SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL

REFLECTIONS SERIES

Multi-actor initiatives in action

Lessons from the Sustainable Diets for All programme

Hivos people unlimited

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SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL REFLECTIONS SERIES: STORIES OF CHANGE

Sustainable Diets for All (SD4All) is an advocacy programme designed to improve access to healthy and sustainable diets for low-income communities, while highlighting the important link between food and climate. Coordinated by HIVOS and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the programme works in partnership with civil society organisations and citizen groups in Bolivia, Indonesia, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. The programme is part of the Citizen Agency Consortium, which is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its Dialogue and Dissent programme.

The SD4All reflections series is a set of papers that discuss achievements, challenges and lessons from the SD4All programme. The series explores the legacy left by the initiative in four areas: citizen agency, multi-actor initiatives, informal markets and capacity development. The lessons shared are based on the expected and unexpected results of research, lobbying and capacity development.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SD4All themes of production, consumption and the markets that connect them, in particular informal markets, are more relevant than ever.

The series is aimed at advocates, researchers, policy makers, citizens and decision makers seeking change in local and national food systems around the world. It will be of particular interest to organisations that bring people into policy making spaces where their lived experience of growing, buying and selling food can shape policy.

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Cover photo: Multi-stakeholder platform in La Paz, Bolivia.
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INTRODUCTION

The food system is full of complex challenges that are affecting people and the planet. Malnutrition, below-living-wage incomes, biodiversity loss and climate change are a few of these challenges. The food system is characterised by a multitude of actors who affect and are affected by food-related policy decisions. However, the needs of those who form the backbone of the food system, namely low-income consumers, producers, traders, processors and vendors, are often overlooked in policy decisions. Citizens can play a vital role in building a new food system that enables women and men, young and old, to use and develop their knowledge to further improve the diversity in production and consumption systems. Connecting these stakeholders gives a new perspective on the challenges of the food system and allows for innovative solutions to be developed.

One of the ways Hivos tackles these issues is through inclusive multi-actor initiatives (MAI; see Box 1), which can serve to connect the various actors of the food system and bring about transformation. We've seen that inviting stakeholders such as decision makers and citizens to engage in these initiatives together encourages a deeper understanding of other perspectives and interests. And when decision makers take on challenges alongside other stakeholders, desired advocacy changes in agenda setting, policy making and practices are often achieved.

This paper documents the results of three multi-stakeholder initiatives that have come about through Hivos and IIED's Sustainable Diets for All programme: the Food Parliament in Buikwe, Uganda; the Food Change Lab in Zambia; and the La Paz Food Council in Bolivia. The paper aims to strengthen our understanding of MAIs by showing what works and what doesn't. It also provides actionable recommendations for people designing MAIs both within and beyond the SD4All programme (Box 2). Each case briefly describes the MAI and how it works, and summarises the main outcomes and lessons. The paper concludes with a series of general recommendations drawn from these case studies.

Box 1. What are multi-actor initiatives?

A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food and Nutrition (HLPE, 2018) defines multi-stakeholder partnerships or multi-actor initiatives as any collaborative arrangement among stakeholders from two or more different spheres of society (public sector, private sector and/or civil society). These stakeholders pool their resources and share risks and responsibilities in order to solve a common issue, handle a conflict, develop a shared vision, realise a common objective, manage a common resource and/or ensure the protection, production or delivery of an outcome of collective and/or public interest.

The SD4All MAIs take different forms, follow different processes, and engage with different stakeholders. Some of these differences are deliberately designed, while others result from less conscious decisions. This is explained by the following principles:

- A MAI follows a conscious design process.
- Co-creation and co-development are central to a MAI process.
- Actors complement each other in capacities, skills, networks and activities.
- MAIs offer the best approach for combining Hivos' three strategies of working with frontrunners (game-changing pioneers and innovators), convening MAIs, and influencing policy at the local and national level.

