



HER+: Harnessing equality for resilience in the agri-food system

Initiative Lead and Co-Lead

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Primary CGIAR Action Area

Systems Transformation

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\$25 - \$25 M

Challenge

Gender and social inequalities are deeply entrenched within our global AFS. Although women are critical agents in the AFS, comprising 43% of agricultural workers (<https://bittylink.com/egr>), the World Economic Forum estimates that it will take 135 years to close the gender gap (<https://bittylink.com/jkf>). The COVID-19 crisis has reversed gains in gender equality, while intensifying stresses of climate change disproportionately harm women (<https://bittylink.com/dfz>). For vulnerable and marginalized groups, social protection raises incomes but often lacks investments to strengthen linkages to the AFS. These structural forces disempower women and other social groups from accessing resources, technologies and services, and better and more supportive markets, policies, and governance institutions, and constrain their decision-making powers.

This is compounded by several challenges within AFS, where agricultural innovations are predominantly technical in form (<https://bittylink.com/juv>), mostly operationalized in isolation from other innovations or levers (<https://bittylink.com/asg>), and lack responsiveness to the needs of women and marginalized actors. Data structures informing policy are often gender-blind, resulting in large-scale investments that work for men and powerful actors (<https://bittylink.com/Ohb>). Digital innovations in food systems offer great potential, yet to date their pathways reflect and reinforce gender gaps (<https://bittylink.com/ad6>). Women's involvement in decent work, whereby they earn a stable, living wage and are free from harassment, is significantly constrained. And while promising, gender transformative strategies lack evidence on enabling women as innovators in production and in markets and lack focus to date on leveraging change beyond the household scale (<https://bittylink.com/kyf>).

Objective

This Initiative aims to contribute to the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy through research that pinpoints effective strategies to achieve gender equality and social inclusion across the AFS. This requires interventions and outcomes that foster empowerment; lead to greater technology adoption and livelihood security by bundling socio-technical innovations; build resilience by leveraging large-scale social protection programs; and make governance and public investment inclusive, transparent and efficient. Its objective is to, with partners, support women, youth and marginalized groups to expand their voice and agency, acquire and control assets, adapt to climate change and shocks, and access better markets, financial and public services.

To achieve this objective, the Initiative will conduct research that identifies solutions and approaches to reduce barriers to gender and social equality in the AFS and measures their economic and social costs and benefits. The initiative will use mixed methods and causal impact evaluation, to provide evidence of cost-effective socio-technical innovations that overcome these barriers and prioritize agency, empowerment, resilience and improved governance for women, youth and marginalized groups.

The Initiative will work in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where women, youth and marginalized groups are vulnerable to climate shocks as well as persistent poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The Initiative will collaborate with One CGIAR Initiatives for synergies, 'value for money,' and greater impact at scale. Ultimately, the Initiative's research will shape socio-technical innovations that contribute to increased gender equality and social inclusion, reaching at least 80 million people by 2030.

Theory of Change

Much needed gender equality and social inclusion in agri-food systems (AFS) can only be achieved if the processes and improvements involved in AFS transformation are designed intentionally with women, youth, and marginalized groups at their center. This will empower people to become agents of change and reduce inefficiencies in agriculture.

This Initiative will bring intentionality to gender and social equality (GSE) in the AFS through impactful research that can be taken up and implemented by partners at scale. To do this, the Initiative will (1) co-develop (with NARES, private sector, development partners) a set of ambitious gender transformative approaches designed to work at multiple scales within AFS, (2) rigorously test bundles of socio-technical innovations to ensure relevance to demand partners, boosting CGIAR technology adoption by women, men and youth, (3) work with governments and development NGOs to test targeted social protection measures such as poverty graduation interventions alongside complementary investments to build resilience and reduce poverty, and (4) help Governments and communities strengthen gender and social equality in national and sub-national plans, policies, and community institutions designed to address climate change.

By 2030, the Initiative will have shaped, tested, and informed the selection of cost-effective mechanisms needed for achieving gender and social equality in the AFS. These will be scaled out by partners further down the R4D continuum to reach at least 80 million people, who will become agents of AFS transformation rather than passive end users, unlocking the multiple outcomes created by CGIAR socio-technical innovations.

