

SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL

SUMMARY

A food systems assessment of the Sustainable Diets for All programme in Uganda and Zambia



A FOOD SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL PROGRAMME IN UGANDA AND ZAMBIA

The Sustainable Diets for All (SD4All) programme, co-ordinated by Hivos and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), aims to make more sustainable, diverse, healthy and nutritious food available for low-income citizens in Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Indonesia and Bolivia. SD4All was initiated in 2016 to build the advocacy capacity of civil society organisations to challenge unsustainable practices and incentives in food production and consumption. The programme takes evidence - especially evidence generated by citizens - directly to policymakers and international institutions so their policies, market practices and legislation will promote diets that are diverse, healthy, fair and based on environmentally sustainable production methods.

Although SD4All was not set up as a food systems programme, 'sustainable diets' as a concept reflects a food systems approach by integrating healthy food and a healthy environment. However, over the course of the programme Hivos and IIED realised the need for a more systemic and holistic approach to enabling sustainable diets and increasing food security by bringing all relevant food system stakeholders together to collaborate on truly sustainable solutions. At the end of the programme, in 2020, Hivos and IIED commissioned a retrospective assessment to show the degree to which the programme interventions reflected food systems thinking, and how they were transforming local food systems.

The assessment makes recommendations for further action to achieve greater change in a new four-year programme starting in July 2020 in Uganda and Zambia. It also proposes indicators that could be used to set up a food systems baseline for monitoring progress.

Box 1. Food Change Labs

The Food Change Lab process is an integral part of implementation of the SD4All programme. It brings multiple stakeholders together to share knowledge, evidence and ideas, and to jointly develop local, national and international examples of how food systems can be transformed. The Food Change Lab process is intended to take a 'field-to-fork' or 'farm-to-plate' approach that encompasses all stages in the food value chain and aims for both rapid, tangible results and longer-term outcomes, including strengthening stakeholders' capacities and networks.

In Uganda, the assessment focused on the Food Change Lab process (Box 1) in Kabarole district implemented by partner Kabarole Research Centre (KRC). In Zambia, the assessment looked at the whole programme - not only the

Food Change Lab, but also research, lobbying and advocacy, and media work.

Why look at the whole food system?

Our current food systems are rife with inequalities and issues that prevent adequate food security for all, and that have consequences for people and our planet, including contributing to climate change and the alarming rate of biodiversity decline. The food systems that feed and provide livelihoods for low-income citizens are often characterised by the high prevalence of informality. However, the traders, vendors and small and medium enterprise processors who are the backbone of the informal food system are overlooked in policy and public debate and face many challenges such as poor infrastructure (and associated threats to food safety), insecure livelihoods, harassment, unsafe working conditions, and lack of land tenure. A holistic food systems approach involving a diverse group of stakeholders is key to solving these urgent and interconnected challenges.

The food system has been defined as "the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded".¹

Thus, while the food value chain - from inputs through to consumption and waste disposal - concerns the actors and activities related directly to food, the food system includes additional contextual components and interrelated systems, such as political context, socio-cultural influences, economic drivers, environmental 'givens' and management systems (biodiversity, soil quality, water resources, etc), and labour markets - all of which contribute to shaping how the value chain functions. As such, the impacts and outcomes of the food system are broader than food itself and include impacts on public health, environmental sustainability and socio-cultural impacts, including on poverty, livelihoods and welfare (Figure 1).