Cosmas Kazimoto and Bana Sankwa, maize harvesting (Stan Makumba)

Box 2. The Sustainable Diets for All programme

Sustainable Diets for All (SD4All) is an advocacy programme, running from 2016-2020, that uses evidence, including evidence generated by citizens, to help low-income communities in Bolivia, Indonesia, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia improve their access to sustainable, diverse and nutritious food. It fits the Hivos mission – innovation for social change – by working to influence the policy and practices of markets, governments and international institutions through citizen action. The programme delivers policy change in three focus areas: 1) healthy and diverse consumption; 2) small and medium entrepreneurs and informal market linkages in food systems; and 3) nutritious and diverse production. SD4All is part of a strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called the Citizen Agency Consortium. The term 'citizen agency' describes people's individual and collective capacity to be agents of their own lives and their own development (Vorley et al., 2020). The consortium's approach rests on two pillars: 1) lobby and advocacy (L&A) to influence decision makers at local, national and international level; and 2) capacity development to strengthen the L&A capacity of civil society actors. Within the consortium we work in three kinds of partnerships: 1) with partners in the five countries; 2) with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED); and 3) with the Dutch government in the Netherlands and at global level, as well as Dutch embassies, especially in Uganda, Kenya, and Indonesia.

Alongside the MAIs outlined in this paper, the SD4All programme has been involved in other local level MAIs, including the Uganda Food Change Lab implemented by the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (Boerwinkel et al., 2018); the Indonesia Food Change Lab, which became the New Generation for Indonesian Cooking initiative (Boerwinkel and Paath, 2018); and a UN initiative at the global level, the One Planet Sustainable Food Systems Network.[1]

UGANDA'S FOOD PARLIAMENT

Context

In late 2017, SD4All partner Slow Food Uganda[2] started up an initiative in Buikwe for citizens to share ideas around common food-related interests. The initial participants called it *Seteserezo webyemere* in Luganda, which translates as food parliament. During the first meeting, the discussion centred on the question of how people thought that monoculture, especially the production of sugar cane, was affecting food production.

This was in response to the situation created by verbal contracts between the multinational sugar companies and farmers to start producing sugarcane. At first, farmers were happy as they hoped to generate more income. However, they soon discovered that this was a false hope, and worse, that they could not switch back to food production as the company would not allow the removal of the sugarcane products they had invested in during the cultivation process. The government presented a bill to the Parliament of Uganda which would prohibit the farmers from removing the sugarcane or selling the produce to a company located further away. Despite still formally owning the land, the farmers were experiencing a form of land grabbing. This situation led them to discuss the issue in the Food Parliament.

Structure and activities

As a MAI, the Food Parliament brings people together to talk and work together across sectors and occupations, and in doing so, builds confidence. It does not have a formal organisational structure, though it resembles a town hall meeting. The group has grown from 30 to 45 people, including representatives of pre-existing Food Communities – informal groups of diverse stakeholders, including farmers and fishers from another Slow Food Uganda initiative, who organise community gardens in which they grow traditional crops.

The Food Parliament also organises learning journeys[3] to generate new ideas and learn from the experiences of others. The group's influence reaches beyond the immediate participants, through discussions with neighbours or colleagues and visits to the vegetable garden plots established by the Food Communities. To enable greater participation, the group has shifted to a system of flexible meeting locations and encourages people to speak in their mother tongue, making the process more inclusive. The Food Parliament facilitator from Slow Food Uganda balances the participation of the more dominant with the quieter participants. Despite the presence of opposing views or interests, participants have managed to understand each other and agree upon solutions.

After the second meeting, the group selected 20 individuals to spread the Food Parliament's agenda – dietary diversity on the farm and on the plate by promoting production and consumption of traditional foods, crops and animals – to their communities. Within this group of 20, they created an even smaller working committee of 7 people to push the parliament's resolutions for consideration by the Buikwe District Local Government. Members of this working committee were selected by the other participants based on their ability to stand up and push a Food Parliament idea forward. Members are not formally elected, nor is there a formal procedure for their work. To avoid issues of (financial) sustainability, committee meetings are organised without the need for external resourcing.

The working committee works closely with a co-ordinator from Slow Food Uganda. However, in the absence of the Slow Food Uganda Co-ordinator, the committee can still conduct their own meetings with leaders and citizens to implement what was agreed upon during the Food Parliament. The working committee prepares the motion for discussion in a Food Parliament and ensures that the motion for the next meeting is already presented. This enables participants to think ahead and encourages others to join in thinking or participating. The Slow Food Uganda Co-ordinator helps complete the Food Parliament reports.

Citizens can reach out directly to their leaders through the committee, and thus amplify their voices in meetings with the local government. In practice, only councillors are allowed to speak in a district council meeting, but, on request, invitees can provide further information or clarification on a councillor's point. After a Food Parliament

Food Parliament meeting (Slow Food)

meeting, the working committee together with the Slow Food Co-ordinator meet with the district council's speaker or clerk to present the views of the Food Parliament.

