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GCAN
GENDER, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND NUTRITION INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

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GCAN Partner Workshop:

Report on Lessons and Priorities for Strengthening Policy Engagement, Institutional Capacity, and Sustainability

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Group photo of the GCAN project team.

Summary The Gender, Climate Change, and Nutrition Integration Initiative (GCAN) brought partners together in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to reflect on progress, exchange lessons on capacity strengthening and policy engagement, identify priorities for the remaining period of the project, and engage with stakeholders in Ethiopia. The three-day workshop combined reflection, peer learning, forward planning, and stakeholder consultation. Several key takeaways emerged from the workshop:

- Partners have made substantial progress in building awareness of the gender-climate-nutrition nexus, developing tools and training materials, convening multisectoral actors, and creating entry points into policy and planning processes. The next challenge is moving from awareness of the importance of integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition goals in policy processes to routine application and institutionalization.

- Capacity strengthening on integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition needs to extend beyond training individuals. Participants emphasized leadership buy-in, institutional mandates, coordination mechanisms, practical tools, sustained financing, follow-up, and opportunities to apply learning in real policy and planning processes.
- Country approaches differ, but partners gained insights from cross-country experiences and valued the opportunity for cross-country learning. Existing manuals, frameworks, metrics, policy briefs, and facilitation approaches could be consolidated and adapted rather than creating entirely new products in each setting.
- Policy engagement is most effective when it is sustained, demand-driven, linked to active policy windows, and grounded in relationships with both technical staff and decisionmakers. Partners also highlighted the importance of co-creating evidence and translating it into practical guidance to facilitate GCAN integration.
- Looking ahead, partners want to strengthen monitoring of capacity and institutional change, deepen peer learning, embed GCAN approaches in existing institutions and platforms, and mobilize resources and partnerships that can sustain the work beyond the current project period.

1. Workshop objectives and approach

The workshop provided an opportunity for GCAN partners to take stock of progress, learn across country experiences, and sharpen priorities through 2027. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss how to connect capacity strengthening with policy influence and longer-term institutional change. The third day was intentionally designed as a separate, outward-facing stakeholder consultation around a specific thematic research issue: how to reduce post-harvest loss along nutrient-dense value chains in the GCAN focal countries. The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Reflect on GCAN progress to date and discuss priorities and a shared vision to 2027.
- Share progress and lessons learned from partner capacity strengthening activities and identify opportunities for cross-country learning and collaboration.
- Share experiences and lessons on policy engagement and communications for lasting influence.
- Showcase GCAN research to partners and relevant stakeholders and gather feedback to inform future research, policy engagement, and programming.

Workshop at a Glance

Day 1: Reflect and strengthen - GCAN progress, cross-country capacity needs, partner roadmaps, and peer learning.
Day 2: Engage and influence - sustainable capacity strengthening, policy engagement, communications, and final-year priorities.
Day 3: Evidence and action - stakeholder consultation on reducing post-harvest loss of nutrient-dense foods, followed by internal closing and follow-up discussions.

2. Day 1 - GCAN progress and capacity strengthening

Day 1 moved from a broad review of GCAN progress to a more detailed examination of capacity needs, partner experiences, and opportunities for collaboration. The sequence helped participants connect the initiative-wide picture with the different institutional and policy contexts in which partners are working.

2.1 Opening and reflections on GCAN progress



Photo: GCAN Project Lead, Elizabeth Bryan, IFPRI

The workshop opened with welcome remarks from Professor Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher, Executive Director, Forum for Social Studies (FSS), and Dr. Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse, Senior Research Fellow and Country Lead, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)-Ethiopia, and a review of the workshop objectives and agenda. Elizabeth Bryan, IFPRI project lead, then reflected on GCAN progress across its three workstreams: 1) policy engagement and capacity strengthening, 2) advisory services, and 3) strategic research at the nexus of gender, climate change, and nutrition. She highlighted recent research on land rights, drivers of animal-source food prices, climate-responsive social protection, and the development and validation of the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) for climate change tool.

The presentation also posed a forward-looking question for the partnership: how can GCAN document what has been learned across different country approaches, strengthen the use of its tools and evidence, and support continued uptake beyond individual project activities? This question was carried through the remainder of the workshop.

2.2 Interactive activity: GCAN journey and vision through 2027

Participants reflected on achievements to date and aspirations through 2027. The discussion highlighted the value of GCAN as a cross-country learning platform and the progress made in integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition into policy processes, research, and capacity strengthening. Participants also emphasized that the remaining period should focus on converting increased awareness into more durable changes in institutional practice, policy implementation, and collaboration.

The end-of-day feedback session supported this forward-looking emphasis. Among the priorities participants selected for investment through 2027, policy engagement and communications, as well as data and tools for advisory services, received the most selections, followed by mentorship of early-career researchers. Participants also highlighted intersectoral coordination, anchoring multisectoral platforms in government, using existing approaches rather than reinventing them, and improving measurement of change.

2.3 Cross-country capacity needs assessment

Elyse Iruhiriye, Research Fellow, IFPRI, presented findings from the cross-country capacity needs assessment covering Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria (Kano and Adamawa states), and Senegal. The assessment in Odisha, India, is ongoing. Using a mixed-methods approach and country-level validation workshops,

the assessment examined strengths, gaps, and priorities for integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition into policy and programming at both the systems and organizational levels.

At the systems level, the assessment found that countries generally have established climate and environmental policies, strategies, and institutional frameworks, often aligned with international commitments. However, integration of gender, climate change, and nutrition remains uneven across policy design, implementation, and monitoring. Gender considerations are relatively well established institutionally, although they are not always transformative, while nutrition is often less explicitly integrated into climate policies.

Key challenges at the systems level included:

- Policy design: Limited meaningful participation of women, farmers, pastoralists, and other stakeholders; insufficient attention to local realities; and difficulties translating broad policy commitments into actionable strategies.
- Policy implementation: Inadequate and unpredictable financing, unclear institutional responsibilities, weak cross-sector coordination, and declining stakeholder participation after the design stage. In Nigeria, challenges in translating federal policies into state-level frameworks were also highlighted.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Underdeveloped indicators for assessing gender–climate–nutrition linkages, fragmented and largely project-based data systems, limited documentation of outcomes, and weak mechanisms for using monitoring evidence to inform policy adjustments.



Photo: Elyse Iruhiriye presents the results of the cross-country capacity needs assessment.

At the organizational level, respondents generally reported stronger integration of the three themes into organizational strategies than into broader policy frameworks. Many organizations have committed staff, relevant technical expertise, and experience addressing individual dimensions of the nexus. However, significant gaps remain in their capacity to operationalize integrated approaches. Gender expertise was the most consistently available across institutions, although its application was not always transformative, and some countries reported declining availability of gender specialists. Nutrition expertise was less consistently available, particularly within climate- and gender-focused organizations. Other organizational constraints included limited understanding of the interlinkages among the three themes, insufficient practical guidance for integrated program design, and inadequate analytical capacity and evidence.

Across both levels, the assessment highlighted a common challenge: although awareness of the gender–climate–nutrition nexus is increasing, institutions often lack the capacities, resources, and mechanisms to translate this awareness into coordinated action. Priority capacity-strengthening needs included improving institutional coordination and partnerships; developing practical frameworks, tools, and operational guidance; strengthening integrated monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems; improving evidence synthesis and communication; mobilizing sustainable financing; and advancing nutrition-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches.

The discussion emphasized the importance of aligning capacity strengthening with country priorities and practical implementation needs. Participants also noted that policymakers are more likely to adopt tools they have helped develop or adapt, reinforcing the value of co-creation. The assessment provided an

evidence base for partners to develop context-specific capacity-strengthening roadmaps and identified opportunities for cross-country learning and collaboration.



Photo: Participants listening to the presentation on the cross-country capacity needs assessment results

2.4 Partner presentations: capacity strengthening progress and priorities

Partner organizations presented their capacity strengthening roadmaps, progress toward objectives, lessons learned, and priorities through 2027. While the approaches reflect different institutional contexts (opportunities and constraints), the presentations showed a common shift in the partners' objectives from broad awareness raising toward more targeted, applied, and institutionally anchored capacity strengthening.

Ethiopia – Forum for Social Studies (FSS)

The capacity needs assessment identified several priority areas for capacity strengthening building the technical expertise to integrate gender, climate change and nutrition; increasing awareness and understanding of how to integrate GCAN in policy processes and programs through the development of standardized tools and guidelines; supporting intersectoral coordination; filling data and evidence gaps; and resource mobilization. FSS has moved from its capacity needs assessment to developing training materials, delivering participatory capacity-strengthening activities, convening policy dialogues and a national conference, and establishing a series of cross-sector webinars. FSS also noted that a more hands-on, participatory training format, with less reliance on presentations, supported active peer learning. The national conference brought researchers, policymakers, and practitioners together to discuss practical integration of gender, climate change, and nutrition. Monthly webinars have helped connect actors from different sectors and make the nexus more concrete as it is applied to specific research or policy topics.

As a result of these efforts, FSS reported growing recognition of these linkages among policymakers, increased requests for training and technical input, and examples of demand for nexus-oriented evidence. FSS also reported interest from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia, in using its training manual and increasing participation in its Digital Community of Practice.