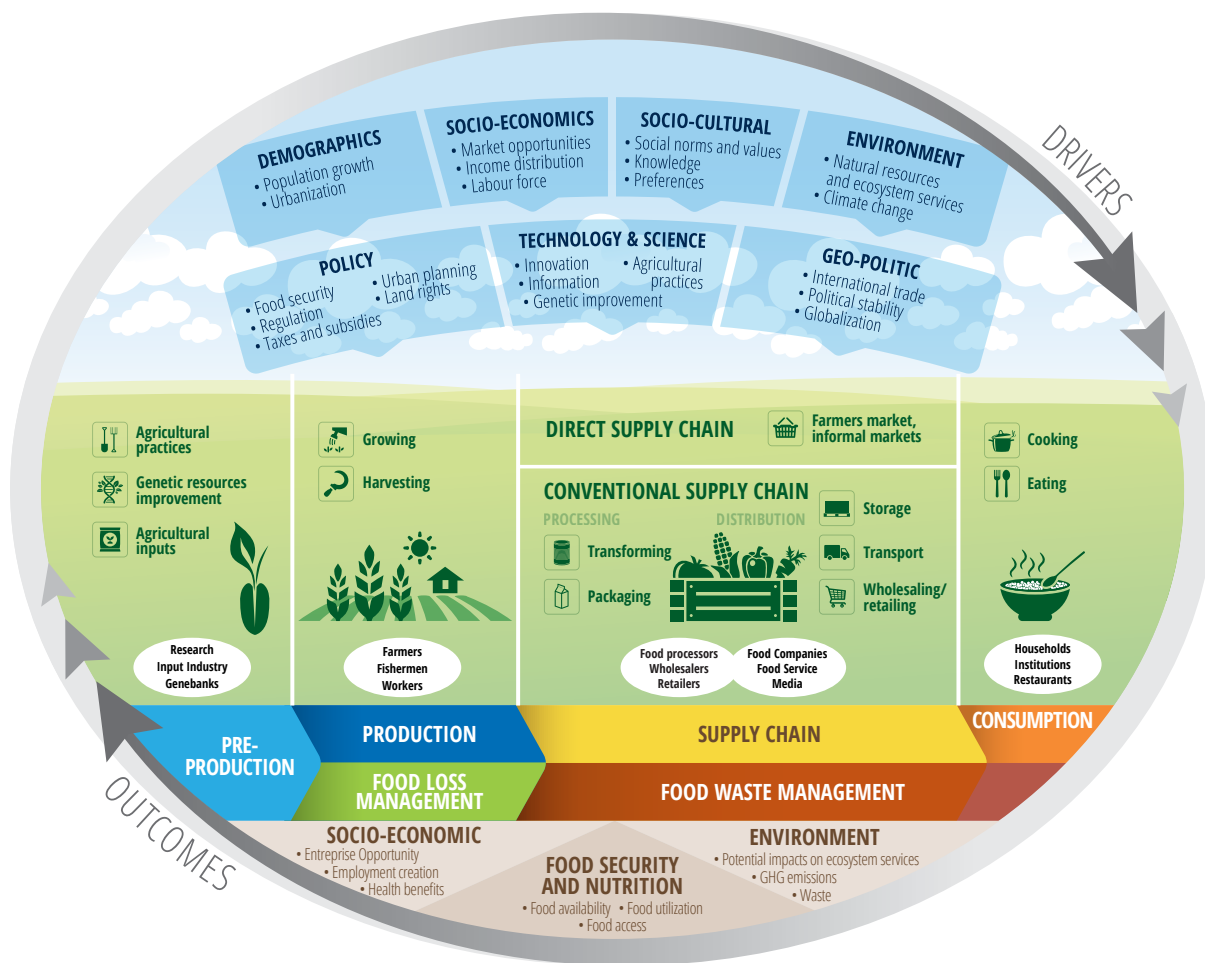
The food system also includes many actors who are not directly involved in food supply chain activities but whose work affects them nonetheless, including policymakers, informal market actors, civil society organisations, public health professionals, researchers and academics, training providers and educators, and the media.

Sustainable food systems principles

The last few years have seen growing recognition of the urgent need for a holistic food system approach to tackle the interconnected nature of food system challenges. The sustainable diets framework arose in recognition of that

Figure 1: The food system²

DRIVERS • ACTIVITIES • ACTORS • OUTCOMES



need, but most work in this area has been conceptual. Hivos and IIED realised the need to move beyond theory by implementing and monitoring a food systems approach in interventions on the ground. We have developed a set of eight principles to guide programmes that aim to advance sustainable food system transformation, to underscore both programme development and all stages of implementation (Box 2). These principles formed the basis of the assessment in this report.

Box 2. Sustainable food system principles	
CORE	1. Whole system approach
	2. Integrated sustainability dimensions (health and well-being, the economy, and the environment)
	3. Multi-level approach
	4. Multi-stakeholder participation
SUPPORT	5. Evidence-based interventions
	6. Innovation and flexibility
	7. Long-term focus / institutionalisation
	8. Monitoring and evaluation

Principles 1 to 4 are drawn from the above conceptualisation of the food system and are considered core principles.

Principles 5 to 8 support the core principles and are drawn from the literature on multi-stakeholder planning and programme development;³ principles 5 and 6 in particular were enshrined in the SD4All programme from the outset.

