for deep equity

Embrace the experience of the IGS to inform work on putting into practice the priorities identified in the CI Partnership Paper, especially for more complex relationships that demand joint ownership and responsibility, and involve increasing scope (number of players, sectors, levels) and scale.

4. What have we learned about resourcing regional Impact Growth Strategies?

The **premise of raising funds for regional platforms¹⁹, that may be pooled and used as flexible resources has been proven**, but not fully achieved. Over the past 4 years, HHOF in southern Africa had the most success with this mechanism, and did not require CARE USA unrestricted or endowment funds after its first two years. These funds have also been valuable in providing matches to other restricted donor funds in West Africa and LAC. In total, as of December 2018, approximately \$3.3 million²⁰ was raised as pooled funds for the IGS. Some colleagues note that the processes around raising pooled funds and their year-to-year allocation and management lacked transparency, and from an IGS team point of view, therefore, somewhat diminished their flexibility. Nevertheless, it is clear that this is a promising channel that allows unrestricted investments to be replaced with somewhat flexible restricted resources, which is very valuable.

In addition to pooled funds, since their inception, the four **IGS have made significant contributions to raising additional restricted resources (in the range of \$100 m) in their regions for work related to the platform**. The greatest success has been in Southern Africa²¹ and Asia Pacific. IGS contributions to resource mobilization efforts have come mainly from four factors: Learning generated through the IGS platforms that allows us to present the best that CARE has to offer; Opening opportunities for donors to engage with a wider field of learning and access to many more stakeholders; Relationships (externally with regional networks and platforms, and internally across countries) curated and/ or managed through the IGS platform; CARE's growing regional presence and visibility; and Contributions to program design and proposal preparation from the IGS team. We are not making the case here that none of these resources would have been raised were it not for the IGS, but we are making the case that the IGS added value and made tangible and significant contributions to CARE's ability to raise restricted resources at a time when resources are increasingly scarce. The following examples offer a sense of the nature of support the IGS present for raising restricted resources.

¹⁸ Action Learning Sets are a simple but powerful way for individuals to learn from each other by working together on real challenges, using the knowledge and skills of a small group of people combined with skilled questioning, to produce fresh ideas and reinterpret familiar concepts. INTRAC has a useful guide on Action Learning Sets [here](#).

¹⁹ This was intended as part of the *Fight with CARE* campaign focused on significantly increasing resources for CARE's poverty-fighting work.

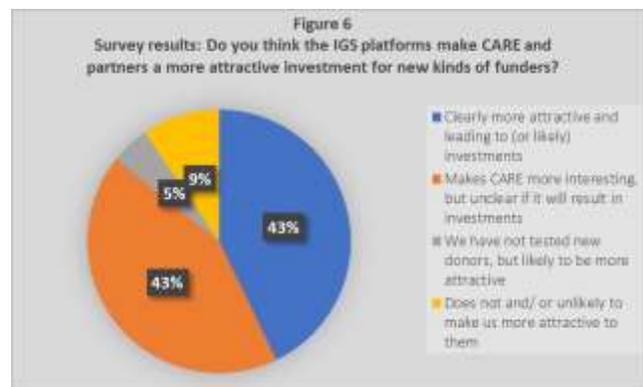
²⁰ This included \$644,066 for EVER, \$301,600 for WoM, \$2.3m for HHOF, \$38,136 for the MENA region, and \$299 for MbW.

²¹ The USAID grant for the *Takunda* project in Zimbabwe valued at \$55 million greatly skews this total. But IGS learning, partnerships and networks (especially FANRPAN) and support in bid preparation were critical to this success.

- Made by Women was instrumental in securing the \$4.5m Target grant, which includes components to scale the EKATA collective action model in Bangladesh, and adapt it for Vietnam and Indonesia. The IGS team provided support to the proposal preparation process, drawing heavily from IGS learning
- Made by Women was successful in re-allocating and raising additional funds over \$2.6 million to support CARE's Covid-19 response with garment workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam
- HHOF helped expand IGS partnerships (such as with FANRPAN or IUCN) to multiple countries, improving the competitiveness of CARE bids (\$55 m USAID funding for Takunda in Zimbabwe or \$16m BMZ/ GIZ funding for Community based adaptation in Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe). In the case of BMZ/ GIZ, CARE's increased presence and visibility on regional platforms contributed to the win
- Women on the Move influenced the expansion of CARE's partnership with Mars Wrigley in West Africa, which has now evolved to become a global initiative, including partnership with CARE in India, Thailand, and countries in LAC. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Mars donated \$5 million to support emergency responses in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and other cocoa producing countries, with much of the work led by solidarity groups
- In collaboration with CARE France, EVER was able to secure over \$1m from Agence Française de Développement and the Chanel Foundation for the first two phases of the Mujeres, Dignidad y Trabajo project across Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and the US. The grant is managed at the regional level. Proposals for another phase worth approximately 2 million euro are currently in preparation.

There are a few colleagues who raise the question of whether UNR resources may have been more cost effectively applied to improving the quality of CARE's bids for resources in order to raise additional resources. And here are some who think that the IGS did not contribute to additional resource mobilization success. We did not dig into this discussion too deeply in the review as we are not looking at resource mobilization in isolation, but as a set of broader benefits or value that these platforms may contribute. In addition, **there is clear evidence of specific and significant value added to resource mobilization** through the learning, presence, relationships, and expertise on these platforms, as described above.

In addition to pooled funds and restricted funding from familiar sources, colleagues surveyed and interviewed suggest that **different kinds of funding opportunities seem to be emerging**, that may be cultivated. These include: funders aiming to support feminist organizations and agendas; Progressive philanthropists and foundations increasingly interested in supporting work with local grassroots social movements; Climate change focused resourcing mechanisms; Funders interested in scaling methods; Other corporate co-funding and social investment mechanisms beyond corporate social responsibility donations; Market based approaches actors interested in supporting social enterprises. There is work emerging around the organization exploring these new kinds of funders and funding opportunities, but several respondents indicated that this needs to progress at a faster pace and in ways that generate accessible learning, evidence, and innovation. For example, interesting angel investors or impact investors may require us to invest in developing a way to calculate the return on investments. Success with some of these donors may require veering away from traditional financial flows and cost recovery mechanisms and clearer articulation and evidence of the power of regional platforms. Some colleagues also suggest the need for deeper work around navigating political dilemmas in resource mobilization as CARE ventures into more political space. We will need the ability to unpack, dialog, learn from them, and take clear positions. These emerging opportunities and dilemmas will require clear **resource mobilization and cost recovery strategies, capability for real time learning dialog, and analytical support**.