Building on these achievements, FSS plans to tailor further training to technical staff, provide shorter orientation sessions for senior leaders to build institutional buy-in, and establish a national GCAN task force to sustain collaboration beyond the project. The proposed task force would bring together government agencies, civil society, and researchers to support longer-term coordination. FSS also plans to develop targeted policy briefs and factsheets with actionable recommendations for priority decisionmakers. Getting leadership buy-in was considered an essential priority to ensure that individual capacities are translated into routine practice. Participants also discussed where the GCAN task force should be anchored and how existing policy-dialogue participants and growing interest from government and development partners could be leveraged.

Kenya – Centre for Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation for a Sustainable Africa (ICCASA)

ICCASA co-developed its capacity-strengthening roadmap with 30 stakeholders representing government, multisectoral platforms, academia, civil society, the private sector and farmers. The roadmap centers on knowledge sharing on the GCAN nexus, evidence synthesis and dissemination, standardized tools, resource mobilization, multisectoral coordination, and piloting integrated solutions. ICCASA has made progress on its roadmap over the past year. It developed a GCAN training manual and Gendered Metrics Toolkit, supported national and county-level policy dialogues, and trained journalists, resulting in six print stories, three videos, and five podcasts translating GCAN evidence into accessible communication products.

ICCASA also observed tangible demand for expertise at the GCAN nexus and especially for ensuring that climate change and gender are reflected in nutrition policies; ICCASA was invited to support integration of gender and climate considerations into the Murang'a County Nutrition Action Plan, received a similar request from Isiolo County, and gained a regular opportunity to contribute to the Ministry of Health's Climate and Nutrition Technical Working Group. The Murang'a County Nutrition Action Plan was highlighted as an example of moving from awareness toward application. They noted that convening policymakers alongside community representatives has brought local priorities into policy conversations. ICCASA also reported continued involvement in the Climate-Smart Agriculture Multi-Stakeholder Platform (CSA-MSP), the Intersectoral Forum on Agrobiodiversity and Agroecology (ISFAA) and other MSPs as a vehicle for knowledge sharing, learning and co-design.

Further work is needed to institutionalize the nexus beyond individual trainings, promote consistent adoption of tools, measure changes in capacity and practice, and mobilize sustainable financing. Policy dialogues in Kajiado County also generated policy commitments that will require follow-up.

Nigeria, Adamawa State – Environmental Care Foundation (ECF)

ECF reported important institutional and policy engagement gains in Adamawa State. After the GCAN project launched with the stakeholder mapping workshop, stakeholders maintained strong interest in continued collaboration and helped advocate for establishing the Climate Change Sector Working Group (CCSWG) within the State Ministry of Environment. With support from the Governor, the CCSWG was formally inaugurated and continues to regularly convene government desk officers, academic institutions, civil society, and development partners in regular coordination meetings. In the past year, ECF has increased engagement at the national level, including with the National Council on Climate Change and through a National GCAN workshop in December 2025. As a result of these efforts, ECF has elevated its national profile and is recognized as an official partner by the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic

Planning and the Federal Ministry of Environment. ECF emphasized that high-level advocacy, multisectoral platforms, and validation processes have been important for building local ownership of GCAN approaches.

The capacity needs assessment and validation workshop identified several priorities for capacity building including support for policy integration and implementation, institutional coordination, building technical in climate-smart agriculture and gender-responsive programming, generating policy relevant evidence to support decision-making, and direct engagement and inclusion of rural communities in policy processes. ECF has started to make progress on its capacity strengthening roadmap by producing a policy brief that was presented to the State Assembly on how to domesticate the national Climate Change Policy in Adamawa State with a focus on gender and nutrition. ECF also completed a research paper on climate change impacts on women's livelihoods and nutrition in Adamawa and is building partnerships with universities and research institutes at the national and state levels, including Adamawa State University and the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies. ECF also introduced nutrition-sensitive considerations into a tree planting and home-gardening initiative.

Going forward, ECF aims to strengthen direct engagement with grassroots women's organizations and communities, resource mobilization, establishment of data systems, and sustain stakeholder coordination through the CCSWG. Capacity strengthening will target sector working groups, civil society and academic actors, desk officers across ministries, departments and agencies, and CCSWG members, with trained stakeholders expected to contribute to the domestication of the national climate change policy in Adamawa State. ECF will also advocate for continued state support to the CCSWG and the Savannah Climate Research Center.

Nigeria, Kano State – Aliko Dangote University of Science and Technology (ADUST)

ADUST had early success with integrating gender and nutrition into climate-related policy in Kano State through participation in the review of its climate change policy and bringing the ministries responsible for health and women's affairs into the process. Since then, ADUST has focused on embedding a gender, climate change, and nutrition lens within existing university directorates and institutional processes rather than maintaining GCAN as a stand-alone project activity to support sustainability beyond the lifespan of the project. This includes incorporating GCAN responsibilities into directorates' terms of reference and routine funding processes. University-level engagement has helped advance a new climate-change center and integrate nutrition considerations into food science and technology activities. ADUST also continues to engage state and local government on implementation on the Climate Change Policy and has established a GCAN-supported community of practice that has also attracted interest from GIZ and other actors.

Following the capacity needs assessment and development of a capacity strengthening roadmap, ADUST is also working to increase capacity to integrate the GCAN nexus within the university and in other institutes within the state. The work has included developing a GCAN training manual and facilitation guide, as well as pre/post-training assessment instruments. ADUST has conducted training-of-trainers with university professors and has carried out stakeholder capacity-building workshops. Stakeholder mapping helped identify influential actors for targeted advocacy and capacity strengthening.

Going forward, ADUST will hold thematic trainings with academic institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders and develop a curriculum for professional courses and an academic program at ADUST. Further engagement will target sector working groups, local government leadership, and state decisionmakers to support implementation of the revised climate change policy.

Senegal – Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rural (IPAR)

Through the capacity needs assessment and IPAR's interactions with key stakeholders in Senegal, they observed that while sectoral approaches are still dominant in the country, there is growing openness to integrating the GCAN nexus as understanding about the linkages between gender, climate change and nutrition increases. As a result, there is growing demand from government institutions to support GCAN integration. For example, Senegal's Directorate of Climate Change invited IPAR to contribute to efforts to integrate gender and nutrition into the nationally determined contribution policy revision process (NDC 3.0), in collaboration with UN Women; the national nutrition coordination body expressed interest in incorporating climate considerations into its work; and the Ministry of Agriculture's gender unit also signaled interest. Partners noted that awareness raising has made nutrition more visible to climate actors, while nutrition institutions are increasingly recognizing the climate dimension.

The capacity building roadmap identified six priority areas: strengthening intersectoral coordination, training on resource mobilization, development of guidance and tools to support GCAN integration, establishment of monitoring mechanisms and systems, using data to support decision-making, and community capacity building. IPAR developed a policy brief based on the capacity needs assessment and is beginning to make progress on implementing its roadmap. Early activities include developing and testing a practical training manual for integrating gender, climate change and nutrition into policy and project planning, convening sensitization workshops and training sessions, and engaging ministries and other stakeholders through bilateral meetings and policy dialogues. IPAR has also used videos, online communications, and locally accessible materials to explain the nexus.

IPAR's next steps include delivering practical training, collaboration on NDC implementation, establishment of formal partnerships, and adaptation of materials to stakeholder needs. This will include engagement with the National Council for the Development of Nutrition and training-of-trainers approaches to enable national institutions to use and disseminate GCAN materials. IPAR will also pursue opportunities for collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Directorate of Climate Change, and UN Women, supported by formal partnerships and MoUs where appropriate. IPAR emphasized the need for practical guidance that helps stakeholders apply nexus thinking in day-to-day work. IPAR has deliberately sought to work through existing institutions and partnerships rather than create parallel structures. A recurring lesson has been that co-development of capacity plans creates ownership and that stakeholder demand for nexus approaches is growing even though sectoral silos remain strong.

India, Odisha – Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)

WASSAN began the GCAN project with participatory rural appraisals (PRAs) and community-level resource and social mapping across different climatic and livelihood settings in Odisha. Findings informed four thematic consultations with policymakers and practitioners, including discussions on climate-resilient agriculture, natural resource management, diversified livelihoods, and nutrition-sensitive local food systems. These consultations were anchored in specific, policy-relevant themes emerging from the PRAs: climate-resilient agriculture, natural resource management and local governance, diversified rural livelihoods, and local food systems and nutrition. One theme, for example, focused on how public food distribution could better reflect locally preferred, nutritious foods; how distribution points could also share dietary information; how the program could be designed to remove gendered barriers in accessing services, and involve men in nutrition awareness rather than treating nutrition as solely women's responsibility.

WASSAN reported that this concrete, program-focused framing helped generate stronger engagement than general discussions of the GCAN nexus. The consultations surfaced practical issues such as women's drudgery, diversified cropping, advisory systems, nutrition-sensitive policy design, and the need for stronger interdepartmental convergence.

