



INSIGHTS SUMMARY

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE: PRACTICAL APPROACHES IN FOOD SYSTEMS

GLOBAL SUMMIT / PARTNERSHIP / WORKSHOP / 22 JUNE 2023

Hosted with Nutrition Connect (GAIN) | IFSS (GAIN) | Glocolearning

We would like to thank the following experts for sharing their invaluable experiences and lessons learned from working on the frontlines of the food systems field:

Alok Ranjan, Director of Programmes and Investments, **The Power of Nutrition**; **Paloma Fernandes**, CEO, **The Cereal Millers Association in Kenya**; **Manasseh Miruka**, Nutrition Enterprise Unit (NEU) Cluster Lead, **GAIN**; **Tara Shyam**, Director, Food System Partnerships, **Global FoodBanking Network**; **Mduduzi Mbuya**, Director, Knowledge Leadership, **GAIN**

We also thank the following systems experts for guiding the practical learning sessions:

Charlotte Pedersen, Innovations for Health and Planet, Lead & Senior Advisor, **GAIN**; **Debjeni Samantaray**, Knowledge Mobilization Manager, Nutrition Connect, **GAIN**; **Francoise Cattaneo**, Sustainable food systems researcher and facilitator, **Glocolearning**; **Heather Zornetzer**, Sustainable Food Systems Researcher, **IFSS portal & Glocolearning**; **Lilian Nyamongo**, Associate, Nutrition Connect, **GAIN**; **Oliver Camp**, **GAIN**; **Roseline Remans**, CEO, **Glocolearning** & Honorary visiting researcher, **CGIAR**; **Silvia Martinez**, **Glocolearning** intern and **WUR** student; **Tesfaye Hailu Bekele**, Sustainable Healthy Diets Researcher, **Wageningen University** & Researcher, **Glocolearning**

This insights paper captures the key takeaways from a skills-based session, “Partnerships for Systemic Change: Practical Approaches in Food Systems”, where global experts in the food systems domain shared their knowledge and insights on designing and implementing effective systems change. The session was organised as part of the Business Fights Poverty Global Summit 2023, emphasising the significance of collaboration and collective action in addressing complex challenges.

The workshop brought together practitioners from Nutrition Connect (GAIN), IFSS, and Glocolearning who delved into the intricacies of systems change. With the aim of ensuring that every individual around the world has access to nourishing food, the experts recognised that solving issues such as food shortages and malnutrition necessitates tackling interconnected challenges like poverty, political instability, and climate change – and also that the evolving learning

from addressing food systems is applicable to other systems change challenges.

The workshop focused on introducing participants to essential tools for systems change, including visioning, backcasting, accelerators, and pathway mapping. Through an interactive and informative session, attendees gained insights into practical approaches for creating lasting systemic change in food systems.

OVERVIEW

The discussions emphasised the importance of trust-building, changing policies and regulations, designing market incentives, stable finance, and transforming mindsets. Financing any system change was recognised as crucial and not to be underestimated. The report also discusses the importance of safeguarding against undesirable effects.

INSIGHT 1: LONG-TERM SYSTEMIC THINKING IS ESSENTIAL

The discussions during the workshop underscored the primacy of a systemic, long-term approach over short-term gains. The complexities inherent in systems change, ranging from resource availability to policy and governance structures, demand a systemic perspective that considers the intricate web of relationships and dependencies. This involves understanding the intricate connections among the various actors in the system, including producers, consumers, policymakers, and investors, as well as acknowledging the constraints and opportunities within the system. The balance of urgency and patience was highlighted, as the issues confronting food systems are not easily resolved and require sustained, targeted efforts. Moreover, the workshop stressed the need to cultivate a mature set of stakeholders, including funders