Hivos and IIED's role

In addition to providing technical and financial support, Hivos and IIED proactively enable the emerging change process through multi-actor engagement. Hivos and IIED have built the capacity of the Slow Food Uganda team in communications, monitoring and result-based reporting, food lobbying and advocacy, among others, enabling them to organise policy dialogues, systematise the experiences and follow up.

Key outcomes

The problems with sugar cane growing discussed in the first Food Parliament were presented to the district council speaker and clerk, who subsequently invited two Food Parliament representatives to speak during the council meeting. The result was the signing of a resolution by the district council on the restriction of sugarcane growing, specifying: 1) that sugar cane can only be grown if a plot is bigger than three acres; and 2) that at least 70% of that land should be dedicated to food production. It also gave the authority to agricultural extension officers to promote food diversification with smallholder farmers. The decision resulted in a plan to formulate a food security and nutrition ordinance, which is a legally binding and enforceable law.

The 20 individuals who first constituted the Food Parliament session have met four times and discussed important themes such as eating less fried food and producing and consuming diverse and local foods. The participants have gained awareness and knowledge of various policies and policy-making processes, and acknowledged that they feel strengthened in their ability to voice and raise issues, for example with technical experts or their local governmental leaders.

The Food Parliament has also invited government leaders to their meetings, including the district Youth Councillor, who has become a member of the working committee. Where previously the district council never used to discuss food and nutrition-related issues, they now acknowledge that participating in the Food Parliament has "opened their minds" to these issues.

The Food Parliament was also specifically designed to give women a platform to participate actively and share their views. Not only is the parliamentary committee 60% female, the meetings have also resulted in the creation of the Buikwe District Women Leaders Forum. This group of 15 women leaders discusses the role of women in enhancing food diversification in production and consumption, and encourages other women to get involved in practices that improve food and nutrition security.

Key lessons

It is useful to have a participant who links citizens with local government. Involving the Youth Councillor meant that during district council sessions he could support or spearhead resolutions formulated in a Food Parliament meeting. He could also explain, clarify or demystify the workings and dynamics of the local government policy-making process

Youth speak out (Kabarole Research and Resource Centre)

to the other Food Parliament members. In turn the Food Parliament enriches and invigorates his work. For example, the parliament's resolutions have resulted in more diverse school gardens where students can grow seasonal crops that contribute to their dietary intake. They have also provided an avenue for students to be involved in discussions around the production and consumption of nutritious foods.

Sustained support for an initiative is very important. The Slow Food Co-ordinator provided close support and hands-on coaching to the Food Parliament in Buikwe. This was key for building rapport and trust with participants. Close support from Hivos and other Slow Food Uganda staff who are not necessarily part of the MAI also allows them to take their interventions to a higher level. Their monitoring system includes a quarterly narrative report and each trip to the field results in an activity report to Hivos and the local government of Buikwe. This has helped to flexibly and swiftly introduce adaptations to the Food Parliament's way of working.

Adjusting design 'on the go' is useful when guided by a key vision. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the Food Parliament follows an emergent design with clear beacons, including a mutual aspiration to promote dietary diversity and preserve traditional foods, which guide the group in adjusting and engaging with others. As a result, the Food Parliament functions alongside and complements other spaces for multi-stakeholder engagement, such as the Food Communities, the Slow Food Youth Academy[4] and the Buikwe District Women Leaders Forum. The system works despite a lack of formalities: representatives are chosen rather than formally elected, and there are no memoranda of understanding or any other formal rules of engagement.

Capacity building should be organised. Despite strengthening participants' knowledge, their ability to voice concerns, and their overall confidence, Slow Food did not organise formal opportunities to build capacity among participants. Important skills to build in future Food Parliaments could be organisational development issues such as agenda-setting and presentation skills.

One participant can embody several key stakeholder roles. In a context where one single occupation can rarely feed an entire family, people tend to have multiple occupations at the same time or from season to season. Whereas we tend to define these actors into separate categories, in reality people undertake multiple activities and can identify with a variety of roles. For example, the committee speaker is a secondary school teacher, but also a farmer. Another member is a farmer, but also a former politician. The same applies to the group members, where a farmer is also a fisher, and a chef also raises chickens. Therefore, one parliament member can represent the perspectives of more than one stakeholder.