Planned next steps include completion and validation of the capacity needs assessment. WASSAN will then translate consultation findings into targeted capacity strengthening workshops, policy briefs and research outputs, and engagement with government agencies and other stakeholders to support stronger intersectoral coordination and long-term institutionalization of the GCAN nexus in key institutes. It will also hold a state-level convening, capacity strengthening workshops, policy briefs and research outputs, and continued support to climate- and gender-responsive institutional mechanisms.

2.5 Breakout groups: capacity strengthening priorities and collaboration

The afternoon breakout groups responded to three agenda questions: how capacity change can be measured; where partners can learn from or collaborate with one another; and which existing tools or products could be adapted as cross-country GCAN resources. Several common messages emerged.

- Move from awareness to application. Participants wanted capacity strengthening to be tied to real decisions, plans, budgets, and implementation processes rather than delivered as isolated training events.
- Differentiate audiences. Senior leaders, technical staff, researchers, civil society organizations, media, and communities need different forms of engagement. Mapping audiences and their specific capacity needs can make activities more targeted.
- Consolidate and adapt existing resources. Partners are already exchanging manuals and approaches. Potential shared resources include training modules, operational guidance, analytical frameworks and matrices, M&E indicators, policy briefs and factsheets, and communications products.
- Strengthen measurement. Participants proposed tracking not only who is trained, but changes in knowledge and practice, institutional arrangements, policy uptake, budgets, coordination, and implementation. Outcome stories could complement a more systematic framework.
- Use multisectoral platforms as learning and coordination spaces. Partners were interested in comparing how platforms are established, anchored, financed, and sustained across contexts, including what has not worked.
- Create more regular peer-learning opportunities. Ideas included structured exchanges during monthly partner meetings, joint webinars, partner spotlights, invitations to one another's events, and a continuing online learning space.

3. Day 2 - Sustaining capacity and strengthening policy influence

Day 2 shifted from diagnosing capacity needs to asking how capacity strengthening can generate sustainable impact and policy influence. The day featured an expert panel, plenary reflection, a World Cafe on policy engagement and communications, and partner breakouts on goals for the final year of the project.



Photo: From left to right: Selam Esayas, Alemtsehay Sergawi, Selamawit Gebreegziabher Kebede, Fiker Shiferaw, and Tirsit Sahledengle

3.1 Panel discussion: capacity strengthening for sustainable impact

The panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Selam Esayas, FSS, brought together four experts representing government, research institutions, and development partners to reflect on the challenges of sustaining capacity strengthening and translating knowledge into policy and practice. Panelists included Alemtsehay Sergawi, Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia; Dr. Selamawit Gebreegziabher Kebede, Policy Studies Institute; Fiker Sheferaw, World Bank; and Dr. Tirsit Sahledengle, Addis Ababa University and FSS. The discussion focused on capacity gaps at individual, organizational, and systems levels, and the institutional arrangements needed to sustain progress beyond individual projects and training activities.

A central message was that training individuals does not automatically translate into improved policies, programs, or outcomes. Sergawi noted that, despite substantial investments in training government experts, applying new knowledge remains challenging, particularly as agricultural institutions have traditionally emphasized production and productivity over nutrition outcomes. Kebede similarly observed that capacity-strengthening initiatives often focus on activities rather than outcomes, with knowledge gained by individuals rarely embedded in institutional practices. When trained staff leave, their expertise may be lost unless institutions have appropriate incentives, procedures, and mechanisms for retaining and applying knowledge.

Sheferaw emphasized that capacity strengthening requires organizational commitment, resources, coordination mechanisms, professional networks, and sustained coaching and follow-up. She noted that training is just one event, while capacity building is a process. Sahledengle reinforced the importance of considering the wider system, including infrastructure, technology, institutional relationships, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Panelists agreed that capacity strengthening should begin by identifying the problems institutions need to solve and the capacities required to address them, rather than starting with predetermined training activities. Engaging institutional leadership before or alongside technical staff was seen as essential for creating an enabling environment in which new knowledge can be applied.

Panelists highlighted fragmented institutional mandates, duplication of efforts, and weak coordination as major barriers to integrated action. Different organizations frequently undertake similar research or capacity-strengthening activities without sufficient collaboration, while cross-cutting issues such as gender, climate change, and nutrition may lack clear institutional ownership, accountability, or dedicated budgets. Kebede emphasized the importance of shifting from individual relationships toward sustained institutional partnerships and focusing on alignment with shared development outcomes rather than competing organizational mandates. Suggestions included stakeholder mapping, developing common research and results frameworks, engaging in policy coherence assessments, and establishing shared platforms or dashboards to document ongoing initiatives and facilitate collaboration.

Sustainability also requires political commitment and predictable financing. Panelists noted that cross-cutting priorities are often underfunded because responsibility for their implementation is dispersed across institutions. However, dedicated budget allocations, senior-level champions, and clearer institutional mandates can help elevate these issues within government priorities. Integrating GCAN concepts into education curricula, institutional procedures, and existing training systems was also proposed as a way to sustain capacity beyond the project period.

The panel also emphasized that research is more likely to influence policy when policymakers are engaged from the outset in identifying research questions, generating evidence, and interpreting findings. Kebede called for demand-driven research that responds to government priorities and produces practical implementation guidance rather than reports alone. Sheferaw similarly stressed the importance of engaging policymakers throughout the research process to strengthen ownership and uptake. Sahledengle highlighted the need for high-quality, context-specific evidence and clearer conceptualization of the linkages among gender, climate change, and nutrition.

Sergawi provided examples of how evidence has informed government action, including the development of nutrition-sensitive agricultural strategies, post-harvest management plans, food safety guidance, and training materials adapted to different value chains. She also described the Ministry of Agriculture's efforts to strengthen nutrition-sensitive agriculture through its extensive agricultural extension system. At the same time, she emphasized the importance of incorporating farmers' experiences, local food systems, and indigenous knowledge alongside scientific evidence.

Panelists stressed that effective capacity strengthening should be people-centered and responsive to local contexts. Sahledengle emphasized that climate change affects communities and social groups differently, making grassroots knowledge and locally appropriate adaptation strategies essential. Community engagement should therefore begin during problem identification and intervention design rather than being limited to consultation after solutions have already been developed. Farmer field schools and other participatory approaches were identified as useful mechanisms for connecting technical knowledge with local experience. Panelists also highlighted the importance of ensuring that technologies and interventions, including post-harvest management solutions, respond to the different needs and constraints of women and men.

3.2 Plenary discussion with the panelists

The discussion highlighted persistent challenges in how gender is understood and addressed within institutions. Panelists cautioned against treating gender as synonymous with women or as a compliance requirement rather than a substantive analytical and technical issue. Kebede emphasized the need to engage men in efforts to address gender inequalities while recognizing and valuing the expertise of women researchers. Sergawi noted that gender and nutrition are not always treated as specialized fields requiring appropriate professional expertise, potentially undermining the quality of training and interventions. Participants also highlighted the importance of addressing structural and cultural barriers, generating evidence on differential impacts, and ensuring that gender-responsive approaches are reflected in institutional priorities, budgets, and monitoring systems.

In the plenary discussion, participants returned to the question of how to institutionalize capacity. Panelists reinforced the need for clearer accountability for cross-cutting issues, stronger collaboration to avoid duplication, gender-responsive budgeting, and practical tools for translating evidence into policy and implementation. Overall, the panel underscored that sustainable capacity strengthening requires moving beyond individual knowledge acquisition to building the institutional systems, partnerships, resources, and incentives that enable knowledge to be applied and sustained. This includes stronger connections among researchers, policymakers, and communities, as well as greater attention to measuring changes in institutional practices and development outcomes.

3.3 World Cafe: experiences and lessons in policy engagement and communications

Participants rotated through three tables focused on policy engagement successes, challenges, and communications. The exercise allowed partners to compare experiences across countries and identify both transferable practices and context-specific entry points.

Table 1: Successes and enabling approaches

The discussion on successes revealed several common approaches that partners found effective in advancing policy engagement and influence across different country contexts. Despite differences in institutional arrangements, policy priorities, and stages of implementation, partners identified similar factors that helped build momentum, strengthen relationships, and create opportunities for integrating gender, climate change, and nutrition into policy and practice.

Strategic stakeholder engagement and relationship building emerged as a critical success factor. Mapping stakeholders and understanding their mandates, interests, and influence helped partners identify entry points for engagement and build relationships with key decisionmakers. Engaging both senior government officials and technical staff was important for securing political support while ensuring continuity and follow-through. Sustained engagement, rather than one-off consultations, helped build trust, increase visibility, and position partners as credible sources of technical support.

Leveraging existing policy processes and institutional structures was another common approach. Partners found that working through ongoing policy reviews, planning processes, government programs, and coordination mechanisms created more concrete opportunities for influence than establishing parallel initiatives. Aligning engagement with government priorities and focusing on specific policy questions or implementation challenges helped make the gender–climate–nutrition nexus more relevant and actionable for policymakers.

Creating spaces for multisectoral dialogue and collaboration helped overcome institutional silos and build shared understanding and ownership of the nexus. Multistakeholder platforms, policy dialogues, joint development of training materials, and regular knowledge-sharing activities provided opportunities for actors from different sectors to identify common priorities and explore practical ways to collaborate. These exchanges also helped raise awareness of the interconnections among gender, climate change, and nutrition and generated further demand for capacity strengthening and technical assistance.