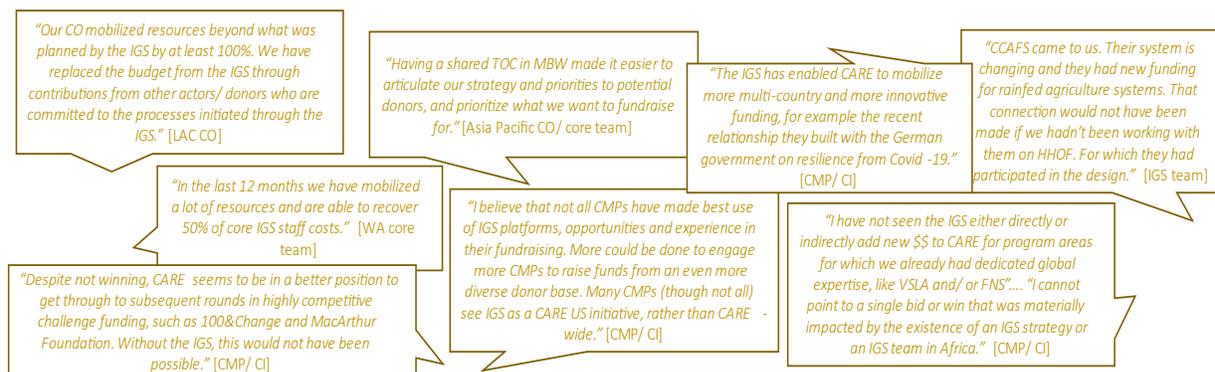


As new resources are raised, IGS teams have attempted to **recover core costs** to replace unrestricted or endowment funding. While there are instances of success, the quality of information and analysis available on costs suggest that

there needs to be much stronger support and work with IGS and/ or regional teams on cost recovery strategies, their implementation, and monitoring.

It is clear that IGS platforms will be most effective when they have access to **flexible funding**. But fully unrestricted resources are not the only way to resource them, as evidenced by the example of pooled funds, which were negotiated to be very flexible in the way they were granted and managed, but yet, were restricted funds. There is a need for more focused attention and guidance on exploring ways in which restricted funding can be made more flexible. Some ideas that emerged in our conversations included: negotiating extended inception or project ending periods, including funding for small innovation grants that allow for greater risk taking.

Colleagues also point to the incredible **resource contributions and resource sharing by partners** for the work of regional platforms that needs to be better recognized and acknowledged. The formal and informal sharing and pooling of resources by various partners in the ecosystem is a key factor in the success of the regional platforms.



The recommendation from this review on resource mobilization and cost recovery draws attention to work that needs to happen within and from the IGS team, but that is only possible with wider organizational buy-in, commitment and dedicated support. IGS teams are in the process of developing resource mobilization and cost recovery strategies. However, their development, use, and responsibility for fulfillment should not be abandoned to the IGS Coordinator or core team alone. These are also platform shaping functions and need to engage Platform Shapers more substantially. In addition, this recommendation makes two specific suggestions to bolster the work and pursue emerging ideas around resource mobilization and cost recovery. The first is to organize some kind of cross organizational task force (possibly with rotating members across levels) to function over the next 12-24 months to support the development and use of the resource mobilization and cost recovery strategies across IGS regional platforms, including reviewing the strategies, problem solving, helping to test new ideas and assumptions, and putting in place processes to use and learn from them. Participation in this task force could also serve as a development opportunity for colleagues. The second suggestion relates to the revival of the pooled funding mechanism, building on the experience over the past five years.

Recommendation 4 | Resource mobilization and cost recovery

- a) Each regional platform should develop (or complete development of) a resource mobilization and cost recovery strategy²². Build internal commitment and support (such as through a task force drawn from talent across the organization) to work alongside IGS teams and platform shapers²³ to draw support to these strategies, problem solve, and learn from IGS resource mobilization and cost recovery efforts
- b) Building on lessons from the past five years, rebuild a pooled funding mechanism with wider organizational buy-in to raise flexible funding for regional platforms to multiply impact.

²² This strategy is not so much a detailed plan, but clear direction on the different kinds of resources being pursued, collaboration and support they demand, potential risks, ballpark targets, and how the work will be managed and led. Similarly, the cost recovery strategy should clearly list assumptions that need to be tested and who needs to be involved in doing so.

²³ The idea of 'Platform Shapers' was introduced at the end of Page 11 and is described in greater detail on Page 21.

5. How are Impact Growth Strategies influencing program quality?

Beyond collaboration and work on scaling pathways, the review surfaced a number of other areas through which the IGS may be influencing the quality of CARE’s programming. We outline three of these here:

More systemic analysis and design

Survey and interview respondents drew attention to improvements in the way programs are designed:

- Designing with other system actors, including women in our impact populations and IGS partners at different levels
- Better understanding of intersectionality by working closely with women’s movements
- More systematic inclusion of advocacy and other scaling pathways in design
- Better integration of CARE’s approaches (gender, governance, resilience) in program design. From PIIRS data we see that IGS related project designs are more likely to score ‘Transformative’ using the Gender and Governance markers and ‘Excellent’ on Resilience than all projects in each region²⁴.

“The food crisis in Zambia is not just about policy choices in Zambia but the way that climate, politics, market economics, social cultural issues are playing out across the region and the influence of regional trading blocks. We are now recognizing that more clearly in the way we work.” [CO/RMU respondent]

Learning across silos

The IGS created opportunities for learning across countries. Colleagues note that having clear thematic boundaries, and in many cases bringing the same people together (including partners) in iterative conversations, helped steadily progress and deepen learning. This kind of learning has been instrumental in furthering work along scaling pathways.

However, colleagues point out that having clarity on how learning may be applied is important to be able to channel the direction learning takes and products, if any, that are developed. The southern Africa IGS platform made a substantial investment in learning by setting up Learning Hubs as the core structure of the IGS. Learning generated through the work of these hubs was clearly useful for those who participated and it enabled sharing between countries and greater conceptual clarity. Several colleagues point to this learning being used in proposals that followed. But several colleagues who participated believe that these learning efforts could have had even greater impact if there was more strategic engagement of country offices and more clarity on how learning would be used and what kinds of learning products were fit for purpose. In the end the Learning Hubs were found to be too expensive and also had unfair expectations laid on them, being the main channel through which country programs interacted with the IGS core team.