The Uganda Food Change Lab: summary of findings

The Uganda Food Change Lab is focused on Kabarole District in western Uganda, a fertile agricultural area at the foot of the Rwenzori Mountains. Fort Portal, which formally became a city in July 2020, is the region’s main urban hub. The Uganda programme emphasises the importance of increased production and consumption of locally-grown indigenous foods as part of sustainable and diverse diets, enabling access to safe, nutritious foods by low-income consumers (including via the informal sector). It aims to inform local and national policies, programmes and actions for transforming food systems that deliver sustainable and healthy diets in Uganda.

Outcomes

Although four years is not long enough to engender significant cultural change, the assessment report has identified outcome clusters and mapped how the various activities have had an effect (Figure 2). There were several key outcomes from the initiative:

- Local policies, plans and regulations were reviewed and approved to support diversity and healthy food at household level in Kabarole District. The SD4All programme led to amendments to the Production and Environment Ordinance to target multiple parts of the food system: inputs (seeds), production, post-harvest storage, processing, consumption (nutrition and food security); in-home and institutional cooking methods; and in-home storage.
- Several initiatives have helped to improve demand and consumption of indigenous food varieties and nutrient-dense recipes, including a greater presence of indigenous food in the district's markets and restaurants, the setting up of a seed bank, and regular indigenous food festivals.
- Improvements to the infrastructure (lighting and water) for informal street food vendors, who provide nutritious food for low-income consumers but who have operated in informal, often unsanitary conditions. Fort Portal became the first municipality to overcome the constraints of Uganda's 1935 Public Health Act by using local powers to provide an enabling environment for informal street vendors.

Sustainable food systems assessment findings

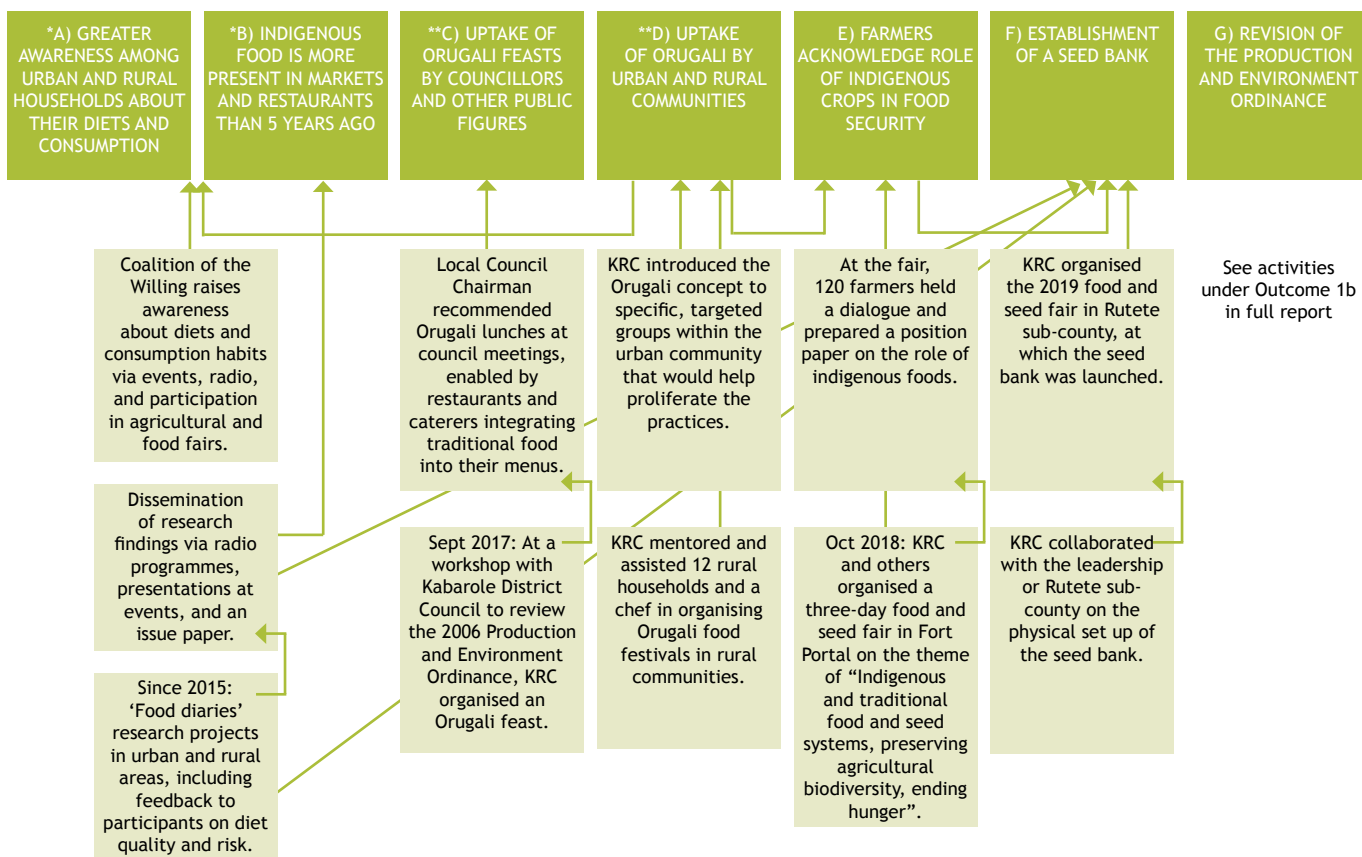
Principle 1: Whole system approach. The Uganda Food Change Lab responds to the challenges presented by low-income and informal employment, malnutrition and food insecurity, and violence against women street vendors,