Combining evidence generation with capacity strengthening and policy engagement was also identified as an effective strategy. Participatory assessments, consultations, and research helped ground discussions in local realities and identify practical problems that policymakers were seeking to address. Partners found that evidence was more likely to gain traction when accompanied by targeted capacity strengthening, practical guidance, and opportunities for policymakers to contribute to identifying problems and developing solutions.

Across contexts, a consistent lesson was that successful policy engagement depends less on isolated activities than on sustained, demand-driven engagement that builds institutional ownership and responds to concrete policy opportunities. Although partners pursued different entry points, their experiences suggest that strategic relationships, multisectoral collaboration, alignment with government priorities, and the integration of evidence with practical capacity support are mutually reinforcing approaches to advancing the gender–climate–nutrition nexus.

Table 2: Challenges and lessons learned

The discussion highlighted several common challenges that partners encountered in engaging policymakers and promoting the integration of gender, climate change, and nutrition. Despite differences in country contexts, participants identified similar institutional, operational, and resource constraints, as well as practical lessons for strengthening future engagement.

Sustaining stakeholder engagement and institutional relationships emerged as a major challenge. Partners reported difficulties maintaining participation in multistakeholder platforms and policy dialogues, particularly among government representatives facing competing demands and frequent invitations to similar events. Relationships often depended on individual champions, making progress vulnerable to staff turnover, leadership changes, and political transitions. While influential champions were important for opening doors, participants emphasized the need to institutionalize relationships and establish mechanisms for continuity beyond individual contacts. Several partners also reflected on the importance of engaging senior decisionmakers early, alongside technical staff, to secure institutional commitment and create a stronger foundation for subsequent activities.

Establishing institutional ownership and sustaining activities beyond project timelines was another recurring concern. Partners questioned whether project-led platforms and initiatives could remain effective without stronger government ownership, clear institutional mandates, and dedicated resources. At the same time, participants recognized that government anchoring alone does not guarantee sustainability. Existing coordination platforms may be inactive or lack clearly defined responsibilities, while establishing new platforms can create duplication and competition for stakeholders' time. A key lesson was to build on and strengthen existing institutional mechanisms wherever feasible, clarify roles and accountability, and adapt project tools and approaches to government systems rather than expecting institutions to adopt entirely new processes.

Overcoming institutional silos and unclear responsibilities for cross-cutting issues remained particularly difficult. Gender, climate change, and nutrition are often addressed by separate ministries and departments with distinct mandates, priorities, and budgets. As a result, responsibility for integrating the three themes can be fragmented or unclear, and competition over mandates and resources may undermine collaboration. Participants emphasized that bringing stakeholders together is not sufficient on its own; effective coordination requires shared objectives, clearly defined responsibilities, and mechanisms for joint planning, implementation, and monitoring. Developing common results frameworks and identifying practical opportunities for collaboration were suggested as potential ways forward.

Managing expectations and translating engagement into concrete outcomes also presented challenges. Awareness-raising events and advocacy visits did not always generate sustained interest or follow-up action, particularly when policymakers had competing priorities. Stakeholders sometimes expected projects to provide financial or technical support beyond available resources. Partners therefore highlighted the importance of targeting actors with the authority and capacity to act, clearly communicating the scope of project support, and maintaining follow-up after consultations and policy development. Ensuring that policies, strategies, and tools are implemented and used by institutions was considered more challenging than developing them.

Resource constraints and gaps in evidence and technical capacity further limited progress. Partners faced difficulties responding to growing demand for support, particularly at subnational and community levels, given limited funding and geographic coverage. The evidence base on the interconnections among gender, climate change, and nutrition was also considered insufficient, complicating efforts to develop practical guidance, identify appropriate indicators, and demonstrate results. Participants noted the need for more context-specific evidence and clearer approaches to monitoring integrated outcomes.

Overall, the discussion underscored that the main challenges to policy engagement are not simply technical but institutional and systemic. Common lessons included the importance of sequencing engagement strategically, building relationships at multiple institutional levels, strengthening government ownership and accountability, working through existing mechanisms, and adapting tools to local institutional contexts. Partners also emphasized that sustained follow-up, adequate resources, and stronger evidence are essential for translating initial engagement and growing awareness into lasting policy and institutional change.

Table 3: Effective communications approaches for policy engagement and influence

The discussion highlighted the importance of strategic communications and awareness raising in building understanding of the gender–climate–nutrition nexus, strengthening stakeholder engagement, and creating opportunities for policy influence. Across countries, partners emphasized that the connections among the three themes are not always well understood, even among policymakers and technical experts. Effective communication therefore involves not only disseminating research findings but also demonstrating why integrated approaches matter and how they can be applied in policy and practice.

Tailoring communications to different audiences and using multiple channels emerged as an important strategy. Partners employed a combination of policy dialogues, workshops, webinars, newsletters, policy briefs, training manuals, videos, and digital platforms to reach policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and communities. Social media, email networks, and WhatsApp groups were particularly useful for maintaining relationships and sharing information between formal engagement activities. Partners also highlighted the importance of translating materials into local languages and using accessible formats, including radio programs and visual communications, to reach wider audiences.

Making the nexus tangible through practical examples and relevant evidence was another common approach. Case studies, research findings, and examples of integrated interventions helped stakeholders understand the connections among gender, climate change, and nutrition and their implications for policy and programming. Partners found that presenting evidence in response to specific policy questions or implementation gaps was particularly valuable. Training manuals, policy briefs, and other practical knowledge products helped translate complex concepts into actionable guidance, while regularly sharing new findings helped sustain stakeholder interest.

Using dialogue and participatory approaches to facilitate two-way communication was also considered effective. Bringing policymakers, practitioners, and community representatives together created opportunities to exchange perspectives, identify shared priorities, and ensure that local experiences informed policy discussions. Stakeholder mapping and consultations helped partners identify appropriate audiences and tailor messages to their interests and responsibilities. Rather than relying exclusively on one-way dissemination, partners emphasized the value of sustained engagement and opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the development and interpretation of evidence.

Engaging the media and leveraging existing networks helped extend the reach of communications beyond direct project participants. Training journalists on the gender–climate–nutrition nexus, developing multimedia content, and collaborating with existing professional and community networks helped raise awareness among broader audiences. Partners also found that maintaining relationships through communities of practice and informal communication channels supported continued knowledge exchange and increased their visibility as sources of technical expertise. In some cases, these efforts contributed to greater recognition by government institutions and new requests for policy and technical support.

The discussion also raised questions about the appropriate scope of community-facing communications and the role of communities in policy accountability. Participants considered whether GCAN should place greater emphasis on informing communities about relevant policies and supporting their involvement in monitoring implementation. They also noted the need to manage growing requests for technical support from policymakers, particularly when these extend beyond the project's resources and mandate.

Overall, the discussion reinforced that effective communications for policy influence require more than producing and disseminating information. Common lessons included tailoring messages to specific audiences, demonstrating the practical relevance of the nexus, combining formal knowledge products with ongoing dialogue, and using trusted networks and accessible communication channels. Partners' experiences suggest that sustained, two-way communication can help build awareness, strengthen relationships, and create demand for evidence and technical support, providing an important foundation for policy engagement and uptake.



Photo: From left to right: Hamza Muhammad, Elizabeth Bryan, Yohanna Moses, Ara Go, Musa Tukur Yakasai, and Kabiru Abdullahi Ya'u

3.4 Reflections and priorities for the final year

The afternoon breakout discussions and Day 2 poll exercise provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on progress, identify priorities for the remaining project period, and consider how to sustain GCAN's contributions beyond the project. Collaboration and sustainability emerged as prominent themes, alongside a shared commitment to moving from awareness raising toward practical application and institutionalization of the gender–climate–nutrition nexus.

Participants emphasized that capacity strengthening and policy engagement should be treated as mutually reinforcing processes, with training and technical support linked to concrete policy opportunities and institutional needs. Looking ahead, priorities included more targeted engagement with decisionmakers and implementing institutions, securing leadership buy-in alongside technical capacity, and strengthening institutional ownership of GCAN approaches. Participants also highlighted the importance of building on existing partnerships and coordination mechanisms, improving documentation and institutional memory, and producing accessible, actionable evidence and guidance to support policy implementation.

These priorities were reinforced by the poll reflections. When asked which policy-engagement practices should be discontinued, participants identified one-off or untargeted training, duplication of existing materials and platforms, excessive reliance on individual government champions, and overly top-down approaches. Several respondents indicated that no particular practice needed to be discontinued.

Participants expressed considerable confidence in achieving their remaining policy-engagement goals. Of 15 respondents, nine rated their confidence at 5, five at 4, and one at 3 on a five-point scale. When ranking the factors most important for lasting policy influence, institutional ownership and follow-through

ranked highest, followed by strong evidence and analysis and sustained relationships with policymakers. Forward-looking commitments emphasized collaboration, institutionalization, resource mobilization, documentation of lessons, peer learning, improved monitoring, and continued integration of the nexus into policy processes.