Strategic humanitarian action

Our experience of the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to observe the influence the IGS may have on CARE’s humanitarian action. The following observations have surfaced in the course of the review:

- Poised for a more localized response | Greater attention to the quality of partnerships with movements and women’s organizations has enabled a stronger, more contextualized localized response as described in the box below.
- Strategically positioned for advocacy | The ability to engage IGS partners in rapid gender analysis and leverage advocacy relationships, enabled CARE to effectively highlight the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and injustices being experienced by our impact populations on multiple forums and levels. In Asia this kind of strategic engagement from the outset has positioned CARE and partners to advocate with garment brands for attention to inequality and a more just recovery. In LAC, backed by CARE, the International Domestic Workers’ Federation is demanding that governments worldwide acknowledge domestic work as a

²⁴ The review did not include deeper analysis of the Gender, Governance, and Resilience marker scores, however, it is worth noting that in LAC 75% of IGS related projects score as gender transformative in FY20 v/s 18% of all projects in the region. In Southern Africa, 21% of IGS related projects score Excellent on the Resilience marker v/s 10% of all projects in the region.

crucial part of the frontline response to the pandemic, and to prioritize domestic workers in vaccine strategies.

- Greater capability for country teams to support each other | Different CARE country teams have different levels of capacities and resources for emergency response. Relationships that have been brokered across countries through the IGS platforms have enabled more and quicker sharing of lessons and cross-country mobilization of resources in which those offices with a higher level of capacity or resources were able to take a lead. In Asia, this kind of collaboration enabled quick uptake of cash transfers, which was a new strategy for work with the garment sector.
- Extend responses in non-presence countries | The IGS platforms offered the possibility to launch COVID-19 responses drawing attention to gender justice in countries where CARE did not have a physical presence, such as Mexico and [Brazil](#).

Meeting the disruption of Covid-19 with women-led innovation and leadership

In West Africa, WoM integrated CARE's Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE) approach in its regional response working with 24,457 women in 752 solidarity groups. Women shared their stories of resilience and adapted Covid-19 responses across solidarity groups through Whatsapp discussions and by engaging with private sector organizations. Some examples of the actions and innovations they launched include: teaching members to sew masks and make hand sanitizer, distributing them within their communities and selling them to INGOs, setting up makeshift handwashing stations in their communities using empty bottles filled with soapy water hung on wooden frames.

In Asia, MbW has been supporting women to organize themselves within worker collectives and trade unions to promote their rights. In early 2020, as many factories across Asia closed and workers lost their jobs or were forced to take unpaid leave, women from these groups started to raise their voice against factory injustice. In Indonesia, a union member who had participated in leadership training negotiated with the factory to adjust the schedule so all workers received some income over that time. She also addressed the concerns of workers who were scared to go to work due to the lack of social distancing and handwashing facilities by ensuring Covid-19 protocols were applied in the factory. In Bangladesh, when factories violated labor law and did not provide notice to workers who lost their jobs, members of a local community action group raised the issue with a union federation and bargained to recover unpaid salary for the laid-off workers.

In LAC, domestic workers associated with EVER began to engage on new online forums, using digital tools and accompanying and supporting their members' actions for resilience. Connecting with domestic worker union leaders in weekly online Saturday workshops has proved to be instrumental in building capacity in the use of digital technology and allowing them to stay connected to strategize around their response. Through this kind of solidarity they were able to support each other and their membership, overcome emotional crises and continue to pursue their objectives. Beyond the immediate emergency response, women are now better poised to advocate for a more just recovery.

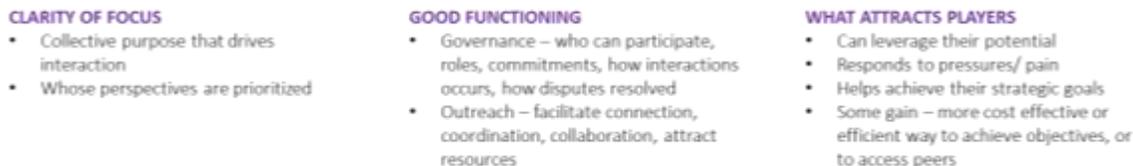
6. How are the IGS regional platforms changing the way we organize and collaborate within CARE?

Our analysis in seeing IGS as ecosystem platforms also helps us understand how they worked within the organization. Each IGS had a core team and an internal governance arrangement (in the form of a working or steering group) that evolved over time²⁵. In some cases, alongside these groups there were sometimes multi-country project advisory groups that, by being an important part of the IGS, served somewhat of a governance function.

²⁵ In southern Africa, the hubs were set up as learning platforms, although there seem to have been some (unfair) expectations of them to play more of a platform shaping role.

We may think of these working or steering groups as possibly playing a **platform shaping function** on the internal side of the IGS platforms. What is this function? Broadly, we may think of it in three main buckets: a) Ensuring clarity of focus and crafting work toward that focus; b) Ensuring that the platform functions well (through good governance and outreach, including to attract resources), and c) Offering value that attracts ecosystem players to participate and contribute to the work. Figure 7 below describes these three areas. In thinking about how regional platforms are changing the way we organize ourselves and collaborate in CARE, we are most interested in the latter two buckets: how the platforms function and how they attract different parts of the organization to collaborate.

Figure 7: The platform shaping function



80% of core team/ CO/ RMU survey respondents and 71% of CMP/ CI respondents believe that the IGS **enabled CARE to work more coherently** in regions rather than ‘just’ as a collection of projects to a very high or significant degree. Shared objectives and collectively developed framework or theories of change provided a rallying call around which different parts of CARE could come together. This is most obviously apparent in Asia where the IGS brought together work across country offices led by different members, CMPs (USA, Australia, UK, India), affiliates (Chrysalis in Sri Lanka) and candidates (Yayasan CARE Peduli in Indonesia). As advocacy to influence policies and programs was a core pathway pursued by all the IGS, CARE USA’s global advocacy team strategically linked their regional advocacy advisors to the IGS teams. CIUK placed and partially funded a dedicated economic empowerment advisor within the MbW core team (actively shaping the IGS). CARE Australia and CARE France, both with multi-country projects in Asia Pacific and LAC, were able to significantly leverage the influence and impact of their work by engaging strategically with the IGS. The mid-term review of the IGS documented factors that contributed to greater alignment and more effective “networked leadership” across organizational boundaries.