THE ZAMBIA FOOD CHANGE LAB

Context

The Zambian food system faces a number of challenges, including maize monocropping and widespread undernourishment. The Zambia Food Change Lab emerged in 2015 to address the limited crop diversity on Zambian farms and in local diets by facilitating dialogue among low-income consumers, traders, traditional leaders, producers and government authorities (Boerwinkel and Chilufya, 2019). This multi-stakeholder innovation process was designed to generate ideas for change in the food system and test these innovations on the ground. Existing multi-stakeholder processes in the food and nutrition sector in Zambia rarely provide a platform for local voices, so the Lab puts particular emphasis on involving local people. Hivos started the Lab in Chongwe District, prior to the start of the SD4All programme. Its goals were to assess local agricultural practices and resulting dietary patterns together with local farmers, policy makers and civil society. In 2016, the Lab became a part of the SD4All programme. It eventually shifted its focus from the local level to the national food system after adding partners with a national focus, and as agricultural policy issues resurfaced.

Structure and activities

Participants were invited to take part in the Lab based on a stakeholder mapping done by Hivos, partners and other alliances, with the intention of involving citizens and local and national civic groups. During the first lab meeting, which was facilitated by the Presencing Institute in August 2015, participants created a food system map to identify key issues on which they planned to work. They established four 'prototyping' groups to tackle selected challenges which had been identified as leverage points. A prototype is a small-scale intervention intended to test a solution's workability. The outcomes of the four prototyping groups are discussed in the next section. In May 2017, a second event was organised to have another look at the problems identified in the food systems map. The group reconvened in 2019 to evaluate their progress.

Hivos and IIED's role

As conveners and facilitators of the platform, Hivos and IIED were responsible for bringing the different stakeholders together and ensuring that they met regularly. Alongside Food Lab events, Hivos, IIED and consultants sponsored and facilitated prototype meetings and other events. We trained our partner organisation Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) to assume more responsibilities. They have taken ownership of the Food Lab methodologies and are integrating the methodology into their way of working. They received specific capacity building on multi-actor partnerships and monitoring and evaluation. Other prototype leaders may also need to be trained because they will also be implementing initiatives that will use lab methodologies. For example, the Lusaka and Kitwe food policy councils are equipped to use lab methodologies to facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms at city level.

Key outcomes

The following four prototyping groups, led by Hivos and IIED partner organisations with expertise in each thematic area, emerged from the Lab. The work achieved by each group was strengthened by their connections with the other prototype groups:

1) **Crop Diversity Endeavour, led by CSPR.** The group has influenced government to move away from the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP) to an electronic voucher system allowing farmers to get subsidies for crops other than maize. At the end of 2018, the group called upon the government to expand the crop list that receives subsidies by setting up multi-stakeholder gatherings in seven districts to receive submissions on what other crops government should subsidise. These issues are explored in the discussion paper, *Beyond Maize: Exploring agricultural diversification in Zambia from different perspectives* (Mwanamwenge and Cook, 2019).

Presenting the food map (Felia Boerwinkel)

2) **Youth (in production and consumption), led by Youth for Sustainable Foods Zambia.** The group was established as a result of the Food Lab. They have organised several awareness activities such as youth day celebrations, agriculture symposiums and food festivals. They also encourage young people to take up farming. As youth do not typically have access to agricultural land, in August 2018 the group planted various types of vegetables in sacks, an activity they called vertical agriculture. They created a platform (WhatsApp group) where they would post the challenges and progress of their sack gardens. They also shared their experience on social media (Facebook) on the affiliated young farmers group called Young Emerging Farmers Initiative (YEFI). This activity stimulated interest from the University of Zambia who expressed interest in partnering with Hivos in making vertical agriculture/sack gardening an activity that can serve as practical experience for university students in the university's Department of Environment.

3) **Awareness raising group, led by Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) Zambia**. One of the key achievements of this group was to form a partnership with the Lusaka City Council to work together on food issues concerning the city. This has enabled the formation of the Lusaka Food Policy Council (LFPC) that will co-ordinate efforts to address challenges within the Lusaka food system. The group has also raised public awareness of food issues, such as the need for diversification, through adverts and cartoons on national TV and YouTube.

4) **Informal economy group, led by Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA**). The group has worked on increasing awareness of health and safety issues in the informal sector. In March 2019, food vendors from the two biggest markets in Lusaka were invited to build their capacity in food handling practices as well as nutrition through the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC) and the municipality. The event ended with the formation of 20 nutrition groups to work as ambassadors for the SD4ALL programme and as peer educators on food safety and nutrition. The perceptions, challenges and policy context of the informal food markets in Zambia are reflected in the research paper, *Informal food markets in Zambia* (Mwango, 2019).