Participants also reflected positively on the value of cross-country learning and the opportunity to exchange experiences in person. The workshop helped identify common challenges and promising approaches that could be adapted across different institutional settings. Overall, the discussions reinforced a shared direction for the final year: consolidating achievements, strengthening the application of GCAN tools and evidence in policy processes, and embedding capacities, relationships, and coordination mechanisms within institutions to support lasting change.

4. Day 3 - Stakeholder consultation on reducing post-harvest loss of nutrient-dense foods

The third day of the workshop brought together GCAN partners and a broader group of stakeholders to discuss emerging research on post-harvest losses in nutrient-dense food value chains. The consultation focused on opportunities to reduce losses in fish, meat, dairy, and fruits and vegetables, with particular attention to Ethiopia and lessons from other countries where GCAN operates. The session provided an opportunity to connect research evidence with practical experiences and perspectives from policymakers, researchers, development practitioners, and other stakeholders.

The consultation aimed to assess the relevance and feasibility of potential interventions for reducing post-harvest losses and improving the availability, affordability, and quality of nutritious foods. Discussions considered not only technologies and infrastructure, but also the market, institutional, financial, and behavioral factors that influence their adoption and sustainability. Participants were invited to critically assess the emerging evidence, identify promising approaches and remaining knowledge gaps, and provide feedback on proposed investment options and an emerging theory of change.

The day combined presentations of research findings with interactive, value-chain-specific breakout discussions, allowing participants to share country experiences, identify context-specific challenges and opportunities, and consider the enabling conditions needed for successful interventions. The consultation was intended to inform further refinement of the evidence review, investment options, and theory of change, rather than to establish a set of agreed investment recommendations.

4.1 Emerging evidence on post-harvest loss

Catherine Ragasa, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI, presented findings from an evidence review on post-harvest losses in nutrient-dense food value chains, focusing on Ethiopia and drawing lessons from Kenya, Nigeria, and India. The review covered fish, meat, dairy, eggs, and fruits and vegetables, examining the magnitude and drivers of losses, the effectiveness of interventions, and opportunities for future investment. Post-harvest losses were defined broadly to encompass physical losses in food quantity as well as economic, quality, and nutrient losses. Reducing these losses was framed as an important opportunity to improve the year-round availability and affordability of nutritious foods while strengthening livelihoods and incomes, particularly for small-scale producers, processors, and traders.

On the magnitude and drivers of post-harvest losses, the presentation highlighted substantial differences across value chains, both in reported losses and in the strength of available evidence. Dairy has the strongest survey-based evidence in Ethiopia, with estimated losses of 2.1–4.3% in formal marketing

channels compared with 17–41% in traditional channels, underscoring the importance of addressing constraints in informal markets. Reported fish losses are approximately 30%, although estimates are based on limited evidence. For fruits and vegetables, available studies suggest substantial losses, including approximately 36% for avocado and 35% for tomatoes during transport, but nationally representative data and rigorous evaluations are lacking. Estimates of meat losses are also uncertain, with frequently cited figures of 23–27% drawn from regional estimates rather than robust Ethiopia-specific field measurements. Evidence on losses in egg value chains is particularly limited.

Across value chains, the review identified several structural drivers of losses, including inadequate cold-chain, storage, processing, and transport infrastructure; seasonal fluctuations in supply and demand; weak market coordination; and limited access to finance. In Ethiopia, religious fasting periods contribute to pronounced fluctuations in demand for fish, while seasonal harvest gluts create marketing challenges for fruits and vegetables. Poor handling and transport practices contribute to losses in meat and other perishable products. Weak cooperative governance, land-use arrangements, limited quality-grading systems, and the divide between formal and informal markets further constrain investment and adoption of improved practices. The presentation also emphasized the lack of reliable statistics and impact evaluations, which makes it difficult to determine where losses are greatest and which interventions offer the strongest returns.



Photo: Participants listening to the presentation on the evidence review of post-harvest loss.

In terms of evidence on interventions and innovations, experiences from other countries illustrated a range of promising approaches, including improved handling, packaging, drying and processing technologies; solar-powered cooling and cold storage services; hygiene training; quality-based pricing; and strengthened market coordination. For fish, evidence from India demonstrated that relatively simple improvements in processing and handling could reduce losses, while experiences in Nigeria and Kenya highlighted the potential of cooling-as-a-service models and improved processing technologies. In meat value chains, studies showed that hygiene training and monitoring can improve handling practices, although improvements in food safety also depend on complementary infrastructure, such as reliable water supplies. For dairy, evidence from India demonstrated the potential of cooperative systems combining quality standards, cooling infrastructure, and price incentives, while cooling technologies piloted in East

Africa offer possible solutions for small-scale producers. In fruits and vegetables, studies from Nigeria and Kenya showed that improved packaging, cold storage, and market coordination can reduce losses and improve product quality and market returns.

However, the review cautioned that technically effective interventions do not necessarily achieve widespread adoption or remain financially sustainable. Examples included underutilized cold-storage and processing facilities in Kenya and India, where inadequate community engagement, weak governance, and the absence of viable business models limited use. Similarly, evidence from digital market platforms illustrated that reductions in losses do not automatically translate into financially sustainable enterprises. Low adoption of improved packaging and cooling technologies, even where benefits have been demonstrated, further highlighted the importance of understanding costs, incentives, and market conditions. These experiences suggest that investments in infrastructure and technologies need to be accompanied by appropriate financing, institutional arrangements, complementary services, and support for adoption.

Building on the evidence review, Ragasa presented a preliminary set of investment options and enabling conditions for stakeholder consideration. These included improved fish storage and processing, particularly around major fishing areas; cooling infrastructure and quality-based payment systems targeting traditional dairy markets; improved hygiene and pre-slaughter handling in meat value chains; and better packaging, processing, storage, and market information for fruits and vegetables. Opportunities to adapt practices already used in Ethiopia's formal export and processing sectors for domestic and informal markets were also highlighted. For example, improved milk-testing protocols, reusable crates, and simplified food-safety and handling standards could potentially be extended to smaller-scale actors.

The presentation emphasized that these options should be assessed in relation to existing policies, programs, and institutional capacities rather than pursued as stand-alone investments. Ethiopia's post-harvest management strategy and ongoing investments in livestock, fisheries, and agricultural value chains provide potential entry points. Priority enabling conditions included stronger cooperative and institutional governance, sustainable financing and business models, access to complementary infrastructure, stakeholder participation in investment design, and better systems for measuring losses and evaluating interventions. Particular attention was given to ensuring that investments reach informal-sector actors and generate benefits for women and other resource-constrained participants in value chains.

Rather than presenting a fixed set of recommendations, the research team introduced a draft theory of change for discussion and refinement. The proposed pathway linked investments in infrastructure, technologies, institutional capacity, and market systems to reduced losses, improved product quality, more stable incomes, and greater year-round availability and affordability of nutrient-dense foods. These intermediate outcomes were expected to contribute to improved nutrition, stronger livelihoods, and more resilient institutions.

Participants were invited to critically assess the proposed investments and causal pathways, including where evidence was strongest or weakest; what assumptions would need to hold for interventions to succeed; and how governance, political economy, financing, and market conditions might affect implementation. The discussion also sought to identify potential unintended consequences, opportunities to build on existing programs, and priority areas for additional evidence generation. These questions provided the basis for the subsequent value-chain-specific breakout discussions on 1) fish, 2) meat and dairy, and 3) fruits and vegetables. Given the number of participants for breakout groups, meat and dairy were discussed in the same group.

4.2 Stakeholder feedback by value chain

Across the three breakout group discussions, a common thread emerged: post-harvest loss reduction is not simply a technological challenge; successful interventions depend on understanding market incentives, producer and consumer behavior, institutional capacity, and the broader policy environment. Further details from the discussions on each value chain are elaborated below.

Fish value chain: Improving preservation, market access, and consumer demand

The fish breakout group identified several opportunities to reduce post-harvest losses, emphasizing the need to combine improved preservation and processing technologies with stronger market linkages, producer organization, and consumer awareness. Participants noted that fish losses are particularly significant where production is concentrated in remote areas, transport infrastructure is inadequate, and producers lack access to reliable cooling and storage facilities. These constraints contribute to both physical losses from spoilage and economic losses when fish must be sold quickly at reduced prices.

Bringing preservation and processing closer to production areas was identified as a promising approach. Participants discussed establishing rural processing and aggregation hubs, potentially managed by cooperatives or small and medium enterprises, to reduce the need to transport highly perishable fresh fish over long distances. Options included improved sun or solar drying, smoking, salting, pickling, and more advanced value addition, such as fish oil and packaged products, where sufficient demand exists. Decentralized cold storage, particularly solar-powered refrigeration in areas with unreliable electricity, was also considered important. In Nigeria, participants noted that the lack of storage forces fishers to sell their catch at discounted prices at the end of the day, illustrating how improved preservation could reduce losses while strengthening producers' bargaining power.

Improving transport, market connections, and producer organization was another priority. In Ethiopia, fish production is concentrated around lakes, dams, and other water bodies, often far from major consumption centers. Participants highlighted the difficulties of transporting fish from remote areas, including the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam region, where inadequate infrastructure and insecurity can compound spoilage and market-access challenges. Stronger cooperatives, coordinated transport, and private-sector investment in cold-chain logistics were suggested as potential solutions. Experiences from Kenya, including vertically coordinated fish production, distribution, and retail models, illustrated opportunities to strengthen connections between producers and consumers. Participants also discussed whether lessons from Ethiopia's floriculture industry, particularly its use of private investment, contracts, and integrated cold-chain logistics, could be adapted to fish value chains.