and seeks to address their causes. As such, it operates at the intersection of the food system. The intention to work with stakeholders at all food systems nodes is evidenced in several activities. The stakeholder mapping brought together stakeholders from many (if not all) value chains nodes at the People's Food Summit. However, more attention could be paid to bottlenecks at the processing and trading nodes.

Principle 2: Integrated (thematic) sustainability dimensions. Of the three thematic dimensions of sustainability, well-being and (to a slightly lesser degree) environment are accounted for across the outcomes and activities of the Uganda Food Change Lab. The economic dimension received less attention. The commercial sector was under-represented at Food Change Lab events, although efforts were made to ensure a spectrum of other stakeholders could attend, including youth and informal sector food workers.

Principle 3: Multi-level approach. While the focus of the Uganda Food Change Lab was Kabarole District, it also targeted actors and mechanisms at multiple levels. For instance, the activities on street food vending leveraged local planning powers to create a more supportive environment for vendors while at the same time advocating for repeal or revision of the national 1935 Public Health Act that outlaws informal street vending. Some national government actors were engaged at the start, but follow-up (and potential to generate political will for national level

Figure 2. Sample Uganda outcome cluster, 'Improved demand and consumption of indigenous food varieties'



* Outcomes 2a and 2b are treated together because a) stimulates demand while b) is supply to meet that demand
 ** Orugali feasts come from the Tooro custom of sharing a meal of diverse dishes. They have become a platform for discussion and advocacy on sustainable diets

change) was impeded by the lack of presence of the main SD4All partner, Kabarole Research Centre (KRC), in Kampala.

Principle 4: Multi-stakeholder participation. Stakeholders directly affected by interventions were included in all initiatives. For example, street vendors participated in discussions with Fort Portal Municipality over street lighting, water points and designated spaces; and farmers at the first Food and Seed Fair in 2017 developed a position paper on indigenous foods that they presented to government representatives.

Principle 5: Evidence basis. The Uganda Food Change Lab performed well in evidence-based interventions, with the results of the food diaries research leveraged throughout the process. As a result, interventions were grounded in local realities and represented the priorities of citizens rather than assumptions of governments or international NGOs. Research findings have been disseminated via various channels (media, at multi-stakeholder events, issue papers, etc.), which has brought wide awareness of the issues identified.

Principle 6: Innovation and flexibility. Activities stemming from the Uganda Food Change Lab were highly innovative. These include the use of food diaries and traditional meals to raise household awareness of dietary diversity, promoting production and consumption of indigenous crops, and giving the informal sector a direct say in civic matters that affect them. More flexibility would have been desirable in designing interventions to respond to research findings (such as households' barriers to indigenous diets).

Principle 7: Long-term focus/institutionalisation. There were several mechanisms for institutionalising sustainable diets in Kabarole District: legislation, making indigenous food part of Fort Portal's public identity, finding an institutional home within government for key initiatives, and creating governance structures for informal workers. More reflection is needed to ensure the long-term durability of the Coalition of the Willing, the main multi-stakeholder platform.