Working in a garden (Stan Makumba)

Key lessons

Design is not a blueprint. Although a process might start out with a well thought-out design, or an open mind (and design), it's important to then be flexible in pursuing what emerges (e.g. depending on the reactions of participants or opportunities and challenges that present themselves). An example of this was the shift from the local focus in Chongwe District to the national focus of the Lab in Lusaka, as a result of new partners. The Chongwe interventions were more concrete and easily linked to the Food Change Lab. With the national level-focused Lab, the outcomes became more challenging to identify and definitively attribute. The latter way of working requires clear values and principles to guide decision making, as well as close observation of what works and what does not.

System change must include youth. The youth of today will be our future leaders and their voices need to be heard. Including youth in the prototyping groups was key to getting them interested and involved in farming and the food system. We were impressed by the amount of energy that they unleashed to make changes. In addition, Zambia is a youthful population with high unemployment rates, making it especially important to involve youth in changes that will affect the country. In June 2018, the United Nations Population Fund indicated that the number of youth in Zambia between the ages of 15 and 35 years was 4.8 million (the total population is around 17 million people), making it the largest population of young people in the country's history.

Keep up the momentum and commitment of participants between events. So far, the Food Change Lab in Zambia has been designed around multi-stakeholder events and prototyping or working groups characterised by high-profile participants and high-intensity resourcing. This inevitably means that the commitment of participants has a tendency to weaken in the lulls between big events, which makes keeping up the momentum a challenge. This should be factored into the process design. Examples of solutions include providing more follow up in the time between events and designing specific funding modalities for the prototype activities to ensure that they happen within a reasonable timeframe.

Maintain strong community ownership and links to existing government processes. Where Hivos takes on sole responsibility as convener and facilitator, this can undermine participants' commitment and the longevity of the activity. We saw in the Food Lab evaluation that the community of Chongwe, where the Food Lab initially started, did not feel fully included in the later part of the process. Training partner organisation CSPR to take over the Lab has been key for keeping participants committed as they feel more included.

BOLIVIA'S FOOD COUNCIL

Context

In Bolivia, where local food systems must be restored to ensure that they are efficient and equitable, food-related policies and laws have only addressed individual parts of the system, rather than food systems as a whole. This has often led to isolated efforts and investments, and on occasion has had unintended consequences for other parts of the food system. A disparate vision of the food system and food chains neglects the system's many moving parts, including actors and infrastructure, as well as the relations and interactions between food system components (production, transportation, commercialisation and consumption). To improve on this fragmented approach, SD4All partner Fundación Alternativas[5] decided to create the Municipal Food Security Committee in La Paz (or Food Council) in December 2013, aiming to create an environment in which government and citizens sit together, share ideas and work collaboratively across sectors to design policy in a participatory fashion.

Structure and activities

In 2013, Alternativas set up the first Food Council in La Paz, in partnership with the mayor. From the outset, participants were consciously and proactively selected by the Mayor and Alternativas, ensuring representation of a variety of sectors including local and state government agencies, NGOs, universities, think tanks, farmer and market vendor associations, food entrepreneurs and local gastronomical movements. There is no formal hierarchy within the councils; this is a conscious strategy adopted by Alternativas to ensure that these working groups are as inclusive as possible and counter the usual expectations of who is to lead. In case of turnover, especially of participants who represent the public sector where personnel are constantly changing, Alternativas has established a quick mechanism to identify new members.

The first year of work was dedicated to drafting the country's first municipal legislation on food security from an urban perspective and garnering public support to ensure the local government adopted the proposed legislation. In the second year, the Food Council conducted an analysis of the La Paz metropolitan food system in an effort to begin identifying strengths and weaknesses in food production and supply within the eight municipalities that make up the region. This work was supported by experts in an array of issues including production trends and the impact of climate change on food security. The result was a policy and investment proposal prepared by members and presented to the Governor. Importantly, Alternativas conducted and began sharing research on food security and the need to strengthen local food systems. These complementary efforts were aimed at generating evidence to back up the Food Council's proposal. In its third year, work was centred on developing a proposal for a food logistics and supply system for the metropolitan region of La Paz. This proposal was, once again, crafted in a participatory fashion and informed by experts and representatives from sectors such as farmer and market vendor associations. The proposal was presented to the public and private sector, including banks, the Chamber of Commerce, government ministries and agencies, state and local government officials, co-operation agencies, universities, and national producer and market vendor associations. As a result, the state government has begun to adopt the proposal within its development strategies and planning documents.