Building technical capacity and supporting sustainable production were also considered important. Participants emphasized the need for practical training in fish handling, preservation, processing, hygiene, and food safety, particularly for small-scale producers and processors who rely on traditional methods. They also noted that upstream production constraints interact with post-harvest losses. For example, high feed costs, limited aquaculture development, and weak access to production technologies can constrain fish supply, while overfishing and harvesting immature fish threaten the sustainability of capture fisheries. Improved aquaculture practices, local feed production, and appropriate fisheries management were therefore discussed as complementary interventions.

Consumer preferences and demand emerged as particularly important considerations, especially in Ethiopia, where fish consumption varies considerably across regions and is less established in many communities. Participants noted a strong preference for fresh foods and limited familiarity with processed fish

products, which could constrain adoption of drying, smoking, or other preservation methods even where they are technically feasible. Consumer awareness campaigns highlighting the nutritional benefits of fish, alongside demonstrations of culturally appropriate preparation methods, were proposed as ways to stimulate demand. For example, incorporating fish into familiar dishes such as stews served with injera could help increase acceptance. Experiences from Nigeria, where smoked and dried fish are widely consumed, and Senegal and India, where other preservation practices are established, illustrated the importance of adapting interventions to local food cultures and markets.

Overall, the discussion underscored that reducing fish post-harvest losses requires an integrated approach that addresses preservation, transport, market organization, and consumer demand together. While decentralized cooling, improved processing, and better handling practices offer promising opportunities, their feasibility depends on local infrastructure, financing, institutional capacity, and cultural acceptance. Participants emphasized that solutions should be tailored to specific production and market contexts rather than assuming that technologies successful in one country can be transferred directly to another.



Photo: Breakout group on meat and dairy

Meat value chain: Strengthening food safety, infrastructure, and market coordination

The meat breakout discussion highlighted the importance of addressing post-harvest losses through improvements in animal handling, slaughtering practices, hygiene, transport, and cold storage. Participants emphasized that losses and quality deterioration occur at multiple points along the value chain, often reflecting weaknesses in infrastructure, institutional coordination, and market organization rather than a lack of technology alone.

Improving hygiene and handling practices throughout the value chain emerged as a priority. Participants from Ethiopia highlighted the importance of animal welfare and pre-slaughter handling, noting that animals often travel long distances before reaching urban slaughterhouses and require adequate rest before slaughter to protect meat quality. Poor hygiene, inadequate waste disposal, and limited access to appropriate facilities further contribute to food-safety risks and losses. Government inspection and certification systems, including the tagging of inspected meat distributed to retail outlets in Addis Ababa, were discussed as important mechanisms for maintaining standards. These observations reinforced findings from the evidence review that training in hygiene and food safety needs to be accompanied by adequate water, sanitation, equipment, and monitoring systems.

Strengthening slaughtering, cold-storage, and transport infrastructure was another recurring theme. Participants from Kano State, Nigeria, described limited access to slaughterhouses, many of which are privately operated, and unreliable electricity that constrains safe meat storage. In Kenya, fee-based overnight cold-storage services were cited as a promising approach to expanding access to preservation facilities without requiring individual traders to invest in their own equipment. However, high transportation costs remain a significant constraint. These experiences highlighted the potential of shared or service-based infrastructure, provided that facilities are accessible, affordable, and supported by reliable energy and transport systems.

Market organization, governance, and consumer demand were also identified as important considerations. In Adamawa State, Nigeria, participants described challenges coordinating livestock markets and resistance to proposed changes in livestock production systems, including ranching reforms. Traditional preservation methods, such as drying meat, continue to play a role in reducing losses. In Ethiopia, meat demand is strongly influenced by religious fasting periods and festivals, contributing to fluctuations in consumption and marketing opportunities. Even during non-fasting periods, participants noted that meat consumption is constrained by the unaffordability of meat. Participants also noted the importance of considering poultry alongside red meat, particularly as poultry production expands but losses remain a concern at household and small-scale market levels.

Overall, the discussion underscored that reducing losses in meat value chains requires coordinated improvements in handling practices, food-safety systems, infrastructure, and market organization. Investments in slaughtering facilities, cold storage, and transport need to be accompanied by training, inspection, appropriate incentives, and engagement with producers and traders. The experiences shared also highlighted the importance of adapting interventions to existing livestock systems, consumer demand patterns, and institutional arrangements rather than relying on infrastructure investments alone.

Dairy value chain: Aligning cooling investments with market incentives and institutional arrangements

The discussion on the dairy value chain focused on the substantial losses occurring in traditional and informal marketing channels and the potential for improved collection, cooling, quality control, and cooperative organization. Participants emphasized that, although appropriate technologies are increasingly available, their adoption and sustained use depend on whether they respond to producers' incentives, established marketing practices, and household decision-making arrangements.

The underutilization of milk collection and cooling infrastructure was a particularly important lesson. Participants from Kano State, Nigeria, described investments in collection centers equipped with cooling facilities and appropriate storage containers that remain underused by pastoralists and other milk sellers.

Traditional marketing arrangements offer several advantages that formal collection systems may not replicate, including opportunities to negotiate prices, combine milk sales with other trading activities, and avoid formal quality assessments. Distance from collection centers and the fact that livestock keepers are not always the owners of the animals further complicate adoption. Participants also highlighted the importance of household decision-making in shaping milk-marketing practices. In Kano, women may need their husbands' support to adopt new collection and marketing arrangements, underscoring the importance of engaging both women and men in capacity strengthening efforts. These experiences suggest that simply providing infrastructure is insufficient without understanding the incentives and constraints shaping producers' marketing choices.

Bringing collection services closer to producers and creating incentives for quality were identified as promising approaches. Participants suggested establishing more accessible collection points and designing payment arrangements that make participation in formal marketing systems attractive. Experiences from Kenya illustrated the potential of cooperative models that combine timely milk collection, quality testing, and predictable payments. Participants described arrangements in which milk is collected early in the morning and marketed within a short period, reducing spoilage risks. Cooperatives have also introduced subsidized lactometers to enable producers to assess milk quality and have begun linking prices to quality rather than volume alone. These examples highlighted the importance of combining technical improvements with appropriate institutional and financial incentives.

Access to cooling technologies, infrastructure, and technical expertise remained a major constraint across countries. Ethiopian participants emphasized the need for affordable and accessible cooling and preservation technologies, reliable energy and infrastructure, and greater technical capacity to address dairy losses. They also called for stronger evidence on the economic and food-security consequences of post-harvest losses to support government investment decisions. In Senegal, participants reported substantial seasonal variation in dairy losses, particularly during the rainy season, alongside limited collection infrastructure, weak market access, and insufficient cooperative coverage. The experience of a domestic dairy enterprise was highlighted as an example of private-sector involvement in strengthening local dairy value chains.

Institutional arrangements, trust, and market preferences emerged as cross-cutting determinants of success. Participants noted that informal dairy markets are deeply embedded in established social and commercial relationships, including trust in particular sellers and preferences for direct transactions. Formal collection systems may therefore face resistance even when they offer improved cooling and quality control. Strengthening cooperatives, improving governance, engaging trusted local actors, and designing services around existing market practices were considered important for encouraging adoption. The discussion also highlighted the need to account for gendered roles in milk production, ownership, marketing, and household decision-making when designing interventions.

Overall, the dairy discussion reinforced that successful investments in post-harvest loss reduction require aligning technology, market incentives, and institutional arrangements. Cooling and collection infrastructure can help reduce spoilage and improve quality, but sustained adoption depends on proximity, affordability, trust, payment systems, cooperative capacity, and the preferences of producers and traders. Participants emphasized that understanding these factors is essential for designing interventions that are both economically viable and inclusive of small-scale and informal dairy market actors.

Fruits and vegetables: Improving post-harvest management, market coordination, and policy support

The fruits and vegetables breakout group discussed opportunities to reduce post-harvest losses through improvements in production and harvesting practices, cooling, storage, transport, processing, and market coordination. Participants emphasized that solutions must be tailored to the characteristics of different crops, including their perishability, production volumes, seasonal availability, and market destinations. They also highlighted the importance of addressing the economic and institutional barriers that prevent producers, particularly smallholders, from adopting improved post-harvest technologies.

Improving harvesting practices and access to appropriate cooling and storage technologies was identified as an important starting point. Participants noted that losses often begin at harvest, particularly when highly perishable crops are harvested during the hottest parts of the day or are not adequately cooled before transport. Practical measures such as harvesting at appropriate times, providing shade, and using pre-cooling techniques could help extend shelf life. More advanced options included solar-powered and zero-energy cooling systems, shared storage facilities, and improved transport equipment. In Ethiopia, participants highlighted ongoing government initiatives supporting agricultural business cooperatives and farmer clusters through shared warehouses, household-level cooling technologies, and specialized trucks for transporting fruits such as avocado. Solar-powered cooling and aggregation facilities being explored by the World Vegetable Center were also discussed as potentially promising approaches.