The Initiative will collaborate closely with the following other Initiatives for synergies, 'value for money' and greater impact at scale: ClimBeR: Building Systemic Resilience against Climate Variability and Extremes; Resilient Cities through Sustainable Urban and Peri-urban Agrifood Systems; Harnessing digital technologies for timely decision-making across food, land, and water systems; Excellence in Agronomy; Protecting human health through a One Health approach; Rethinking food markets and value chains for inclusion and sustainability; Resilient Aquatic Foods for Healthy People and Planet; Plant Health and Rapid Response to protect Food and Livelihood Security; National Policies and Strategies for Food, Land and Water Systems Transformation; Food Systems Transformation for Sustainable Healthy Diets; Market Intelligence for More Equitable and Impactful Genetic Innovation; and SeEdQUAL delivering genetic gains in farmers' fields. This initiative will also work closely with the regional Initiatives as gender and social inclusion are very context specific.

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Highlights

TRANSFORMATIVE change: A research portfolio aimed at leading CGIAR in finding solutions for women, youth and marginalized groups to become equal partners, rather than passive end users, in the transformation toward healthier, more sustainable, more productive agri-food systems.

CLIMATE CHANGE lens on solutions: This Initiative will address climate change challenges compounding inequalities and exclusion by co-designing with women, youth and marginalized groups projects on voice, empowerment and governance opportunities to better manage water and natural resources, escape socio-ecological poverty traps and thrive despite climate change.

A WHOLE-OF-SYSTEMS approach to gender equality and social inclusion: This Initiative responds to complexity in the AFS by targeting, via its work packages, four interdependent levers-voice, empowerment, protection and governance-essential to enable women, youth and marginalized groups to benefit from CGIAR innovations and participate in AFS transformation.

Rigorous evidence to inform SCALING: Building on CGIAR's comparative advantage in research on gender (<https://bittylink.com/3qh>), social protection (<https://bittylink.com/yk1>) and governance (<https://bittylink.com/7gs>), this Initiative will co-design, test and rigorously evaluate relevant, context-specific strategies and innovations, with opportunities to collaborate with other CGIAR Initiatives and partners, to identify cost-effective approaches for scaling.

Gender SYNERGIES: This Initiative complements activities of the CGIAR GENDER Platform (<https://bittylink.com/qcs>). While the Platform focuses on synthesizing global gender research to deliver insights, identify and prioritize gaps, the Initiative focuses on producing strategic primary research, through designing and testing gender-transformative approaches, to improve effectiveness of scaling partners' interventions.

Work Packages

	Scope of Work	3-year Outcomes
TRANSFORMATIONS for equity and empowerment	Leverage women's VOICE and AGENCY in AFS to identify entry points for greater gender equality; generate desired future scenarios with women, youth and marginalized groups for inclusive AFS trajectories; design and test gender transformative approaches at multiple scales to transform constraining norms and support women's agency as innovators in markets.	At least 10 national agencies, civil society networks, and other public and private actors have strengthened their planning, decision making, and investments by incorporating evidence-based practices, novel scenarios and bespoke gender transformative strategies to overcome structural barriers and enable women's voice and agency and greater social inclusion in AFS governance and markets.
Bundling innovations for EMPOWERMENT and accelerated impact	Operationalizing socio-technical innovations for EMPOWERMENT entails understanding why adoption of promising technologies is low. WP2 identifies which factors need to be considered to co-design and test context-specific bundles of social and technical innovations leading to equal uptake and benefits by women, men and youth in AFS.	At least 4 context-dependent, socio-technical innovation bundles designed and piloted with multiple stakeholders in Eastern Southern Africa and West Central Africa to achieve empowerment outcomes for women, youth and marginalized groups generate an evidence base for large-scale climate-resilient agricultural investments by CGIAR, other initiatives and development and scaling partners.
Leveraging social PROTECTION to build resilience and reduce inequality	Social PROTECTION is a powerful platform reaching billions of vulnerable people in rural areas. WP3 co-designs and tests strategies to leverage social protection and complementary interventions around agricultural livelihoods, human capital, psychosocial factors, and social change to inclusively address poverty and gender inequality, building resilience to climate change and other shocks.	At least 4 governments, UN agencies or non-government partners have modified designs of social protection and other poverty graduation programs to strengthen gender equity and social inclusion in nutrition, health, education, agricultural livelihoods, and psychosocial well-being.
Enabling inclusive GOVERNANCE	Inclusive GOVERNANCE and effective public service delivery better promote equity when the priorities of women, youth, and marginalized groups are heard and consulted. WP4 tests the effectiveness of different institutional arrangements, interventions, and policies in promoting inclusive and responsive governance and public investments, including those related to climate change and planetary health.	At least 3 governments in climate change-affected countries of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have increased the gender responsiveness of local or national-level plans and policies, including those related to climate action, to enable women and vulnerable groups to better influence policies and budgets, and ensure investments and services benefit them.