As a result of the successes of the La Paz Food Council, in 2015 Alternativas set up two more councils in the Bolivian cities of Sucre and Tarija. In 2017, all three food councils came together to share and learn from each other's experiences on food-related legislation and policy proposals. In collaboration with Alternativas, Hivos, Louvain Co-operation and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the councils also organised an event to bring together other cities and local actors from different regions of Bolivia to construct the Urban Agenda for Food Security. The document was then shared with the national government and many of its components have now been incorporated into the National Urban Agenda of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

The food councils meet monthly to discuss issues related to food and food security. Importantly, the work of the Councils always translates into food system proposals aimed at different target audiences depending on the subject matter. Proposals are shared in events and/or meetings with the public or private sector, and have been making their way into state policies since 2014.

Urban food garden in La Paz, Bolivia (Mauricio Panozo)

Hivos and IIED's role

From the outset, Hivos and IIED have worked constantly to strengthen Bolivia's food councils. In addition to financial support, they have helped Alternativas to develop the institutional capacities required to conduct research and advocate effectively. Hivos and IIED have also facilitated analysis of the work of the food councils to ensure that lessons learned and best practices are documented and can be of use to others interested in replicating this type of work.

Key outcomes

Thus far, and as demonstrated by the adoption of most proposals put forth to date, food councils have proved that their work can successfully generate awareness of the multi-dimensionality of food systems amongst policy makers, decision makers, elected officials, local organisations and the media. Likewise, participants gain greater knowledge of how to design strategies to improve food security, work across sectors, conduct advocacy and build partnerships around common goals. While awareness is not the same as behavioural change, it is an important first step. In this way, Alternativas considers that collective reflection can stimulate a series of subsequent effects and positive developments.

Over the years, the Food Councils have developed a series of municipal laws and investment proposals. Most recently, in 2018, the Food Council of La Paz supported the drafting of the Municipal Law on the Promotion of Urban Food Gardens, which was adopted by the local government that same year. The law is the first of its kind in the country and ensures people will have access to municipal land in order to grow food locally. Also in 2018, the local government of Sucre adopted the Municipal Law for Food and Nutrition Security which was drafted by the city's Food Council in 2016. These achievements legitimise the councils as sources of workable strategies that can be adopted by the government and other actors.

Key lessons

Multi-stakeholder processes require skilled facilitators. To conduct this work effectively, facilitators must be flexible, open-minded, and have excellent interpersonal and planning skills; all of which are fundamental to convene a large and diverse group on a recurring basis, and ensure meetings are consistently productive. Alternativas facilitates both the process and the meetings, balancing participants' involvement. The ultimate goal is to ensure participants leave the monthly meetings feeling satisfied, having learned and produced something tangible. It is important to highlight that the regular meetings and personal relations that develop amongst participants help build a work environment based on mutual trust and confidence. People become more comfortable discussing and sharing ideas, knowledge and experience.

Food Council meeting (Alternativas)

Multi-stakeholder food councils are an effective mechanism to build local networks and conduct advocacy. They bring different perspectives together and demand that participants reach consensus on a series of issues. The proposals that result thus reflect a multi-dimensional understanding of food security and food systems. They are also the outcome of complex processes based on dialogue and negotiation, and as such ensure that policy proposals are easier to implement once they are adopted.

Build in sustainability from the start. A sustainable initiative is one that can function without external support. Up until now, Alternativas has undertaken direct advocacy, interspersed with 'indirect' advocacy through each city food council as a two-pronged approach. However, it is not always clear who leads the change process and whether this will evolve over time, giving rise to questions about the sustainability of the food councils. For example, will Alternativas transfer ownership of the food councils, and if so, how and when does it plan to do so? Transferring ownership and, more generally, ensuring the sustainability of an initiative must be factored into the design process from the start. Building ownership to enhance sustainability following the withdrawal of Alternativas would require capacity building well beyond a training event or a presentation. This is especially important as building ownership and sustainability is more complex when multiple stakeholders are involved. With such a multi-stakeholder process, creating a collective vision and building collective ownership do not happen automatically. Instead they need to be consciously aimed for and nurtured over time. This will require continuous and close monitoring, reflection, (re) strategising and flexibility. Process design and monitoring are therefore key skills for facilitator organisations such as Alternativas, Hivos or IIED.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of insights have emerged from the three case study reviews. They have been synthesised below to provide some actionable steps for others designing MAIs.