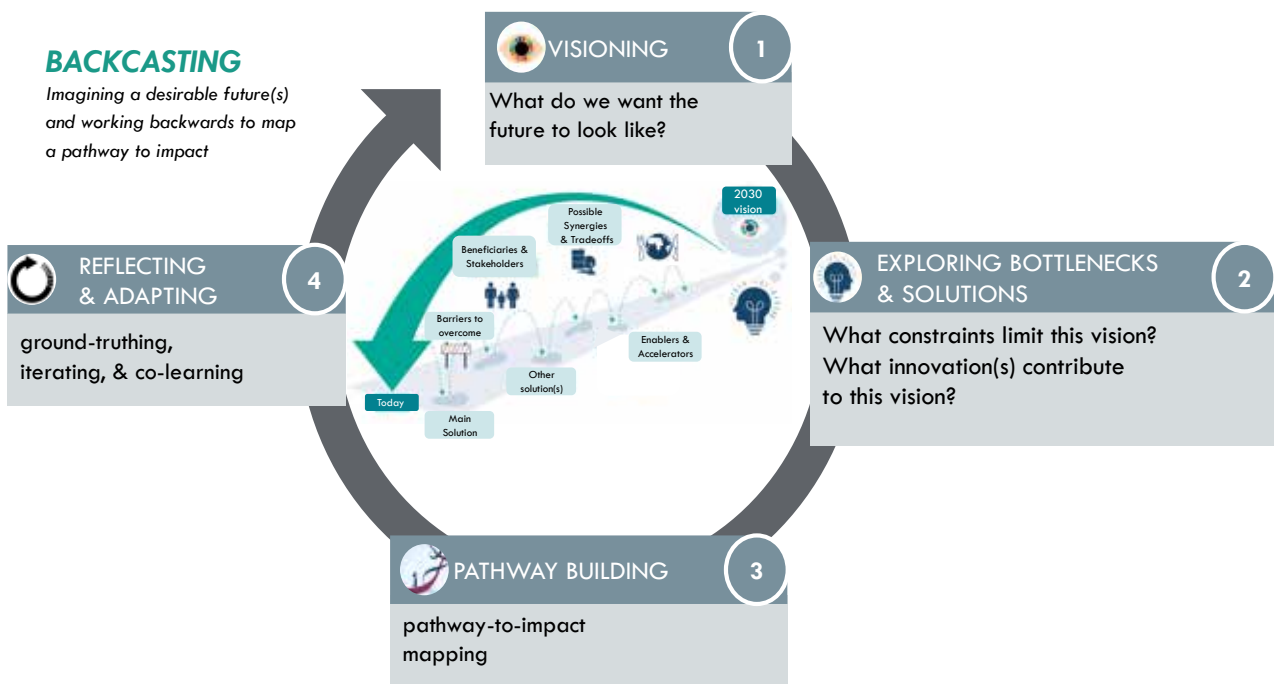
and investors, who are not only focused on immediate victories but also on achieving long-term systemic improvements.

INSIGHT 2: INNOVATIVE TOOLS FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE ALREADY EXIST

The participants emphasised the role of innovative tools, such as the Backcasting-to-pathway map builder tool available on the Innovative Food Systems Solutions (IFSS) Portal, for enabling systems thinking and understanding complex food system challenges. The portal, an open-access platform, allows users to explore and implement food systems innovations.

The Backcasting tool, in particular, emerged as a powerful means of fostering systems change. It involves envisioning a desirable future and then working backward to identify the necessary steps to achieve it. Articulating these visions not only elucidates how different partners envisage a desirable future but also exposes the differences and similarities in their perspectives.

This tool, combined with other innovative solutions – such as identifying accelerators and anticipating blockers – holds immense promise for fostering systemic change. You can find a list of tools shared during the session in the resources section of this paper.



INSIGHT 3: PRIVATE SECTOR AND SMES UNLOCK SCALE & LONGEVITY

An integral component of systemic change is the private sector, particularly Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Discussions across the workshop identified these key stakeholders as pivotal in driving systemic change.

The notion of 'ownership' was stressed, wherein businesses should not only comprehend the complexities of the food systems but also shoulder the responsibility of transforming them. The discussion further highlighted the capacity of the private sector to influence consumer behaviour and promote good nutrition. By leveraging the power of their brands, businesses can play a vital role in promoting nutritious food consumption.

