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# Increasing Food Security in Nepal

## Results from the Systems-Level Evaluation of the SAMARTHYA Project

### KEY TAKEAWAYS



The project strengthened the technical and operational functions of two large social movements in Nepal, increasing their legitimacy and enabling them to secure land certificates for the first time



Project advocacy led to the adoption of the Local Government Agricultural and Land Act to strengthen a focus on service provision, subsidies, registration and finance for landless and small-scale farmers



Women increased their participation, leadership, and economic empowerment in communities



Agricultural services were strengthened and made available to the target group for the first time



The project had significant success scaling-up climate resilient models with government and locally



The project greatly improved the lives of the farmers and communities in which it worked

### Background

**Problem:** Social movements in Nepal struggle with organization and have limited ability to influence decision-makers. Landless people have had the right since 1990 to farm the land on which they reside, but this land has remained unregistered and unused for economic purposes. Policies

on land, agriculture and food security in Nepal are not sufficiently supportive of the needs of landless people and marginalized farmers, particularly women, and government lacks the knowledge to work with these groups. Community-led models to build climate resilience remain small-scale and are not integrated within government systems.

**Solution:** CARE Nepal’s ‘SAMARTHYA: Promoting Inclusive Governance and Resilience for the Right to Food’ project was implemented in Udayapur, Siraha and Okhaldhunga districts between July 2018-June 2022k. The project was conducted in partnership with social movements—Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC), the National Farmers Groups Federation (NFGF), and the National Land Rights Forum (NLRF)<sup>1</sup>—and several technical partners. SAMARTHYA collaborated with local and provincial governments to improve the policy context related to land, agriculture and food security for landless people and marginalized farmers, supported social movements to engage with government, and mobilized them to undertake advocacy. The project also strengthened government systems and developed and institutionalized climate resilient scalable models in land and agriculture within government. SAMARTHYA further strengthened the internal systems and capacity within these social movements, supporting them to become more established and sustainable.



**Project goal:** The project aimed to increase momentum for the Right to Food agenda in Nepal, making it more contextualized, concrete, and systematic. SAMARTHYA expected to improve the lives of the target group through improved food and nutrition security. Although not originally conceived as such, the program also sought to achieve systems-level change through actions linked to a range of CARE’s pathways to scale.

**Outcome harvesting** is a participatory approach in which the harvester facilitates the collection of evidence of what has been achieved and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

## Questions and Methodology

The evaluation was designed to explore the following questions.

**1. Process:** What did the program do and how were the systems-level pathways integrated across its activities?

**2. Systems-change:** What changes were achieved by the project through different systems pathways (applying the Vision 2030 pathways to scale framework)? How did the systems-level changes across these pathways reinforce or support each other?

**3. Population-wide impact:** How did those systems-level changes result in changes in individual level impacts on people’s lives?

The evaluation employed the Outcome Harvesting (OH) methodology to answer these questions. Following the six steps of the OH methodology, the evaluation harvested data on SAMARTHYA outcomes,<sup>2</sup> the significance of the outcomes and the contributions of the project to those outcomes.



## Findings

SAMARTHYA integrated its work on social movements and policy advocacy with significant success, capacitating these movements as advocates leading to changes in policies, programs, and budgets. This grassroots advocacy approach also became self-sustaining. The project also integrated a focus on social norms change within its movement building approach, increasing women's inclusion and participation.

Key results include:

### **Stronger social movements**

The NFGF and the NLRF with CARE succeeded in organizing farmers, and through piloting a categorization-based Farmer ID card (FID), landless and otherwise marginalized farmers received land certificates from the government for the first time and access to free or subsidized agricultural inputs. These changes were achieved in part through assessing the specific needs of social movements and technical training and capacity building of movements, particularly on undertaking advocacy and joint actions. Allyship was also built among likeminded civil society organizations to advance movement building in land, agriculture, food security and climate change concerns.

NLRF expanded the size of its movement from 48 to 63 districts, increasing from 42,000 to 93,000 member landless and small-scale farmer households. NFGF expanded its reach from 53 to 60 districts, increasing from 4,013 to 5,120 member groups. Women's participation in these movements increased to above 51%.