Design and set-up

Work flexibility into the process. Designing a MAI on a topic like food that affects people's daily lives results in experiences from various stakeholders that may change the course of the initiative. The cases show that there are a few ways of dealing with this. One can start with a concrete plan and adjust it if something appears not to work. Alternatively, one can start in a more open way without a clear plan and invite ideas. These can be followed through and efforts adapted by giving space to what appears to work well, while curtailing or even stopping approaches which do not pick up momentum. A third option is to specifically design activities so that you expect adaptation and iteration, while staying committed to a small number of key goals set at the start.

Clarify what you aim to change, define a desired change process, and monitor progress. It should be clear how a MAI will contribute to the desired change laid out in the overall theory of change. Furthermore, the MAI's activities and methods should be sequenced strategically, while remaining flexible, and this depends on how change is presumed to unfold. For example, do certain stakeholders first require training to enable them to participate meaningfully in an activity? Questions such as these require thinking through to be clear about how an activity will help take the next step towards the desired change. It's also important to continually monitor progress to assess how change is unfolding and determine if adjustments need to be made.

Be inclusive. Ensure that marginalised groups, including small-scale producers and low-income consumers – especially women – are involved. These key actors, whose voices are rarely heard in policy making, are crucial in making the links between policy and local realities. People should also be allowed to speak their own language. Government officials and private sector actors also need to be involved in order to influence the system and to help clarify policies and policy-making processes that affect the food system. However, don't let the desire to work in an inclusive way hamper advocacy efforts. Sometimes, efficient advocacy requires 'lone wolf' actions, such as informal bilateral talks with a well-positioned advocacy target, rather than a large group of diverse stakeholders. It is important to strike a balance between the two, using knowledge about advocacy change processes to lead to desired outcomes.

Conduct a stakeholder analysis. This will ensure that a wide range of people are involved, as discussed above. In the cases discussed here, most participants were selected based on their potential to contribute or via chance meetings. It was unclear what motivated these choices or how new participants could be included. A more systematic analysis of food system actors would increase the inclusivity of a MAI. But it is important to keep in mind the lessons from the Ugandan Food Parliament, which showed how individuals may have several different roles. Categorisation depends on each context's notion of a 'stakeholder' or 'actor', which in reality these may be fluid and overlapping entities.

Ensure strong facilitation. Making sure there are strong facilitators (or a facilitating organisation) and regular meetings will keep people engaged. Good facilitation will balance the various interests within the group and ensure the participation of less vocal actors. This allows large groups to be convened on a recurring basis and meetings to be productive because participants are learning and feel that their efforts are contributing to change. Close support from a facilitating organisation or partner, as was the case with the Slow Food Coordinator, also builds rapport and the credibility of the MAI and ensures continued participation. Regular meetings also build relationships and confidence, allowing people to feel comfortable enough to discuss and share their knowledge.

Focus on everyday issues and discuss them in the local language. Address issues that people can relate to and will want to commit to working on in the MAI. This includes issues that concern them, such as their dreams for their children, and relate to their pride as a community or nation. An abstract theme like sustainable diets will need to be broken down into concrete issues that people can engage with, such as land grabbing, the health of their children, and the concrete effects on their environment and communities.

Food Lab meeting (Felia Boerwinkel)

Role and support of Hivos and IIED

Support partners with research, advocacy, and communications. While Hivos and IIED played different roles in the three countries (Hivos initiated the process in Zambia and partners set up the platforms in Uganda and Bolivia), in all three cases Hivos and IIED have strengthened the capacity of partners. The advocacy toolkit and associated trainings formed the basis of this capacity development, helping partners to improve policy dialogue and systematise their experiences. Partners have requested more capacity development in agenda-setting and presentation skills.

Consider building capacity in law and policy issues for some groups. Injustice can happen because people do not understand their rights, or the policies and laws that affect them. Building capacity in these issues can make a crucial difference in their ability to lobby and advocate, enhancing citizen agency. This may require a conscious and honest assessment of our own knowledge and capacities beyond the 'usual topics' such as diversification. Providing needs-based capacity development to support citizens' advocacy has the potential to correct power imbalances and should be included in the MAI design.

Support partners in monitoring and evaluation. Harvesting outcomes and organising reflection meetings are a key part of showing what has been accomplished and learned from the process.