As SMEs offer a unique blend of agility, innovation, and adaptability – which are crucial for navigating the complexities of food systems – they can quickly respond to changing market conditions, develop innovative solutions to pressing challenges, and scale their operations to meet growing demand. Moreover, SMEs are often embedded in local communities, allowing them to leverage local knowledge and resources to enhance the resilience and sustainability of food systems. The workshop underscored the need to support SMEs through conducive policy frameworks, adequate funding, and capacity-building.

INSIGHT 4: PEOPLE PROXIMATE TO THE CHALLENGES BEST UNDERSTAND THE SOLUTIONS

An important insight was the evidence demonstrating the wisdom within locally grown solutions in addressing complex system challenges. A key example discussed was the effective treatment of children with acute malnutrition using locally grown foods. The participants suggested that equipping communities with the necessary resources and empowering them to unleash their local knowledge could foster sustainable change, enhance food security, and aid in combating malnutrition.

Recognising the integral role of women, indigenous communities, and intergenerationality in system transformations was highlighted. The agency of these groups could pave the way for significant positive change. Moreover, enhancing trust, humility, and ownership across the value chain could serve as a catalyst for systemic change.

Community empowerment, coupled with locally grown solutions, is a critical entry point for achieving resilience, fighting poverty, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

INSIGHT 5: CO-CREATION AND COLLABORATION ARE CATALYSTS OF CHANGE

The workshop emphasised the power of co-creation and collaboration in driving systemic change in all systems. Given the complexity of food systems, no single actor can bring about change on their own, and the same was said for other systems identified during the workshop. Systems change requires a collective effort, with all stakeholders contributing their expertise, resources, and perspectives towards a shared goal. This collaborative approach necessitates acknowledging and respecting the diverse interests, needs, and aspirations of all actors involved. It also entails fostering trust, transparency, and mutual accountability among stakeholders. The workshop highlighted the importance of engaging the most affected communities in decision-making processes, thereby shifting power dynamics and enabling long-lasting change.

Community empowerment, coupled with locally grown solutions, is a critical entry point for achieving resilience, fighting poverty, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

A GUIDE TO BACKCASTING AND ACCELERATING SYSTEMS CHANGE

STEP 1: VISIONING

- Start by imagining a desirable future for the system.
- Articulate this vision among different partners, encouraging their input and perspectives.
- Use guiding questions to trigger further discussion, explore shared aspirations, and begin working backwards from the shared vision (see Backcasting image).

STEP 2: IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL ACCELERATORS

- Understand the ten essential elements identified by Cornell University for accelerating change (see Accelerators wheel image)
- Recognize that these elements apply across various systems, not just food systems.
- Prepare to discuss experiences and lessons learned related to these accelerators.

STEP 3: EXPLORING BOTTLENECKS AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

- Bring together representatives from different sectors to identify bottlenecks and solutions.
- Look for connections and underlying drivers among the challenges and solutions.
- Ask critical questions. Seek solutions that benefit multiple sectors and create synergies rather than trade-offs.

By following these steps, you can leverage the backcasting approach and the identified accelerators to foster stronger partnerships, challenge assumptions, and accelerate positive change in food systems.

STEP 4: REFLECTING AND ADAPTING

- Allocate time for reflection and learning from both successes and failures.
- Emphasise collaborative learning and adaptability.
- Create opportunities to share lessons learned and adjust strategies accordingly.

STEP 5: PATHWAY MAP

- Use a pathway map to visually represent the interconnected nature of different ideas and clusters.
- Allow different partners to identify their roles and collaborative opportunities within the map. Challenge assumptions.
- Address specific areas that require further discussion or trust-building with certain groups.