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Impact Area Contributions

Nutrition, health & food security	Agri-food systems retrofitted for greater gender equality and social inclusion are expected to result in an improved ability of the AFS to provide healthy, nutrient-rich food (and enough of it) to meet the growing nutrition, health and food security demands of millions of men, women and children.
Poverty reduction, livelihoods & jobs	Poverty graduation programs, women's entrepreneurship development in the agri-food systems and application of gender-responsive packages of technical and institutional innovations to enhance and stabilize productivity will contribute to creating new jobs, developing resilient livelihood portfolios and expanding economic opportunities for women and men in food systems.
Gender equality, youth & social inclusion	Women, youth and other groups become proactive agents of agri-food systems transformation, benefiting from enhanced agency in policy dialogues, greater participation in the co-design of innovations and programs, and a better ability to demand, access and control use of services and technologies.
Climate adaptation & greenhouse gas reduction	Enhanced agency and reduction of structural barriers enable women, youth and other vulnerable groups to participate more actively in, and influence, policy making processes, including on national climate adaptation plans (NAPs), the Global Stock Take for the next generation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
Environmental health & biodiversity	Implementation of tried-and-tested socio-technical innovation bundles, which include digital support, enhanced decision-making, participatory development, and application of context-specific strategies, is expected to have a positive impact on the status and management of natural resources (water, soil, nutrients and biodiversity) in target sites.