Survey and interview responses also describe ways in which the IGS **opened spaces for dialog and learning**, especially cross-country spaces. In all regions, colleagues indicated that they communicated more with other country teams, which helped build coherence around CARE’s approaches and adapting and scaling proven models as described earlier. But beyond this, the IGS also offered cross-country spaces to problem solve, question, innovate, talk about what was not working, and overcome barriers together. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment hub in southern Africa offered a rare space for reflection, where, stepping back from their immediate context, colleagues could be vulnerable together as they explored their own understanding and barriers to gender equality.

“Through this space, we began to see each other more as humans – you forgive and engage one another. But there was a lot of pressure.... People asking, “What about gender analysis technical training? All that could follow. It was important for us to start with discussions around power and our personal experience.” [GEWE hub participant]

Some colleagues point out that spaces for dialog are going to be increasingly important in the coming days. They note that if we truly listen to the voices of impact populations and support their agenda, we are going to start to engage in more political issues at the intersection of issues such as gender, class, or race inequality with labor and land rights in supply or value chains. These issues and their intersectionality may surface contradictions for the organization and in some partnerships, which may be challenging to meaningfully address at a global level. An example of such an issue is the nature of market-based approaches that may align (and those that don’t) with the rights based agendas of the labor rights movements with which we work. There may be more generative ways to surface the issues and understand them at a regional level in the context of the IGS, exploring and navigating them with our closest partners.

“There were competing mandates, lack of mutual accountability, and hugely imbalanced resourcing (with IGSs getting ‘free money’ while established teams had to continue to prove their worth – in a good way – by security restricted funding in partnership with country teams.” [CMP/ CI respondent]

Despite these many benefits, some colleagues (especially in some country offices and global teams) believe there **needed to be greater clarity on mutual accountabilities, the value these platforms offer, and how other teams were to engage with them**. Coming at a time when there

was significant pain in many parts of the organization around financial resources and viability, there was a sense of competition around access to unrestricted resources. And as there wasn’t yet a shared understanding on the value of these platforms, many continued to view them as separate to their work and expensive cost centers – consumers of scarce unrestricted resources. In cases where these flexible resources were shared directly with other teams, such as through small advocacy grants, there was more support and eagerness from other teams to engage.

Survey and interview responses also indicate that beyond a few teams and offices there were **barriers to buy-in and ownership** from the wider organization as the **IGS platforms were seen as CARE USA-owned** and managed (reporting into CARE USA’s regional management units).

Returning to the idea of the IGS as ecosystem platforms, while on the external side they may be most effective when loosely held, the internal side in **a large, complex global organization that is used to operating with clear structures and hierarchies may require a stronger platform shaping function**. In addition to clarity of focus and shaping programming and partnerships, this function includes governance (including how others may engage or how tensions are to be resolved) and a clear way to reach out and interest teams across the organization. Also, platforms function by attracting the participation of players in the ecosystem. This typically occurs when the platform helps them leverage their potential, respond to pressures they are facing (such as resource scarcity), contribute to achieving their strategic goals, and gain something (such as a more cost-effective way to work with a large number of colleagues) – See Figure 7.

Through various discussions during the course of this review it seemed that while the working/ steering groups have been quite effective at supporting platform shaping externally (including focus, direction, outreach), **the function of internal platform shaping** was usually left to the Coordinator or IGS core team and line of management, especially to raise funding for core costs, or when there were contradictions or tensions to resolve. As a result, in several instances, the narrative of “us v/s them” persisted.

Moving forward, greater attention to **a more collective internal platform shaping function** may offer the opportunity to address the challenges around mutual accountabilities, shared ownership, and clarity on the value these platforms offer. It is also worth noting that this way of working is a big change and regional platforms cannot influence this magnitude of organizational change without change in other parts of the organization. Clearer internal platform shaping that involves colleagues from the wider organization may help build a better understanding of how mindsets and ways of working may also need to shift (We return to this in the next section and in framing the fifth recommendation from this report). Beyond clarity and work on the platform shaping function itself, it is clear that the nature of leadership and presence in the core team (and especially of the Coordinator) played an important role in IGS capability for successful outreach within the organization. The Coordination role demands hugely proactive and engaging leadership, and is difficult to combine with other roles. Turnover in these positions demands careful managing and thoughtful transitions.

7. What other institutional benefits do we observe from the IGS platforms, beyond the regions?

The review surfaced a number of additional institutional benefits for CARE beyond work in each region:

Vision 2030 - foregrounding justice | Colleagues cited several ways in which work on the IGS platforms have helped shape CARE’s Vision 2030 and related Impact Area Strategies and Scaling Pathways (which are themselves at the heart of the “how” in Vision 2030). The most frequently mentioned were working with social movements, especially feminist movements and actors, and foregrounding justice in our work.

“The IGS deserve a lot of credit for what you find in the Impact Area Strategies. You will see West Africa and Southern Africa’s work in the Gender Justice, Climate Justice, and Right to Food, Water, and Nutrition strategies. The Impact Area Strategies have been talking about integration these past six months. The IGS have led work on this for the past 4 years and this has been very important for CARE.” [Global team member]

Shifting power | In the course of interviews, there were multiple references to the IGS as potential prototypes for how CARE may work as a “locally led, globally connected, diverse and engaged network. Observations on how this is playing out practically included:

- Providing the opportunity and focus for teams across levels and entities in the organization to gradually **overcome traditional silos and collaborate beyond and across projects and levels** around issues of greatest importance to impact populations
- Leveraging flexible resources to convene collaborative spaces and processes for design, innovation, learning, and thought leadership that **draw energy, visibility, confidence, and a sense of solidarity to regions and countries**
- **Intentionally shifting power and decision making closer to the impact**
- Serving as spaces for the practice of **feminist leadership** to emerge, especially on platforms where we work with social movements (observed in their greater focus on sharing and shifting power and clearer articulation of politics and purpose)
- Explicitly **building on collective strengths, expertise, and resources** from different parts of CARE to maximize our contribution to impact at scale
- Helping the wider organization **listen better to our impact populations and their organizations**, and learning together about how we can internalize feminist and social justice principles in our work, which is essential to Vision 2030.