Principle 8: Monitoring and evaluation. The SD4All programme used the Theory of Change method for programme planning, monitoring, adjustment, evaluation and learning. Several monitoring approaches were used, including outcome harvesting, narrative assessment, capacity self-assessments and non-scientific proxy indicators. These proved to be very useful to gain in-depth understanding of how activities have contributed to interim outcomes, but do not demonstrate progress and impacts of SD4All interventions on all aspects of the food system. Therefore, the outcomes in a Theory of Change must be coupled with indicators and a monitoring framework linked to food systems objectives that guide and facilitate measurement.

The SD4All programme in Zambia: summary of findings

Despite its rich natural and human resources, Zambia has high rates of malnutrition. Stunting and cognitive

impairment affect 40 per cent of children under five, and obesity and overweight affect 23 per cent of women. As well as poverty, a major reason for this is a high dependence on maize, leading to poor, high calorie diets that are rich in starch but low in fruit and vegetables. Maize monocropping on 90 per cent of the country's farms leads to loss of biodiversity and soil degradation, increases vulnerability to pests and recurrent climate change-related events like droughts and flooding. Traditional local crops, meanwhile, such as millet and sorghum, which are more drought tolerant and more nutritious, have been largely eclipsed. There is an urgent need for agricultural policy changes to promote diversity in agricultural production and consumption in Zambia.

Outcomes

Many of the activities under the Zambia SD4All programme are intended to increase knowledge and awareness and therefore take time to have an impact. Governments and local authorities have taken steps towards promoting sustainable food. For example, sustainable diets have been inserted into the 7th National Development Plan (NDP) and a national crop diversification strategy has been developed.

Key outcomes from the initiative include (see some outcomes reflected in Figure 3):

- The 2019 national budget foresees increasing the number of extension workers and strengthened integration of food diversity and nutrition in agricultural extension services, while the revision of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) programme will ensure greater access to non-maize seeds and other inputs.
- Lusaka City Council has signed a memorandum of understanding to create a food policy council, including informal market traders. In Kitwe a wide range of actors in the value chain committed to work together to support the marketing of diverse and traditional foods by reducing market levies and transportation costs in order to encourage access to markets.
- A national Good Food logo is in development, which will help consumers identify nutritious food. Increased awareness increases demand for sustainable foods by low-income consumers, especially women and youth.
- Knowledge and skills have been built to effectively promote and engender sustainable diets policies and practices of public and private sector actors. For example, the Beyond Maize study was a cooperation between Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), Consumer Unity Trust Society (CUTS), CSO-SUN, IIED, and the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute.

Sustainable food systems assessment findings

Principle 1: Whole system approach. Zambia's SD4All Food Change Lab looked mainly at production, consumption, processing and access. Although incomplete as a map of the food system, this was undoubtedly useful in allowing individual stakeholders to 'locate' themselves and their issues in relation to others, and helped the group prioritise

action. Adopting a food systems framework from the start and conducting a thorough food system scan would have led to more concerted, integrated actions. However, thorough stakeholder mapping was conducted prior to the launch of the Lusaka Food Policy Council in 2020, with 22 members representing most areas of the food value chain, including informal sectors and urban farmers to promote urban gardening.

Principle 2: Integrated (thematic) sustainability dimensions. The Zambia SD4All programme has mainly integrated the health and well-being and environment dimensions of sustainability. More thought could be given to the business case for growing, trading, and processing non-maize crops. Inclusion of a greater number of diverse business stakeholders would enable greater understanding of commercial needs. Being able to present a business case for diverse foods would attract investment and research by the mainstream private sector and government, and could speed up the transition.

Principle 3: Multi-level approach. The programme in Zambia has had impacts at all levels. There are clear outcomes in relation to national policies, and partners also worked at several sub-national levels to ensure local level interpretation of national policy promotes sustainable diets and give a greater say for local citizens in issues that directly affect them. At provincial level they identified challenges to implementing the 7th NDP and promoted crop diversity as part of the national Crop Diversification Strategy; they encouraged inclusion of food diversity and smallholder views in Ward Development Plans; and they worked with municipal governments to form food policy councils in Lusaka and Kitwe.