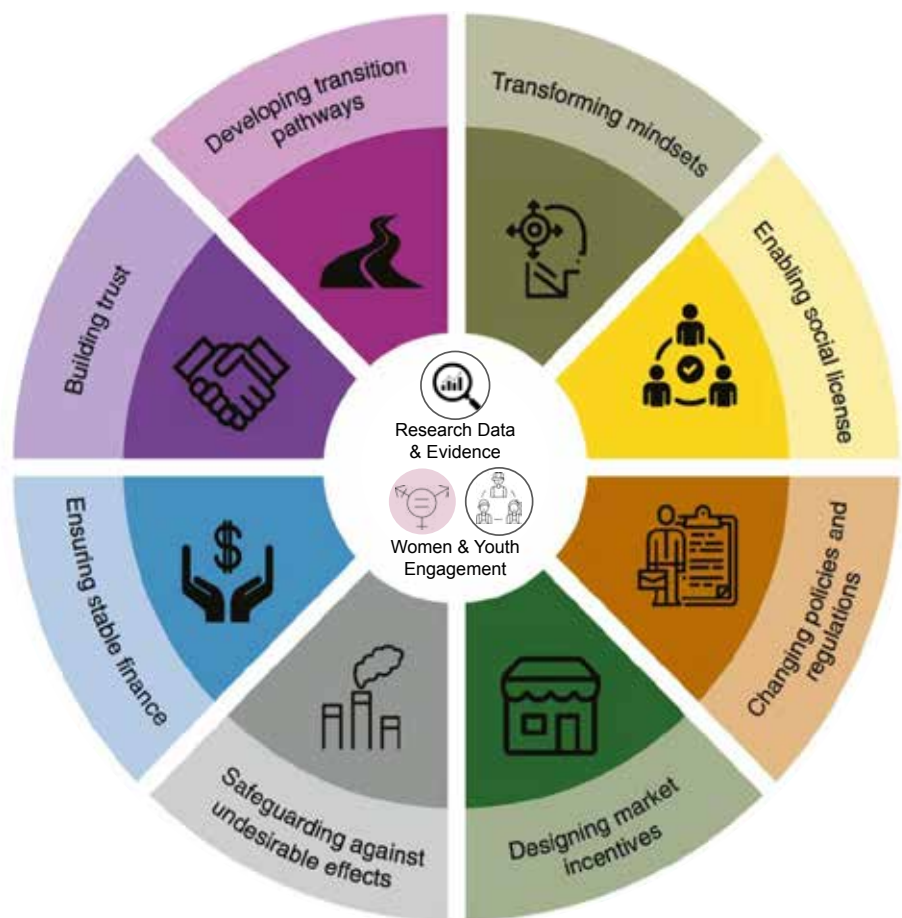
By following these steps, you can leverage the backcasting approach and the identified accelerators to foster stronger partnerships, challenge assumptions, and accelerate positive change in food systems. Remember that these processes can be messy but valuable, requiring collaborative effort and continuous reflection.

TOP FIVE PIECES OF ADVICE FROM THE SYSTEMS CHANGE PRACTITIONERS:

1. Establishing trust between different actors and partners is crucial for effective collaboration.
2. Policy and regulatory changes play a significant role in driving market incentives and accelerating progress in system change.
3. Effective design of market incentives and obtaining social licence are key drivers for innovation adoption and building public trust.
4. Access to stable and sustainable financial resources is vital for scaling up innovations and actions in any system change.
5. Transforming mindsets is essential for driving system change.

ACCELERATORS

Elements that are found to be essential to accelerate systems change, building upon food systems experience
Adapted from Herrero et al. NATURE FOOD, VOL 1, May 2020; 266–272
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-020-0074-1>,



CONCLUSION

The experiences from practitioners working to create long-term systemic change in food and nutrition demonstrate the need for concerted efforts and strategic actions. Trust-building, changing policies and regulations, designing market incentives, stable finance, and transforming mindsets emerged as key insights from the discussions. Addressing these aspects and promoting collaboration, inclusivity, and collective learning will lead to

more effective and sustainable practices in any system change. To achieve the desired impact, it is crucial to align stakeholders, bridge sectors, and foster holistic perspectives, keeping in mind the importance of data, evidence, and the empowerment of underrepresented groups. By implementing these insights, we can drive transformative change and create more resilient and equitable societal systems for the future.