Technology adoption, affordability, and suitability for different crops emerged as key challenges. Although improved crates can reduce damage during transport, participants noted that high purchase costs and the expense of transporting empty crates back from markets limit adoption. Solar-powered cooling was considered promising in some settings, but participants from Nigeria cautioned that the large volumes and specific humidity requirements of vegetables can make such systems difficult or costly to operate. Participants emphasized that technologies should be evaluated against the specific needs of different crops and value chains rather than promoted as universal solutions. The choice of crop varieties was also highlighted, as varieties differ in shelf life, nutritional quality, production requirements, and suitability for fresh consumption or processing.

While investments in technologies and physical infrastructure are necessary, participants emphasized that reducing post-harvest loss also required systemic and behavioral change. Maintenance requirements and access to technical expertise were also identified as important considerations. For example, evidence from Addis Ababa reveals that simple maintenance failures, such as improper temperature settings, exacerbated avoidable losses, highlighting that the efficacy of new infrastructure is entirely dependent on operator training, reliable energy, and functioning supply chains. Therefore, upgrading the hardware without upgrading human capital and maintenance systems yields diminishing returns.

Expanding processing and value addition was considered particularly important for highly seasonal crops such as tomatoes and onions, which often experience substantial losses during peak harvest periods. Participants discussed drying, improved storage, and processing into products such as tomato paste as ways to absorb seasonal surpluses and extend market availability. However, processing facilities must be appropriately sized and supported by reliable raw material supplies and viable market arrangements. An example from Nigeria illustrated how a tomato-processing facility faced difficulties when farmers shifted to alternative buyers offering better prices, highlighting the need for commercial arrangements that balance the interests of producers and processors. Participants also emphasized the importance of improving hygiene and food safety in traditional drying and preservation practices.

Strengthening market information, aggregation, and producer–buyer relationships was another major priority. Participants noted that farmers often lack reliable information on market demand and prices, contributing to oversupply, price volatility, and losses during peak production periods. Improved market information systems, more predictable pricing, and stronger connections between producers and buyers were identified as important enabling conditions. Farmer aggregation through cooperatives or producer groups could improve access to transport, storage, and processing services while strengthening negotiating power with larger buyers, including supermarkets. Experiences from India, where farmers have established direct relationships with tomato-sourcing companies, were cited as potentially relevant. Participants also called for greater attention to the role of brokers and intermediaries in shaping prices and market access.

Policy support and incentives for post-harvest loss reduction were viewed as essential for expanding adoption and sustaining investments. Participants emphasized the importance of implementing existing post-harvest management policies, strengthening good agricultural practices, and helping farmers meet quality and regulatory requirements for domestic and export markets. Targeted subsidies, tax incentives, and other forms of public support could improve access to technologies, although ensuring their maintenance and continued use remains a challenge. In Ethiopia, ongoing agricultural commercialization initiatives were highlighted as potential mechanisms for expanding access to technologies and markets, particularly for smallholder farmers organized in clusters and cooperatives.

The discussion also highlighted political economy considerations affecting investment in fruits and vegetables. Participants observed that government policies and investments often prioritize staple crops, such as wheat, over nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables, despite the latter's importance for nutrition, livelihoods, and employment. In Ethiopia, examples were raised of land previously used for vegetable production being shifted toward staple crops in response to government priorities and market trends. Participants therefore called for greater prioritization of fruits and vegetables in agricultural policies and investments, recognizing their importance for nutrition, livelihoods, and employment. In this context where individual fruit and vegetable intake remains far below WHO/FAO recommendations, post-harvest loss reduces local supply of these nutrient dense crops, inflating prices and limiting dietary diversity. Preserving these foods from farm to fork is, therefore, a direct intervention in food-based nutrition.

In Ethiopia, where post-harvest management policies and government-supported horticultural initiatives are already in place, participants emphasized the need to strengthen implementation, expand access to appropriate technologies, and address challenges related to their adoption and maintenance. The recent National Postharvest Management Strategy (2024–2030) and the integration of over hundreds of thousands of farmers into Integrated Agro-Industrial Parks signal a shift from a narrow focus on grains to a holistic value-chain approach. However, the success of flagship initiatives, such as the National Avocado Development Program, hinges on inclusive institutional design. Evidence indicates that while cooperative membership and access to credit drive the adoption of improved post-harvest practices, entrenched gender and age disparities limit equitable participation. Food-safety concerns associated with chemical treatments used to extend shelf life were also raised, underscoring the need for safer preservation methods and appropriate regulation.

Overall, the discussion reinforced that reducing post-harvest losses in fruits and vegetables requires interventions across the value chain, supported by functioning markets and an enabling policy environment. Promising technologies include improved harvesting and handling practices, affordable cooling and storage, better packaging, and expanded processing capacity. However, their effectiveness and adoption

depend on crop-specific requirements, economic incentives, producer–buyer relationships, and institutional support. Moreover, technical and policy interventions must be deliberately gender-transformative, ensuring that women and youth have equitable access to finance, training, and leadership roles, to truly close the post-harvest gap and secure both livelihoods and nutrition. Participants emphasized that greater investment in post-harvest management for nutrient-dense foods could contribute not only to reduced losses and higher producer incomes but also to improved availability and affordability of nutritious foods.

4.3 Cross-cutting feedback on the emerging theory of change

The value-chain discussions reinforced the importance of moving beyond technology-focused approaches to post-harvest loss reduction. Participants emphasized that the effectiveness, adoption, and sustainability of interventions depend on the interaction of infrastructure, market incentives, institutional arrangements, producer and consumer behavior, and the broader policy environment. Several cross-cutting considerations emerged for refining the proposed theory of change:

- **Align technologies with local needs, incentives, and market conditions**. Investments in cooling, storage, processing, and transport should respond to the specific characteristics of each value chain, including production volumes, seasonality, perishability, market distances, and consumer preferences. Examples of underutilized milk collection centers and processing facilities demonstrated that technically appropriate investments may fail when they do not align with existing marketing practices or offer sufficient incentives for adoption.
- **Address complementary infrastructure and operational requirements**. Reliable energy, water, transport, market facilities, and maintenance services are critical to the effectiveness of post-harvest technologies. Participants emphasized the need to assess these requirements alongside proposed investments, including whether technologies can operate affordably and sustainably at the scale required by producers and traders.
- **Strengthen market coordination and incentives for reducing losses**. Better market information, aggregation, quality-based pricing, and stronger producer–buyer relationships can help create economic incentives for improved handling and preservation. Participants also highlighted the importance of understanding how intermediaries, informal marketing arrangements, and household decision-making influence adoption. Improved technologies must offer tangible benefits to the actors expected to use them.
- **Invest in institutional capacity and viable business models**. Cooperatives, producer organizations, private enterprises, and public–private partnerships can play important roles in managing shared infrastructure, coordinating services, and connecting producers to markets. However, their effectiveness depends on sound governance, appropriate financing, management capacity, and clear arrangements for operation and maintenance. The theory of change should distinguish between technical performance, adoption, and long-term financial sustainability.
- **Integrate capacity strengthening, consumer awareness, and market development**. Training in harvesting, handling, processing, hygiene, and food safety is essential but may be insufficient without complementary infrastructure and incentives. Consumer preferences and awareness also shape demand for preserved and processed products, particularly in settings where food cultures favor fresh products. Interventions may therefore need to combine supply-side improvements with efforts to build demand and support changes in market practices.

- **Account for policy priorities and political economy**. Participants highlighted the influence of government investment priorities, regulations, institutional arrangements, and competing interests on the feasibility of interventions. Greater attention is needed to the implementation of existing policies, incentives for technology adoption, and the relative priority given to nutrient-dense foods compared with staple crops. These factors may affect which interventions receive support, who benefits, and whether improvements can be sustained.
- **Strengthen the evidence base and assess distributional outcomes**. Important evidence gaps remain, particularly for fish and fruits and vegetables, regarding the magnitude and location of losses, the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions, and their longer-term outcomes. Participants highlighted the need to distinguish production constraints from post-harvest losses and to examine impacts on incomes, food safety, nutrition, and sustainability. Future research should also assess who adopts and benefits from interventions, including women, small-scale producers, and informal market actors.

Overall, the discussions suggested that the emerging theory of change should explicitly recognize adoption, market viability, institutional capacity, and enabling policies as critical links between investments in post-harvest technologies and intended outcomes. It should also account for differences across value chains and contexts, as well as potential trade-offs and unintended consequences. These considerations can guide refinement of the proposed investment options and identification of priority areas for further research and stakeholder engagement.



Photo: From left to right: Elyse Iruhiriye, Akash Panda, Yohanna Moses, and Esha Sarswat

5. Conclusions and next steps

The GCAN Partner Workshop in Addis Ababa highlighted the progress made in strengthening capacities and partnerships to integrate gender, climate change, and nutrition into research, policies, and programs. Discussions underscored a growing emphasis on translating these capacities into sustained institutional practices, stronger policy engagement, and measurable outcomes. The stakeholder consultation on post-harvest losses further reinforced the importance of considering technical solutions alongside the market, institutional, behavioral, and policy conditions that shape their adoption and effectiveness.

