Flagship 4: Supporting Policies, Programs, and Enabling Action through Research (SPEAR)

Highlight 2: Engaging in Global Conversations on Diets and Nutrition

As diets change and countries all over the world increasingly grapple with multiple forms of malnutrition simultaneously, the importance of global conversations, partnerships, and knowledge sharing grows. A4NH researchers are called upon to contribute research and expertise to policy and program dialogues and collaborations, on topics ranging from food system transformation to issues of equity to how to ensure healthy diets are accessible and affordable as well as the design and development of capacity strengthening efforts to bring in different perspectives.

International gatherings that shine a spotlight on nutrition and health provide opportunities for researchers to amplify expertise, influence the thinking on important issues, and share learning. At the Committee on World Food Security’s annual meetings, which brought together representatives from 126 countries as well as members of the private sector and civil society, A4NH participated in a CGIAR side event on what it takes to create a healthy plate with food systems sustainability considerations for low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). The event responded to the recent EAT Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, and Health, which called for significant reductions in consumption of animal-sourced foods and increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and plant proteins—a diet which A4NH-supported research by Derek Headey at IFPRI found unaffordable for many in LMIC. A4NH is working to ground global studies like these in the realities of LMIC to ensure improvements in sustainability, nutrition, health, and inclusion. Namukolo Covic, who coordinates A4NH research in Ethiopia, set the scene during her keynote address, saying “It’s very clear that current food production and consumption practices are not conducive to the type of sustainability that we require or desirable nutrition and health outcomes,” emphasizing there are positive habits in the Global South consistent with the EAT recommendations that should be leveraged instead. The session, which also featured A4NH researchers from HarvestPlus and ILRI, alongside colleagues from other CGIAR centers, shared a range of evidence-based approaches that could help food system transformations deliver better nutrition and health sustainably.

In addition to sharing experiences during international gatherings, A4NH researchers work closely with international and regional coalitions and organizations to share insights and strengthen capacity on issues pertaining to the intersection of agriculture, nutrition, and health. A4NH researchers at IFPRI coauthored a publication with the World Food Programme (WFP) on the process the two organizations used to develop WFP’s Nutrition-Sensitive Guidance, which is being used to design and redesign their programs globally. In addition, they are collaborating to redesign WFP’s Food for Assets Program in Sri Lanka to make it more nutrition-sensitive; IFPRI’s research team will evaluate the impact of this program on agriculture, nutrition, and well-being outcomes.

Leadership development is important to ensure nutrition professionals can navigate the multiple stakeholder relations needed to deliver on nutrition. A4NH researchers are working closely with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and others to strengthen capacity. To help SUN countries establish effective multisectoral stakeholder platforms (MSP) for nutrition action, researchers at the Institute for Development Studies, with support from A4NH, developed an MSP design toolkit that is now being used by countries to design and redesign their programs globally. In addition, they are collaborating to redesign WFP’s Food for Assets Program in Sri Lanka to make it more nutrition-sensitive; IFPRI’s research team will evaluate the impact of this program on agriculture, nutrition, and well-being outcomes.

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