“The IGS has given us the courage to be humble, to listen, to take positions. Inside CARE it has given us courage to reach out with confidence to other parts of CARE... to lead.” [IGS team member]

CARE’s credibility and profile | Many colleagues attest to the IGS contributing to raising CARE’s profile and credibility as a serious, committed and influential player on regional and global platforms. Colleagues who have interacted with the MbW platform in Asia comment on CARE’s emergence as a “recognized in practice leader” in the garment sector. In LAC, CARE is being seen more clearly as a rights based organization that is “respectful of the autonomous agenda and decisions” of impact population organizations. CARE’s commitment and solidarity with domestic workers has increased its credibility in the feminist movement in the region -- CARE is being viewed as a thought leader, and is being invited to emerging discussions about care work. In West Africa, others in civil society note CARE’s strong commitment to women’s

“We are now seen as a thought leader and credible player in the garment sector, not a service provider. CARE was the only NGO invited to be a founding member of the EMPOWER@WORK collaborative.” [IGS team member]

“We have a seat at the table in global and regional forums. Strategy and learning are very hard to fund. Without this initial [unrestricted funding] investment, I strongly feel there would not have been the time or resource to support this work, and CARE would not have been able to be a credible partner or influence the sector as much as it has.” [CI/CMP survey respondent]

political participation. In West and Southern Africa, CARE now has a seat at the table on regional and continental policy forums. And in Southern Africa, a number of new programming opportunities and partnerships have developed from CARE's greater visibility on these platforms.

Innovation around CARE's presence | Whether or not this was the intent, the IGS are helping explore ways in which CARE's presence may shift. By cultivating key partnerships in Brazil (with THEMIS) and Mexico (with CACEH), CARE is now able to program in these countries. This experience was later instrumental in CARE's response to the Venezuela crisis, allowing for programming and managing half a million dollars in Venezuela using this model. Lessons from IGS external and internal collaboration have strong potential to inform the evolution of CARE's presence in these regions and efforts toward diversification.

Building on our discussion on IGS influence within CARE (Sections 6 and 7), the next recommendation from this review focuses on the internal platform shaping function in regional platforms as a way to build on progress to date, address some challenges that have surfaced, and energize CARE's journey toward a localized and diversified network. Specifically, it calls upon the wider organization (not just CARE USA) to collaborate to create opportunities that help build **a more active and generative platform shaping function** for the internal side of these regional platforms.

Recommendation 5 | Organizing as a localized and diversified network

Building on the IGS experience to date, create opportunity for proactive and purposeful collaboration across the organization in shaping regional platforms. This platform shaping function may include cultivating spaces, processes, and interactions that help the platforms ensure clear focus, function effectively, shift power, and attract the engagement of relevant stakeholders on the platform.

This effort around creating a more generative internal platform shaping function may be sponsored by a CI working group or a specific part of CARE on behalf of the wider organization for broader buy-in. In order to leverage the power of platforms, it should not be driven in a top-down manner, but rather be invitational in approach, enabling (even encouraging) colleagues from different parts of the organization to self-organize and come together to more purposefully play platform shaping roles for regional platforms. Not everyone or every entity that engages with the platform would do so in this kind of role – indeed, one of the things that the platform shapers may clarify are the different ways in which various entities may engage with the platform. But those who do play a platform shaping role will be able to access certain opportunities on the platform, and they will also make some commitments and share certain responsibilities as individuals and representatives of their part of the organization.

Beyond the specific task at hand, since this is a very different way of working than we have had in the past, it may be helpful to agree on some principles to help platform shapers look forward and leverage the complexity and diversity of these platforms, avoiding the tendency to force-fit them into more familiar ways of working and managing work.

Below are some thoughts, advice, and inspiration from the review to guide work on internal platform shaping:

- Emphasizing **connections and relationships**, not just what we do and who we are
- **Linking into conversations** on future forms of presence and organizational models, CARE's efforts to diversify, and Vision 2030
- Allowing **space for informal networks, connections, friendships and trust** to grow
- Learning from the culture of emerging relationships with partners - embracing **different kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing**
- Drawing inspiration from ecosystems - designing for an organic ecosystem or **wildflower garden, not an engineering diagram** -- Platforms shapers as gardeners, not managers
- Adopting **feminist leadership principles** and being mindful of deep structures²⁶ in the organization

²⁶ In Feminist Leadership literature, deep structures generally refer to places in organizations where most of the indirect and hidden power and *power under* is located, and from where direct and visible power may be resisted or sabotaged. This may occur

- Embracing the **blurring of boundaries between internal and external** parts of the platform and the implications this may have for CARE’s future presence
- Practicing **ways to learn together** and figuring out what we need to unlearn
- Foregrounding an understanding of power and actions to **explicitly shift power**

8. How may we imagine the future of regional platforms in CARE?

Regional platforms in general

Until this point, this report has told the story of the IGS platforms to date. We now look at where we go from here. As the review progressed, many colleagues expressed great uncertainty at the future of the IGS as they did not know if there continued to be an appetite or interest in regional platforms in the wider organization. Several colleagues interviewed for the review were not clear on whether the IGS still existed at the time of their interview. A first step in moving forward has to be some affirmation of what they have achieved, their potential value for progress toward Vision 2030, and some shared understanding of what they are.

If the wider organization sees promise in regional platforms, there are still a few questions to address. We need to think about the future of regional platforms in general and the future of the four specific platforms reviewed here. The four platforms that were part of this review are not the only ones in CARE – they are four that received investment of flexible resources from CARE USA for the explicit purpose of multiplying impact. There have been other efforts at organizing regionally, such as around child marriage in the MENA region which was initially supported as an IGS, and around a participatory approach to prevent gender based violence in the Great Lakes in Central Africa, which is quite developed. There was some desire to work regionally around resilience in the Horn of Africa and around the Mandera triangle, building on longstanding collaboration between CARE offices in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. There also is the emerging Asia Pacific Impact hub²⁷, which has included a significant Dignified Work component in its initial development (linking to MbW). And there are other multi-country configurations around CARE.

“We can keep spending our time looking for data to convince ourselves about the value of them [the regional platforms]. There is clear evidence... those outside see it more clearly than us. We have to either accept it or not, and not occupy ourselves in counting... but noticing the change around us.” [CARE USA EMT member]

Given the complexity of the current context as well as the limitations of a review of this nature, rather than trying to project how many platforms there may be in future and how they will be managed, it may make more sense to think about them with a more entrepreneurial approach. Rather than answer the question, “What should be the fate or design of regional platforms in CI in the future,” we may ask, “**How might regional platforms emerge in the future to contribute significant impact at scale and help the organization progress toward Vision 2030**” Could we imagine a process that allows teams to self-organize and propose the formation of a regional platform under certain conditions? What may be the preconditions for the emergence of regional platforms in the future? What are the opportunities they present? What are the risks? How do they complement or work alongside existing RMU structures? Do they, and how do they signal or propose their presence to the organization? How are they received and by whom? What commitments do they need to make? What kind of support may be available for them? What kind of minimum level of support is required for them to be able to flourish? Is there a threshold number of platforms beyond which they lose their effectiveness and are disruptive to coherence in the organization?