### **A stronger policy environment**

The project influenced the formulation and amendment of key regulations, policies, and programs at the federal, provincial, and local levels to better support the rights of landless and small-scale farmers. Key policies influenced included the Local Government Agricultural Act and Land Act, to include a stronger focus on climate resilient agriculture and the needs of landless, small-scale farmers, climate vulnerable communities and women. These Acts have incorporated the categorization-based FID developed and advanced by CARE and NFGF.

### **Greater gender inclusion in policy and formal spaces**

SAMARTHYA supported NLRF and NFGF to develop women-friendly policies and guidelines, including minimum

participation requirements. Policy advocacy also included a strong focus on gender, inclusion, and women's rights. Evaluation results show women now playing a more meaningful role in decision-making within NFGF and NLRF. Policies and land and agricultural models also have a stronger focus on gender and social inclusion, and women have increased access to government services.

### **More responsive government structures**

SAMARTHYA adopted an integrated systems strengthening and social accountability approach, working in partnership with government and its resource partners to ensure quality and responsive services in land, agricultural, climate change and food security. A key success was the agreement with local government for one technician to be made available per ward, who provided agricultural extension services to producer groups, which significantly improved service delivery mechanisms. This led to enhanced quality and quantity of agricultural extension services and subsidized production inputs support, such as seeds, irrigation facilities, tools, agricultural insurance, and minimum support price for farmers' products.

### **Scaled-up practices proven to address the needs of landless and marginalized communities**

SAMARTHYA enhanced coordination on scalable models with federal and local government structures, and with duty bearers within the National Association of Rural Municipalities (NARMIN). Joint planning and pilot demonstrations facilitated effective scale-up. As a result, local government jointly planned, piloted, and finalized climate resilient land and agricultural models together with CSO partners, and scaled-up these practices within their plans, policy, and programs.

### **Improved well-being of landless and marginalized communities**

Stronger and more responsive systems in Nepal will have a significant impact on people's lives, including enhanced leadership skills, technical skills, access to resources, food and nutrition security, women's empowerment and livelihoods and economic development. The evaluation results confirm this theorized impact showing that landless people and marginalized farmers do have **greater access to land** and **agricultural inputs** and **greater participation of women** in social movements and formal decision-making processes.

## Recommendations and Future Directions

The evaluation provided several lessons both on systems-level change and impact including the importance of a holistic and integrated intervention, the impact of effective partnership and networking for policy change, and the value-add of supporting social movements to conduct advocacy. Key recommendations are:

### FOR CARE

- **Expand the SAMARTHYA project approach to other geographies and contexts.** This program model has proven highly effective in combining system-approaches to improve the well-being of farmers, producers and their families.
- **Expand CARE's work engaging with social movements** for policy change and as a sustainable approach to addressing the needs of the marginalized communities. The success of SAMARTYA program provides insights into effective ways to build movements and how integrating social movements into systems-focused programs can improve their effectiveness.
- **Continue to foster robust institutional linkages** with local level government building ownership and accountability and facilitating policy change or adoption of models.
- **Support farmers and producers to create business plans** to provide a clear road map for active involvement by groups and to mitigate internal conflict.

### FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PRACTITIONERS

- More systematically advance **evaluation of systems-level change across its portfolio** to understand the scale and impact of this work and to inform more rigorous and effective learning across programs.
- **Ensure clarity on how the project included systems-level activities before undertaking the evaluation.** It is important to spend time exploring how project goals, and related project activities, relate to the systems-level pathways before the evaluation (where this was not originally its focus). For instance, developing a robust Theory of Change or conceptual framework for the program.
- **Support a greater focus and measurement on the impact of systems-level change in individuals.** Support staff to explore and understand systems approaches and to measure those. Specifically, the population-wide impacts of the SAMARTHYA project should be further evaluated.
- **Consider the timing of the outcome harvest.** Outcome harvesting may need to be conducted immediately after the project ends to ensure as current an understanding and experience from stakeholders as possible.

### Endnotes

1 CSRC, NFGF and NLRF are national people's organizations/individual member organizations with a strong history of supporting and uniting disempowered farmers and communities and advancing their land and agricultural rights in Nepal

2 A change in the behavior, relationships, activities, actions, policies or practices of individual, group, community, organization, or institution with whom a program works directly. Canadian International Development Research Center

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The full Nepal Outcome Harvesting Evaluation report is available for further information [here](#).