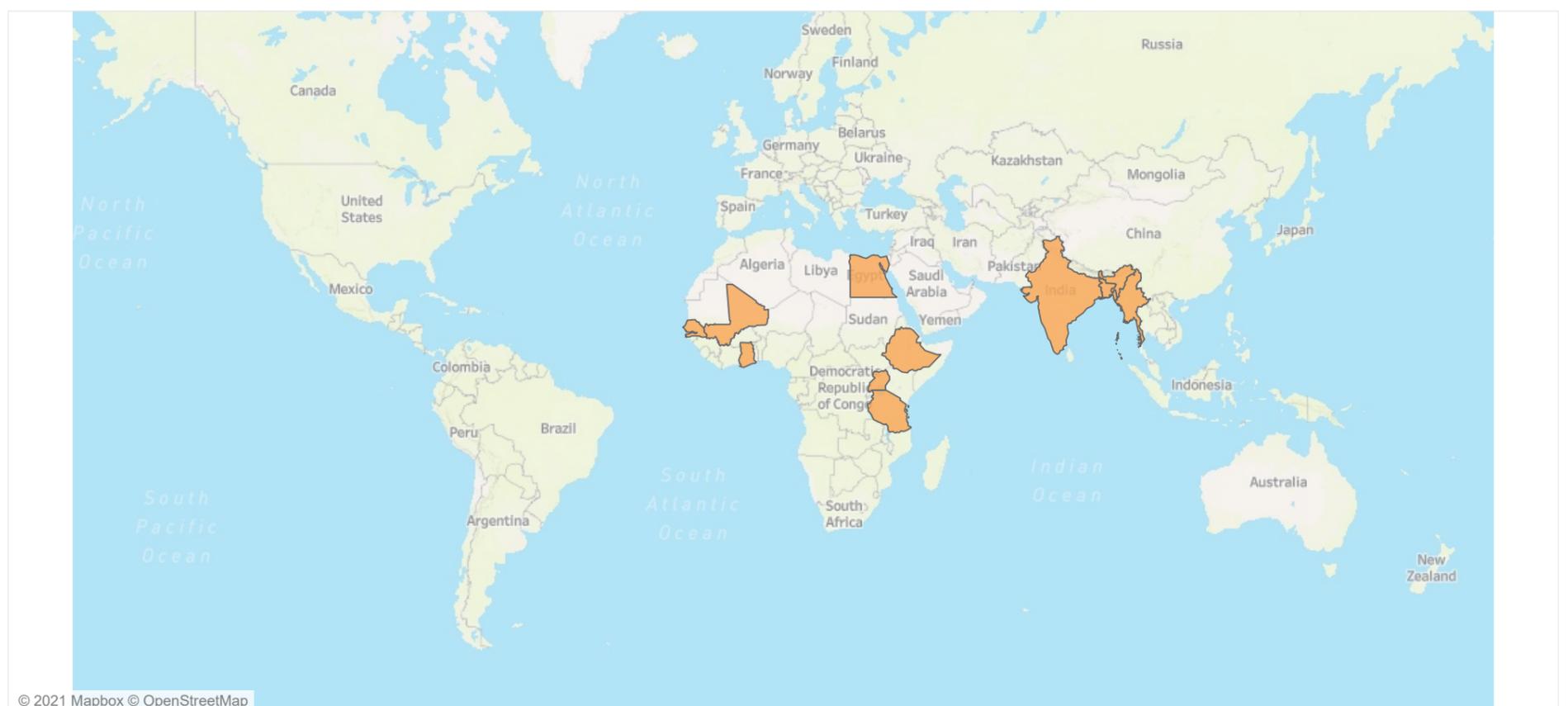
Impact on SDGs



Regions

Global	Central and West Asia and North Africa (CWANA), East and Southern Africa (ESA), South Asia (SA), South East Asia and the Pacific (SEA), West and Central Africa (WCA)
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Countries



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Innovations

Gender transformative approaches databases that tackle constraining norms and power relations causing gender and other social inequalities at multiple scales. For use by government, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors who aim to increase the voice and agency of women and socially excluded groups in pursuit of developing an inclusive AFS.

Decision support tool that outlines the necessary steps and processes to take when identifying the factors that limit empowerment and adoption of promising technologies when bundling socio-technical innovations. For use by other One CGIAR Initiatives and partners to increase uptake of and associated gender equality and empowerment outcomes from their core technologies.

Poverty graduation model interventions, combining social protection with interventions like poultry kits and training for women, men's engagement to support domestic work, and mental health support, designed to accelerate exiting poverty and empowerment for women and socially excluded groups in poor, fragile and climate change-affected areas in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

A set of recommended institutional arrangements (national-level plans, transparent gender responsive governance tracking tools, guidelines for governance of natural resources, tools for engaging women in the policy process, effective service delivery modalities, etc) to make the enabling environment around agri-food systems transformation and climate resilience more gender-equitable and socially inclusive.

A training curriculum available for women's groups in climate-vulnerable settings to increase their understanding of public sector responsibilities and potential toeholds to influence government, and to build their capacity and sense of collective agency to bring about improved AFS policies and public services.

Key Partners

Demand	Government	Government of Ethiopia / Government of Bangladesh / Government of Egypt
	International NGO	CARE International / WorldVision International
	Multilateral	Food and Agriculture Organization / World Food Program
	Other	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation / USAID GIZ
	Regional NGO	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
Innovation	Academic, Training and Research	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, Ethiopia/ Makerere University, Uganda / Cornell University, USA
	Government	Government of Ethiopia / Government of Bangladesh / Government of Egypt
	International NGO	CARE International / World Vision International / Promundo / Data2X
	Other	African Population and Health Research Center
	Private Sector	Cowtribe, Ghana
Scaling	Academic, Training and Research	Makerere University, Uganda
	Government	Government of Ethiopia / Government of Bangladesh / Government of Egypt (Ministry of Social Solidarity)
	Multilateral	Food and Agriculture Organization / World Food Program / UN Women / African Development Bank / Asian Development Bank
	Other	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation / USAID / GIZ
		Jeevika, Self-help Group, Bihar, India

Enabling gender and social equality through resilient and inclusive agri-food systems: theory of change