In thinking about the future of the IGS regional platforms, some colleagues suggest that the global Impact Area Strategies (IAS) designed to further Vision 2030 may play this kind of role of enabling a more coherent and

through the kinds of behaviors that are rewarded in practice, unstated personal biases, informal cliques or groups that wield influence, etc.

²⁷ The Asia Impact Hub is a shared platform emerging across the Asia-Pacific region to better leverage CARE’s capacities, resources, partnerships, and learning towards common goals.

integrated way of working across the organization around specific themes. It is true that the IAS may influence coherence and internal collaboration toward Vision 2030, and that they may also support regional organizing and learning where appropriate. But from this review, we also recognize the value regional platforms are contributing toward building “*the most relevant, diverse, inclusive and effective organization possible*” that CARE aspires to be in Vision 2030, by:

- Shifting power within the organization and locating decisions closer to impact;
- Cultivating innovative relationships that share power (especially with social movements that we recognize are effective in achieving social change outcomes);
- Supporting agility in working through an ecosystem approach in complex contexts.

These represent new ways of working that lend themselves to a more agile and diversified future for CARE and one that may enable us to more meaningfully address the calls to INGOs to decenter power. Indeed, organizing at regional or sub-regional level in a coherent way is one-way INGOs can still add value in an environment where national and local actors are now more effective in convening action at national level, while still connecting deeply to work and stakeholders on the frontlines. While it may make sense in one or two themes for global Impact Area Strategy teams to convene integrated and coherent ways of working in the organization, it is unlikely that global platforms of that nature can as fully take forward the promise that regional platforms offer, and should not be explored as a universal solution.

Beyond these internal reasons to pay attention to the promise of regional platforms, external trends such as the increasing complexity of CARE’s operating environments, rapidly changing contexts, and increasing conservatism and backlash around the world to social justice progress make the case for the kind of agility, collaboration, and flexible roles for which regional or sub-regional platforms seem to have high potential

No matter what the future of regional platforms at CARE, it seems a first step would be to socialize a clearer narrative and understanding of these platforms in the wider organization. This review makes a recommendation to draw on materials from this exercise, the mid-term review in 2019, the four IGS, as well as other emerging regional platforms such as the Asia Pacific impact hub to **socialize a narrative of the promise of regional platforms** – as assets, rather than only consumers of scarce unrestricted resources; Cultivate excitement in strategizing about their future and explore ways to share ownership and engagement; Engage colleagues in dialog on the role that regional platforms may play in progress toward Vision 2030. For the greatest success, it is important that the next phase of work on regional platforms not be driven by CARE USA alone. It will also be important that clear responsibility and accountability assigned and resourced in a way that builds ownership across the wider organization. Existing organization wide networks and groups may also play an important role in building a better understanding of regional platforms across the organization.

Recommendation 6 | The future of regional platforms

Over the next year, build and socialize a clear narrative of regional impact platforms and their promise for impact at scale and progress toward Vision 2030. Engage cross-CI groups in strategizing about the future emergence of regional platforms

Considering the future of the four platforms reviewed

Looking ahead at the future of the four specific IGS reviewed here, from the limited engagement with stakeholders for this review, it appears that all four IGS in different ways are gaining momentum, and are poised for even greater impact and learning with some adjustments, evolution of focus, and accompanying changes in the wider organization.

In LAC, **Equal Value Equal Rights** has strong momentum and is pursuing a strategy to 2030. With ILO C-190 approved, there is opportunity for national and regional advocacy across the region around both C-189 and C-190 conventions, with leaders of the domestic worker movement at the forefront. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted

in significant setbacks (including from backlash) to women’s rights and labor and human rights of domestic workers. This will require the collective attention of stakeholders. How the platform progresses will be guided by the response and needs of the domestic worker social movements. One issue that has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic is the call for the recognition of domestic workers as essential workers, which may take different forms in different countries – this may link to work around the care economy, demands for universal basic income, and the future of work.

“In our excitement to work on issues of domestic workers, we should be careful that we do not stereotype them. We should not think that the only option for these women is to be domestic workers. They should be able to grow and follow their dreams.” [IGS Partner]

The IGS team has been looking at the balance and spread of resources and work across the different countries, and may attempt to work on some issues sub-regionally. The use of digital technology for movement strengthening, communication campaigns, social business, provision of public services and the creation of inclusive digital policies are also issues that will take some focused effort.

The experience of EVER in LAC has valuable lessons for CARE in cultivating partnerships in countries where CARE does not have a physical presence. As the movement matures, there may be opportunity here to consider how the relationship with some of these partners may evolve, or to imagine with them a stronger association with the CARE confederation (if they were to be interested) as CARE progresses toward diversifying its network.

In West Africa, **Women on the Move**’s decision to deliberately foster women’s leadership and collective voice in solidarity groups to enhance their public participation has the potential to be transformative. By ceding power and working with other players, CARE has learned to listen better and be guided by women’s priorities and collective vision. The platform is now well poised to build on this work.

Connecting solidarity groups in networks within countries and across the region can be very powerful and potentially lead to significant impact. But there is also potential for harm and for networks to be taken over or lose momentum and connectivity. This is an area that may take some dedicated focus and generate important learning in the coming years.

Over the next few years, this platform presents excellent learning opportunities for the wider organization: To deepen our collective understanding of networks and network dynamics; To learn from work on multi-institutional spaces that shift power in favor of women; To support and learn from women as they exercise their leadership (including in emergencies) and increase their political participation. CARE’s role will naturally evolve as women’s networks grow and strengthen, and that too will shape the focus of this platform. Cross learning with the more mature domestic worker movement in LAC may also be meaningful for women in solidarity groups and CARE and partner colleagues.

As with the other platforms, a more deliberate internal platform shaping function can help clarify governance and interactions and roles on the platform, and strengthen collaboration with CARE’s global teams and Impact Area Strategies.