RESOURCES:

- Business Fights Poverty Global Summit 2023 - resources page for this Systems Change workshop. Available at: <https://businessfightspovetry.org/global-summits>
- GAIN (n.d.) GAIN: Partnerships for systemic change: Practical approaches to food systems. Available at: <https://www.gainhealth.org/events/partnerships-systemic-change-practical-approaches-food-systems>
- Glocolearning (n.d.) Glocolearning. Available at: <https://ifssportal.nutritionconnect.org/glocolearning>
- Innovative Food Systems Solutions (IFSS) portal. Available at: <https://ifssportal.nutritionconnect.org/>
- Miro Board (n.d.) Miro Board outputs from the June workshop 2023. Available at: <https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVMHD752c=/> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Miro Board (n.d.) The Systems Change Miro Board template. Available at: <https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVM6OePEM=/> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Slides from the workshop (n.d.) Slides from the workshop. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YAIToSo55di3HByO3SkhsnimJ-ZeS7ha/view?usp=sharing> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Twitter video of the workshop (n.d.) Twitter video of the workshop. Available at: <https://twitter.com/FightPoverty/status/1673271102892838912?s=20> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).

FURTHER REFERENCES:

- GAIN (2019) No more missed opportunities: Advancing public-private engagement for nutrition. Available at: <https://www.gainhealth.org/resources/reports-and-publications/no-more-missed-opportunities-advancing-public-private> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- GAIN (2020) GAIN Convening Paper #7, Building Business Contributions for 2020 Nutrition Summit. Available at: <https://www.gainhealth.org/resources/reports-and-publications/gain-convening-paper-series-7-building-business-contributions-for-2020-nutrition-summit> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Innovative Food Systems Solutions (IFSS) portal (n.d.) IFSS Moving to Action. Available at: <https://ifssportal.nutritionconnect.org/moving-to-action> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Innovative Food Systems Solutions (IFSS) portal (n.d.) IFSS Moving Action tools and resources. Available at: <https://ifssportal.nutritionconnect.org/moving-to-action/tools> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Innovative Food Systems Solutions (IFSS) portal (n.d.) IFSS Moving Action self-guided backcasting online tool kit. Available at: <https://ifssportal.nutritionconnect.org/moving-to-action/backcasting-tool> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Kumanyika, S., Kraak, V., Rahn, M., Kranz, S., Menon, P., Ruel, M. and Garrett, J. (2019) New global estimates of hidden hunger. Available at: <https://www.gainhealth.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/new-global-estimates-for-hidden-hunger.pdf> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Nutrition Connect (n.d.) Nutrition Connect - Partnerships for systemic change curated event page. Available at: <https://nutritionconnect.org/news-events/bfp-partnerships-systemic-change-practical-approaches-food-systems-change> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Nutrition Connect (n.d.) Nutrition Connect Advancing Partnerships Priorities. Available at: <https://nutritionconnect.org/priority-areas/advancing-partnerships> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Nutrition Connect (n.d.) Strengthening Accountability for Business Nutrition. Available at: <https://nutritionconnect.org/resource-center/strengthening-accountability-business-nutrition> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Nutrition Connect (n.d.) Food Waste: Nutrition we can't afford to lose, climate costs we can't afford to pay. Available at: <https://nutritionconnect.org/news-events/food-waste-nutrition-we-cant-afford-lose-climate-costs-we-cant-afford-pay> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Nutrition Connect (n.d.) Multi-stakeholder action for better business reporting in nutrition. Available at: <https://nutritionconnect.org/news-events/multi-stakeholder-action-better-business-reporting-nutrition> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).
- Nutrition Connect (n.d.) Food System PPPs: Can they advance public health and business goals at the same time? Available at: <https://nutritionconnect.org/resource-center/food-system-ppps-can-they-advance-public-health-and-business-goals-same-time> (Accessed: 26 June 2023).