Longer-term issues

Invest for the long term. Design the MAI in a way that ownership can transfer beyond the founding organisation to a local organisation. This is important for both the long-term sustainability of a MAI and the commitment of participants. However, sometimes this is not enough, as in the cases of the food councils in Bolivia and the Food Change Lab in Zambia. Multi-actor processes take time and resources to develop a joint vision and inclusive governance structure and to co-create and test out concrete actions to keep up the momentum. Donors need to be open to investing in long-term processes when potential results cannot be defined upfront.

Understand people's realities better. In order to truly give people a voice on issues, we must be aware of how they translate big system issues into what matters to them – often concrete issues of a less grand scale. We need to work from a position that allows us to engage with stakeholders of all kinds, while still having a clear understanding of and empathy for what is important to low-income and/or marginalised citizens.

Identify the impact of Hivos' strategies. We know too little about how our strategies of working with frontrunners, MAIs and policy actually affect people's lives and the issues that are relevant to them. We need to understand, for example, how frontrunners contribute to change through their participation in a MAI, or how to best facilitate a multi-actor process to influence decision makers to change policy direction or policy practice.

CONCLUSION

The case studies analysed in this report have shown the added value of MAIs in addressing food system problems. The complex nature of food systems, with their many moving parts and multiple actors, requires an approach that brings this diversity of views together in a meaningful and productive way. When designed to be flexible and to factor in learning moments and adjustments, and to consciously engage with stakeholders throughout every phase of the process, a MAI can be a useful approach for improving food systems.

Food ambassadors (Kabarole Research and Resource Centre)

CASE STUDIES AT A GLANCE

	Uganda Food Parliament	Zambia Food Change Lab	Food Council Bolivia
Context	Problems of monoculture and how it affects food production	Lack of crop diversity resulting in widespread undernourishment	Fragmented approach to all components of the food system
Location	Buikwe, Uganda	Chongwe and Lusaka, Zambia	La Paz, Sucre and Tarija, Bolivia
Structure of initiative	Four town hall meeting style events over the course of two years involving media, teachers, and former members of Food Communities. Smaller working committee to follow up on specific issues	Two local-level events in Chongwe assessing local agricultural practices and dietary patterns (2015 and 2016). Two national-level events on national food system involving a wider range of stakeholders with working groups (2017 and 2019).	Monthly committee meetings involving local government, universities and NGOs. The La Paz council was set up in 2013. Two more councils were subsequently set up in Sucre and Tarija. In 2017, all three food councils came together to share and learn from each other's experiences
Activities	Meetings where citizens and local government discuss issues around the production and consumption of diverse and local foods. A working committee then proposes resolutions to local government meetings	Mapping the food system and forming prototyping groups to investigate specific issues: influencing government to move away from maize; raising youth awareness; general awareness raising of food issues; and building capacity of food marketers in food handling	Conducting research on food systems; drafting legislation, and ensuring follow-up; creating policy and investment proposals, as well as proposals for logistics and supply systems
Role of Hivos and IIED	Building capacity in communications, monitoring and result-based reporting, and food lobbying and advocacy	Convener and facilitator, building the capacity of partner organisations to eventually run the Food Change Lab	Building capacity in conducting research and implementing effective advocacy; facilitating systematisation of the work

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NOTES

1 See https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-food-system.

2 Slow Food Uganda, one of two SD4All partners in Uganda, is a country chapter of Slow Food International, a global grassroots organisation founded in 1989. Slow Food Uganda has been active since 2006, working on projects such as the Food Communities, Presidia, 10,000 Gardens, and Empowering Regional Coordinators in order to promote the right to good, clean, and fair food for everyone at all times.

3 Learning journeys or sensing journeys pull participants out of their daily routine and allow them to experience the organisation, challenge, or system through the lens of different stakeholders. They bring participants to the places, people, and experiences that are most relevant for the question they are working on (www.slowfooduganda.org).

4 The Slow Food Youth Academy is a learning platform with an interactive training programme for young learners, students and youth of different professions to understand the food system. It builds their capacity and brings them together to take part in discussions aiming to change food production and consumption. It focuses on capacity building in developing food advocacy and entrepreneurship skills (www.slowfooduganda.org/index.php/2017/01/11/sfyn-uganda-academy).

5 Fundación Alternativas is a non-profit organisation dedicated to generating sustainable approaches that lead to greater food security in Bolivia. Alternativas works to unite civic, public and private efforts in the design and application of public policies, programmes and initiatives that allow people and communities to satisfy their universal right to food (https://alternativascc.org/en/home).

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