In Southern Africa, **Her Harvest Our Future** used the SuPER principles for small-scale agriculture in a changing climate that had been developed in the region to leverage learning from across countries to inform CARE’s advocacy agenda. This clarity has helped drive success in the platform’s efforts to multiply impact and the partnerships that support this work.

Through this review we have better understood two elements driving clarity of focus on the platforms – clarity of collective purpose, and clarity of priority perspectives (see page 11). On HHOF, the collective purpose is clear, but the priority perspective needs further clarification. If it is women rural smallholder farmers, future work on the platform will link more to rural women assemblies and farmer coalitions and their alliances, with which CARE

already has relationships in several countries²⁸. This choice will color the nature of analysis, advocacy, partnerships, and nature of scaling strategies used. Clarity on priority perspectives will help move toward more platform ways of working with the benefits it offers highlighted through this report.

If HHOF decides to move toward a more platform way of working, a more deliberate and purposeful internal platform shaping function will be essential to realize its potential. This should preferably be developed with the participation of the global teams/ CMPs leading Impact Area Strategies on the Right to food, water, and nutrition, and Climate Justice, as well as with a few southern CARE offices participating in HHOF that want to be more strategically involved. The future of HHOF may also usefully link to ongoing discussions and proposals for CARE's future presence in South Africa, for example in considering the possibility of inviting a South African organization to join CARE International.

In 2020, **Made by Women** in Asia consulted with country programs across the region to refresh their strategy, integrating learning from previous years and focusing attention on adapting to the impact of Covid-19. The revised strategy focuses on four themes. Two of these are ongoing themes – addressing gender based violence and harassment for women in the garment industry, and enhancing women's voice and leadership for women to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their rights at work. In both of these themes, learning links to work around the CARE world will be valuable. In addition, the strategy has identified two new themes, representing a broadening of focus to link into the world of dignified work and women's economic justice more clearly. The first focuses on the future of work in the garment industry and how women benefit from change; The second is a stronger focus on economic resilience (inclusive social protection and financial inclusion) and linking to post-Covid-19 developments in the livelihoods space.

In the Asia Pacific region where CARE USA has management responsibility for only five of 17 programming offices, and the region is home to two CMPs (Raks Thai and CARE India), an affiliate and a candidate, the emergence of a co-led Asia Pacific Impact Hub is an exciting opportunity, and may offer platform shaping opportunities for Made by Women in the future. At a minimum, Made by Women will benefit from a link to the impact hub.

To the question of the most suitable geographic spread for IGS (included in the terms of reference for this review), from this review geography does not emerge as a strong factor. In general, the wide spread of a region has shown many advantages, but it may be important to work on some issues (or for some periods of time) sub-regionally as LAC is beginning to explore. Similarly, there may be opportunities sometimes for a country (or countries) from another region to participate in the work of the platform as Ethiopia has done on Made by Women. Geographic spread could remain organic on the platforms. Vertical spread across levels, though, may need more deliberate decisions. For example, in Southern Africa, the regional and all-Africa policy infrastructure presents important opportunities. In Asia, the glue that unifies efforts and organizing, is not entirely geographic or driven from a particular level, but thematic (around the global garment supply chain). This will influence its evolution. Geographic spread is also affected by internal CARE factors. For example, in Asia the evolution of Made by Women has been influenced by the fact that the Women's Economic Justice thematic area is led from CIUK and not CARE USA. In addition, being a region with the most diverse types of membership in CARE will have a bearing on its evolution.

To the question of life-cycle triggers for regional platforms – how long should they run? Here we find that the collective purpose and CARE's changing role on the platform will tend to drive life-cycle considerations. In general, it would not be possible to credibly embark on an ecosystem approach and platform way of working unless there was some long-term commitment, certainly more than 5-6 years. But these contexts are very dynamic and these decisions will also be guided by Vision 2030 and the availability of resources. With all of this in mind, the

²⁸ It may be that the platform prioritizes the viewpoint of organizations working on food and nutrition security and climate change. This would shift the nature of work on the platform.

recommendation from this review is as far as possible to pursue the directions and considerations above by continuing some level of investment in the four regional platforms reviewed here, with clear responsibility and accountability for how the regional platforms will be supported (as discussed earlier).

Recommendation 7 | The continuation of current Impact Growth Strategies

Continue some level of investment (resources, learning, support) in the four regional platforms, included in this review with some adjustments, evolution of focus, and accompanying changes in the wider organization

9. What kind of scaffolding may best support regional platforms?

One of the things the IGS teams most appreciated was the flexibility for creativity and innovation – a sanctuary space where they could try to do things differently. Periodic calls around various areas of work were helpful in staying connected and did not inhibit the flexibility of the platforms. It is clear that any supporting infrastructure for these platforms must continue to connect to them lightly.

Colleagues note that annual reports are helpful in getting their message and progress out to donors and to the larger organization, but they continue to be a painful process. It would be worth drilling down into what specific support can make this process easier without losing their value, experimenting with lighter touch approaches. Across the board, colleagues would appreciate more opportunities for learning, problem solving, sharing expertise across the IGS. Several earlier recommendations from this review address this need.



We explored the nature of support that would help regional platforms in general (IGS or other) leverage their potential for significant impact and help propel the organization toward Vision 2030. We call it scaffolding here (and inserted a picture of bamboo scaffolding from the internet) to give the sense of lightness, pliability, and the ability to adapt, improvise and shift. The purpose of this kind of scaffolding is to encourage flexibility and to draw energy and attention to regions and the voices of colleagues

working on regional platforms, to impact populations and their organizations, build relationships – allowing people to get to know each other, to hold tension, to cultivate trust, and heal after conflict.

Moving forward, this review suggests preserving the creative and experimental space as much as possible, while putting in place some supportive infrastructure, especially to aid learning. This may include support that enables the curation of:

- Light action research around a learning agenda as suggested in recommendation 1a
- Learning mechanisms such as co-labs, virtual workshops, peer action learning sets around specific topics such as scaling pathways and strategies, and problem solving around partnership challenges
- Analytical, outreach, and problem solving support around resource mobilization and cost recovery through a dedicated task force

- A small set of services -- some paid (for example decentralized support for the preparation of reports, proposals, other communications materials or documentation, policy briefs, etc.; Translation services; Support to cultivate inner work practices
- Facilitation support for meetings, learning events, possibly initiating communities of practice to encourage facilitation of emergent processes²⁹ that handle complexity well
- Advisory services and analysis around network weaving and analysis, ideally drawn from work with movements
- Regional level MEL analysis, consultation and learning

One suggestion may be to organize **this support as a virtual platform itself** that attracts both those who can offer appropriate skills and services (colleagues and consultants), and those who may draw on them. However, for this to work in support of the regional platforms and Vision 2030, beyond the technical requirements, there will need to be clarity on a set of core principles that guide the nature of support and processes through which it is made available. For example, these core principles may center attention on power and shifting power and encourage the use of complexity appropriate tools and methods such as emergent strategy facilitation, liberating structures, public narrative, the use of inner work practices, etc. Conceptual expertise already exists within the organization and may be sourced internally. Given the nature of work on the IGS, it will be important to balance that expertise with a greater focus on relationships, power, the way people come together, and how they hold tension or heal from conflict.