Principle 4: Multi-stakeholder participation. The Food Labs have been the centrepiece for multi-stakeholder participation in the SD4All programme in Zambia, and were

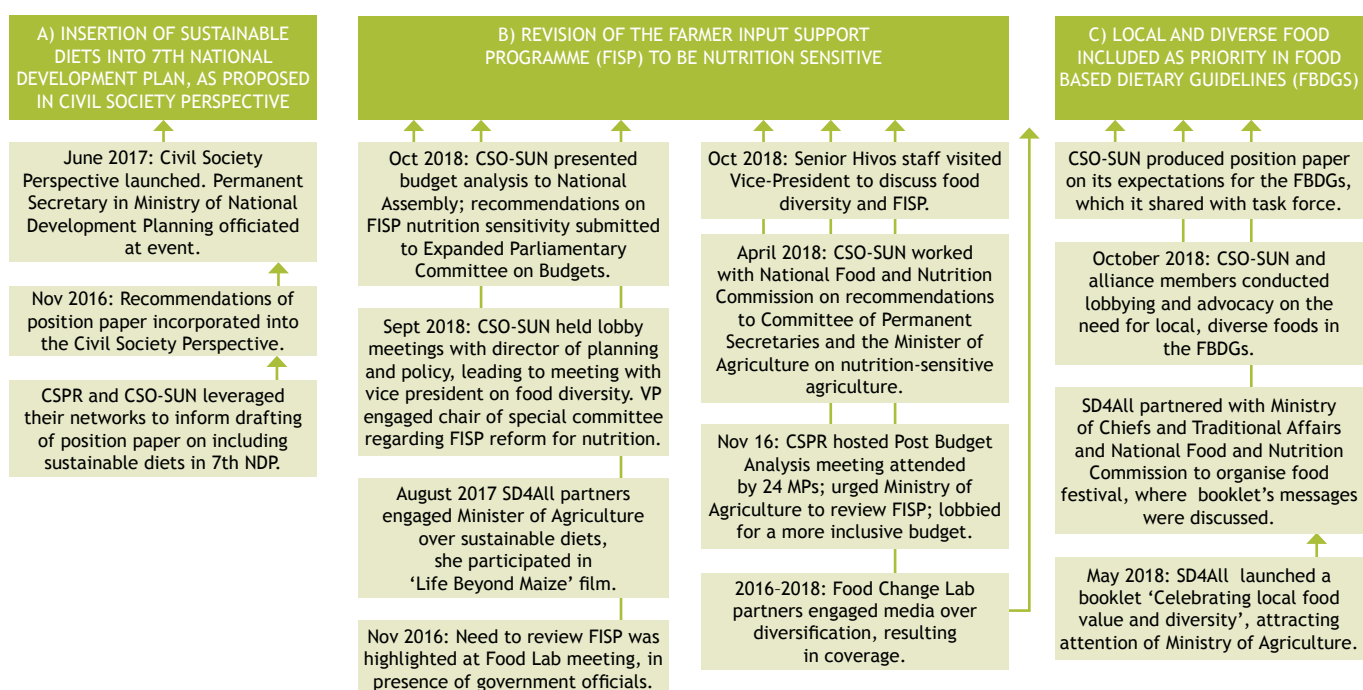
the first initiative in the country to bring together people from a range of perspectives to collectively analyse and develop solutions to issues in the food system. The Food Lab events would have benefited from more strategic invitation of stakeholders. For example, more businesses, and a greater variety from across the food value chain would have contributed to a more complete view of the food system at the outset, identification of supply bottlenecks, and greater understanding of businesses' needs in order to construct a business case for diverse foods.

Principle 5: Evidence basis. The research basis of the SD4All programme in Zambia has been very strong, with several discussion papers published on the findings of studies conducted by partners. Dissemination of key research projects on food diversity had a profound effect on policy discussions. The Beyond Maize study and the 2018 Life Beyond Maize short film have had a particularly profound effect on policy discussions. Discussions in lobbying meetings changed notably after the launch of the video, which was attended by over 100 people including senior government officials and accompanied by media and social media campaigns, with government officials much more aware of mono-cropping narrative and speaking the language of diversity. The Beyond Maize study and, before it, the 2016 position paper on diversity, were also instrumental in developing the Crop Diversification Strategy.

“For politicians, knowledge and information gaps are the biggest barriers to efforts to address sustainable agriculture.”
Former MP at the second Food Lab in May 2017.