During the final discussion, partners identified several areas for action to consolidate achievements and sustain momentum:

- **Strengthen institutionalization and policy engagement**. Build on existing government structures, partnerships, and policy processes to embed gender-, climate-, and nutrition-responsive approaches in institutional practices and decision-making. Target capacity strengthening to specific policy opportunities and actors positioned to influence implementation, while maintaining engagement with technical staff, civil society, and communities.
- **Consolidate and share tools and learning**. Organize existing GCAN tools, training materials, and guidance into a manageable set of resources that partners can adapt to different audiences and contexts. Strengthen cross-country exchange through more interactive monthly partner meetings and targeted sharing of practical experiences, including approaches that have encountered challenges.
- **Strengthen monitoring and documentation of outcomes**. Develop a more systematic approach to tracking the application of strengthened capacities and their contributions to institutional change and policy influence. Document outcome stories and lessons across countries, including changes in practices, coordination, policy uptake, implementation, and resource allocation.
- **Support sustainability and resource mobilization**. Strengthen leadership buy-in and institutional ownership to reduce reliance on individual champions and project-funded coordination mechanisms. Explore partnerships and joint resource mobilization opportunities to sustain priority activities, institutional relationships, and research beyond the current project period.

Partners also agreed on practical steps to strengthen communications and continued engagement. These included more consistent contributions to GCAN communications channels, sharing publications, events, photographs, and other outputs through quarterly reporting, and using regular partner meetings more deliberately for peer learning and follow-up. Additional partner-specific requests for technical assistance, research collaboration, publication support, and administrative follow-up will be addressed through bilateral discussions and ongoing project coordination.

Overall, the workshop reinforced that GCAN's lasting contribution will depend not only on the knowledge and capacities developed, but on how effectively these are embedded in institutions, applied to policy and implementation challenges, and sustained through partnerships. The remaining project period offers an opportunity to consolidate achievements, demonstrate outcomes, and position partners to continue advancing integrated gender, climate change, and nutrition objectives beyond GCAN.

Annex 1: Workshop Agenda

GCAN WORKSHOP AGENDA

September 22-24, 2026 | Haile Grand Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Objectives of the workshop:

- Reflect on GCAN's progress to date and discuss priorities and a shared vision through 2027
- Share progress and lessons learned from capacity strengthening activities implemented by partners, and identify opportunities for cross-country learning and collaboration
- Share experiences and lessons on policy engagement and communications for influence
- Showcase GCAN research to partners and relevant stakeholders and gather feedback to inform future research, policy engagement, and programming

AGENDA

Day 1 – Tuesday, September 22

08:30-09:00	Registration

09:00-09:30	Opening
	• Welcome remarks
	  ○ Professor Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher, Executive Director, FSS
	  ○ Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI
	• Workshop objectives
	• Overview of the agenda

09:30-09:50	Presentation: Reflections on GCAN progress – Elizabeth Bryan, Research Fellow, IFPRI
09:50-10:30	Interactive activity: GCAN journey and vision • Round of introductions • Participants reflect on GCAN's achievements to date and aspirations through 2027 • Facilitator highlights common themes and reflections
10:30-11:00	Coffee/tea break & group photo

11:00-11:30 Cross-country capacity needs assessment findings

- Presentation of cross-country findings – Elyse Iruhiriye, Research Fellow, IFPRI
- Discussion of publication opportunities and next steps

11:30-12:30 Partner presentations: Capacity strengthening progress and priorities (10 minutes per partner organization—first 3 presentations plus Q&A)

- Capacity strengthening roadmaps
- Progress toward the objectives and lessons learned
- Priority capacity strengthening activities, including tools and products, through 2027

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14:30 Partner presentations: Capacity strengthening progress and priorities (10 minutes per partner organization—last 3 presentations plus Q&A)

- Capacity strengthening roadmaps
- Progress toward the objectives and lessons learned
- Priority capacity strengthening activities, including tools and products, through 2027

14:30-15:30 Breakout groups

- How can we better measure and document capacity changes at different levels?
- Where do you see opportunities to learn from or collaborate with one another to address these capacity needs?
- Which activities, tools, or products that you have developed could be adapted or built on as cross-country GCAN products or resources? What would be needed to make them useful across contexts?

15:30-16:00 Coffee/tea break

16:00-16:45 Report back and plenary discussion

- Rapporteurs from each group share key points
- Plenary discussion on priorities and opportunities

16:45-17:00 Day 1 reflections and key takeaways

19:00- Group dinner at Alem Elfign, Haile Grand Addis Ababa

Day 2 – Wednesday, September 23

09:00-09:15 Opening

- Brief recap of Day 1
- Overview of Day 2

09:15-10:30	Panel discussion: Capacity strengthening for sustainable impact
	• Panelists
	  ○ Alemtsehay Sergawi, Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia
	  ○ Selamawit G/Egziabher Kebede, Policy Studies Institute
	  ○ Fiker Shiferaw, World Bank
	  ○ Tirsit Sahledengle, Addis Ababa University
	• Moderator: Selam Esayas, GCAN Ethiopia Initiative Lead, FSS

10:30-11:00	Coffee/tea break
11:00-11:30	Reflections on the panel session
11:30-13:00	World Café: Experiences and lessons in policy engagement and communications • Table 1 – Successes: What successes in policy engagement and influence have you had? What approaches contributed to those successes? • Table 2 – Challenges: What approaches did not work as intended? What constraints or barriers did you face, and why? • Table 3 – Communications: How did you raise awareness of the importance of integrating gender, climate, and nutrition in policy processes? What communications approaches or strategies helped to achieve this? How important is awareness raising for having policy influence?
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	Breakout groups • What are your goals for policy engagement and influence in the final year, and how do you intend to achieve them? • What have you learned from your previous experience that you will build on in the coming year? • How can your capacity strengthening efforts support longer-term policy engagement and change?
15:00-15:30	Coffee/tea break
15:30-16:15	Report back and plenary discussion • Rapporteurs from each group share key points • Plenary discussion on common lessons and future directions
16:15-17:00	Reflections and key takeaways from Days 1-2, and parking lot

Day 3 – Thursday, September 24

Part I: GCAN Stakeholder Consultation: Reducing Post-Harvest Loss of Nutrient-Dense Foods

08:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:10	Welcome and overview of GCAN – Elizabeth Bryan, Research Fellow, IFPRI
09:10-09:25	GCAN in Ethiopia – Selam Esayas, GCAN Ethiopia Initiative Lead, FSS
09:25-10:15	Presentation and Q&A: Evidence Review on Reducing Post-Harvest Loss of Nutrient-Dense Foods in LMICs – Catherine Ragasa, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI
10:15-10:45	Coffee/tea break
10:45-12:15	Stakeholder feedback • Breakout group discussions • Report back and discussion
12:15-12:30	Closing
12:30-13:30	Lunch

Part II: Internal Workshop Closing

13:30-14:30	Workshop closing: Reflections, next steps, and action items • Including internal communications needs and suggestions
14:30-17:00	Optional one-on-one meetings with partners to discuss specific needs and issues

Annex 2: Participant List

Muzna Alvi, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), India

Yirssaw Demeke Ambaw, Hawassa University, Ethiopia

Bedru Balana, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USA

Elizabeth Basauri Bryan, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USA

Mekonen Tekliye Cherinet, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

Marame Cissé, Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rural (IPAR), Senegal

Tegegne Gebre-Egziabher, Forum for Social Studies (FSS), Ethiopia

Faith Gikunda, Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation for a Sustainable Africa (ICCASA), Kenya

Ara Go, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USA

Aissara Hathie, Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rural (IPAR), Senegal

Habtamu Abera Goshu, Ministry of Innovation and Technology

Elyse Iruhiriye, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI),

Selamawit Gebreegziabher Kebede, Policy Studies Institute

Eric Kirimi, Inclusive Climate Change Adaptation for a Sustainable Africa (ICCASA), Kenya

Chala Gowe Kuyu, Jimma University, Ethiopia

Wubetu Bihon Legesse, World Vegetable Center, Ethiopia

Harriet Mawia, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Kenya

Ankitaa Mohanty, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Odisha, India

Yohanna Moses, Environmental Care Foundation (ECF), Adamawa State, Nigeria

Hamza Muhammad Usman, Environmental Care Foundation (ECF), Adamawa State, Nigeria

Anbissa Muleta, Agricultural Transformation Institute, Ethiopia

Selam Esayas Negatu, Forum for Social Studies (FSS), Ethiopia

Akash Panda, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Odisha, India

Catherine Ragasa, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Tirsit Sahledengle, Addis Ababa University and Forum for Social Studies (FSS), Ethiopia

Alemtsehay Sergawi, Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia

Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Ethiopia

Fiker Sheferaw, World Bank, Ethiopia

Mahlet Tekalgn, World Vision, Ethiopia

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DISCLAIMER

This report was prepared with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support the synthesis and drafting of content based on workshop presentations, discussions, and notes. The content in the report was reviewed, revised, and approved by the authors and project partners to ensure its accuracy and faithful representation of the workshop proceedings. Responsibility for the final content, interpretations, and conclusions rests with the authors.

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