For this review, we did not focus attention on the formal organizational structure or reporting mechanisms of Impact Growth Strategies. This was deliberate as it was beyond the scope of this review. For the purpose of cultivating broader ownership, not having all regional platforms report into CARE USA management structure may be helpful. But our findings in this review suggest that more important than the reporting lines are mechanisms for interaction and attention to the quality of relationships.

Recommendation 8 | Scaffolding for regional platforms

Create scaffolding for light infrastructure that regional platforms may draw on for support and cross listening and learning (somewhat like a service provision and learning platform built on a set of core principles)

Summary of recommendations

“Impossible is not for us, because we are ingenious women.” [Nigerian woman from a WOM discussion on their ability to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic]

The decision to invest in Impact Growth Strategies was visionary – an attempt to leverage the best that our diverse, global organization has to offer. And colleagues and partners in these regions responded with creativity, leadership, and love, seizing opportunities and navigating barriers (including barriers within themselves and the organization) to multiply impact. In many ways they advanced the work and relationships further than anyone imagined. These colleagues and these platforms are positioning CARE to foreground justice and contribute even greater impact as described in Vision 2030.

Together the eight recommendations from this review center around a few core ideas that surface from these platforms and that with some support can help drive progress. They are: Learning and inquiry; Celebrating diversity; Shifting power; Navigating complexity; and Attention to relationship.

²⁹ Building capability to facilitate emergent processes can play a significant role in shifting ways of interacting and the culture of groups to be able to more effectively handle complexity. See for example the ten tips for facilitating emergent processes [here](#) that diverge from what many are used to as good facilitation of more linear and predictable processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Understanding impact** | a) Leveraging the *scaling deep* work of the IGS, invest in learning processes and MEL systems to systematically understand outcomes related to shifts in informal structures/ culture/ norms in the public domain. b) Extend global MEL systems to support regional data and analysis, focused on learning and contributing to impact at scale toward Vision 2030
- 2. Thought leadership around pathways for impact at scale** | Beyond drawing from their work, engage IGS colleagues and partners in designing, leading, and co-facilitating learning and thought leadership around pathways toward impact at scale
- 3. Partnering for deep equity** | Embrace the experience of the IGS to inform work on putting into practice the priorities identified in the CI Partnership Paper, especially for more complex relationships that demand joint ownership and responsibility, and involve increasing scope (number of players, sectors, levels) and scale
- 4. Resource mobilization and cost recovery** | a) Each regional platform should develop (or complete development of) a resource mobilization and cost recovery strategy. Build internal commitment and support (such as through a task force drawn from talent across the organization) to work alongside IGS teams to draw support to these strategies, problem solve, and learn from IGS resource mobilization and cost recovery efforts

b) Building on lessons from the past five years, rebuild a pooled funding mechanism with wider organizational buy-in to raise flexible funding for regional platforms to multiply impact
- 5. Organizing as a localized and diversified network** | Building on the IGS experience to date, create opportunity for proactive and purposeful collaboration across the organization in shaping regional platforms. This platform shaping function may include cultivating spaces, processes, and interactions that help the platforms ensure clear focus, function effectively, shift power, and attract the engagement of relevant stakeholders on the platform.
- 6. The future of regional platforms** | Over the next year, build and socialize a clear narrative of regional impact platforms and their promise for impact at scale and progress toward Vision 2030. Engage cross-CI groups in strategizing about future emergence of regional platforms
- 7. Continuation of current Impact Growth Strategies** | Continue some level of investment (funding, learning, support) in the four regional platforms included in this review, with some adjustments, evolution of focus, and accompanying changes in the wider organization
- 8. Scaffolding for regional platforms** | Create scaffolding for light infrastructure that regional platforms may draw on for support and cross listening and learning (somewhat like a service provision and learning platform built on a set of core principles)

ACRONYMS

AIIR	Advocacy and Impact Influencing Reporting tool
BMZ/ GIZ	The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Germany's leading provider of international cooperation services)
C-189	ILO Convention 189 setting labor standards for domestic workers
C-190	ILO Convention 190 to eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CACEH	El Centro de Apoyo y Capacitación para empleadas del hogar, CARE's key partner in Mexico
CIUK	CARE International United Kingdom
CMP	CARE member partner
CONACTRAHO	The LAC Confederation of Domestic Workers
CoP23	The 23 rd conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
CSW	The UN Commission on the Status of Women
EMT	Executive Management Team
EVER	Equal Value, Equal Rights (The Impact Growth Strategy in LAC)
FANRPAN	The pan-African Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
HHOF	Her Harvest, Our Future (The Impact Growth Strategy in Southern Africa)
IAS	CARE's global Impact Area Strategies to further Vision 2030
IGS	Impact Growth Strategies
IDWF	International Domestic Workers Federation
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organizations
ITUC-AP	International Trade Union Confederation, Asia Pacific
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWRAW	
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MbW	Made by Women (The Impact Growth Strategy in Asia)
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MENA	Middle East/ North Africa region
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PIIRS	CARE's global Program Information and Impact Reporting System
RMU	Regional Management Unit
STOP	CARE's Stop Sexual Harassment project in the Mekong region
SuPER	Sustainable, Productive (including profitable and nutrition-sensitive), Equitable, and Resilient [Refers to the SuPER principles for small scale agriculture in a changing climate developed by CARE in southern Africa and applied in Her Harvest, Our Future]
THEMIS	A gender justice and human rights organization – CARE's key partner in Brazil
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WACSI	The West Africa Civil Society Initiative
WBG	West Bank and Gaza
WLiE	Women Lead in Emergency, a flagship CARE approach
WoM	Women on the Move (The Impact Growth Strategy in West Africa)

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Andrea Rodericks, August 2021