Principle 6: Innovation and flexibility. The Food Labs element of the SD4All programme in Zambia has been strongly premised on innovation, with prototyping described as a way to “fail fast to learn quickly”. Flexibility has

Figure 3. Sample Zambia outcome cluster, ‘Governments promoting sustainable food production and consumption’



also been paramount in piloting a multitude of small-scale actions.

Principle 7: Long-term focus/institutionalisation. The long-term durability of initiatives was a low priority. Some stakeholders (e.g. the food diversity prototype group) pledged to continue working on a voluntary basis after the end of SD4All if necessary. The only governance structure created to promote on-going work was the Lusaka Food Policy Council, housed within the municipality to ensure it can continue even without the CUTS as co-ordinating partner.

Principle 8: Monitoring and evaluation. The programme lacked robust monitoring and evaluation to assess progress towards food system change objectives. The partners conducted outcomes harvesting to validate activities' contribution towards outcomes in relation to the Theory of Change, but since this was not the intention at the start of the programme there are no indicators for measuring progress on food systems change.

Recommendations for the next four years

By looking across and between the results of the assessments in Uganda and Zambia, the report makes 12 recommendations for the Food Labs in both countries over the next four years, which will continue under a new programme (Healthy Food Africa) funded by the EU:

- 1) Adhere to an explicit definition of and framework for 'the food system' from the outset and ensure all partners are aware of and understand this.
- 2) Partners should continuously reflect on and apply the sustainable food system principles in all programme activities, adjusting and strengthening them where necessary. Partners should keep detailed documentary records to enable a retrospective review.
- 3) Conduct a food system scan at the start of the programme to have a full picture of how it functions and the key issues. This will help stakeholders to identify bottlenecks and pressure points to address at the outset and provide an overview that can be revisited periodically and adjust as necessary.
- 4) Conduct thorough stakeholder mapping that not only identifies individuals and organisations and their general activities, but that also their connections, interests, perspectives and priorities.
- 5) Provide a definition of sustainable diets that includes all three dimensions of sustainability, and ensure balance in all three dimensions across the programme activities and outcomes, taking into account local priorities.
- 6) Ensure engagement of economic and finance government departments and formal, mainstream enterprises to unlock research and investment in sustainable diets and ensure the transition is economically viable for all stakeholders.
- 7) Select programme partners with the networks and capacity to work effectively at national and sub-national levels and to act as legitimate representatives in the food system of low-income women and men.
- 8) Ensure information is available in native languages and is presented in appropriate, accessible ways for different audiences to avoid unintentionally excluding some stakeholders.
- 9) Involve gender and inclusivity experts in programme planning from the start; ensure application of Hivos' Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion (GEDI) strategy.⁴ A focused effort can especially help mitigate exclusion of women and youth from consultations and decision making. Good practice includes 'pre-labs' for women and youth before the actual Food Change Labs and preparatory training sessions to support women's productive participation and agency.
- 10) Give serious consideration to establishing formal governance arrangements for multi-stakeholder platforms so that they can continue to operate after the end of the programme. If formality is deemed undesirable, consider alternative ways to sustain their work over the long term.
- 11) Throughout the programme, seek to identify how initiatives can secure long-term funding or become financially self-sustaining.
- 12) Generate a food systems indicator framework at the start of the programme (see example indicator frameworks in the full report, Annex B). This monitoring framework could also benefit from an extra layer to assess the impact on collective citizen agency.

Notes

¹ FAO (2018), Sustainable Food Systems: concept and framework, <http://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>; ² Source CIAT CGIAR <https://ciat.cgiar.org/about/strategy/sustainable-food-systems/>; ³ E.g. IPES-Food (2017). What makes urban food policy happen? Insights from five case studies. International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. Available at: http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/Cities_full.pdf; De Zeeuw, H. & Dubbeling, M., 2015. Process and tools for multi-stakeholder planning of the urban agro-food system. In H. de Zeeuw & P. Drechsel, eds. Cities and Agriculture – Developing Resilient Urban Food Systems, Abingdon and New York: Reuters, p. 451; ⁴ Mung'ala (2018) Hivos Gender Equality and Diversity Inclusion Strategy, <https://www.hivos.org/assets/2018/09/Hivos-Gender-Equality-and-Diversity-Strategy-online.pdf>

Access the full report

Read the [full food systems assessment](#) of the Sustainable Diets for All programme now, to explore the detailed food systems approach analysis of our experiences and insights on the ground in Uganda and Zambia.

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