

End-term Evaluation

20 25 Ethiopia Country Report

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Colophon

This country report was prepared by Eshetu Demissie, with coordination and technical guidance from the evaluation team of Impact House. The report forms part of the Right2Grow End-Term Evaluation (2020–2025), commissioned by the Right2Grow Consortium.

List of Abbreviations

AAH	Action Against Hunger
AAT	Accountability Action Taskforce
AU	African union
BMET	Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking
CEGAA	Center for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVA	Community Voice and Action
ECSA-HC	East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community
ECSC-SUN	Ethiopia Civil Society Coalition for Scaling Up Nutrition Movement
EGM	Evidence Gap Mapping
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Right Commission
EDRMC	Ethiopia's Disaster Risk Management Commission
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FSN	Food Systems and Nutrition
GCDA	Gurage Culture and Development Association
GIMAC	Gender in my advocacy campaign
HDPN	Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
JMP	Joint Monitoring Program
L&L	Learning and Linking
MCD	Mutual Capacity Development
MCMDO	Mothers and Children Multisectoral Development Organization
MTR	Midterm Review
OECD-DCA	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OH,	Outcome Harvesting
ORDA	Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara
RTPM	Resource trucking and partnership management
TOC	Theory of Change
UNISE	Unified Nutrition Information System for Ethiopia
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene.
WVI	World Vision International

Summary

Ethiopia's WASH and nutrition crisis, deepened by conflict and limited civic space, leaving nearly half the population without safe water and 39% of children stunted in 2023, highlighted the urgent need for integrated, multisectoral action. The evaluation assessed the impact, relevance and sustainability of the Right2Grow program (2021–2025) in Ethiopia, generating insights to inform future programming within the HDP Nexus. Using a participatory, mixed-methods approach, data were collected in Aneded, Cheha, and Habro located in the Amhara, Central Ethiopia, and Oromia regions, respectively, as well as from government stakeholders at both regional and federal levels, civil society organization (CSO) networks, and the private sector. The data collection process involved five focus group discussions (FGDs), thirteen key informant interviews (KIIs), and one national reflection workshop. Additional methods included direct observation, a Learning & Linking survey, and an MCD assessment. Although the qualitative focus limited direct attribution, the triangulation of findings provided a robust foundation for evaluating outcomes.

The Right2Grow program delivered high-impact results across nutrition, WASH, governance, and inclusion. It resolved 322 service delivery barriers and rehabilitated over 60 facilities, improving access and contributing to the reduction of child undernutrition. Nutrition was institutionalized in all 21 district councils, while budget advocacy led to a 1–2% increase in nutrition allocations across the targeted districts and mobilized over ETB 12 million in local government commitments. Community empowerment was advanced through 124 CVA taskforces and 331 advocacy actions, supported by 25 strengthened Nutrition Coordination bodies. The program influenced 26 multisectoral coordination platforms and developed Ethiopia's first Nutrition-Centric HDP roadmap and operational guide. Over 60 CSOs were trained in budget tracking and policy engagement, contributing to fiscal transparency in 15 districts. Behavioral changes in hygiene and caregiving practices were observed, along with the expansion of school gardening initiatives and vegetable gardens established within government institutions such as agriculture offices for use in demonstrations and nutrition education.

Gender, youth, disability, and climate sensitivity were integrated throughout, with 48% representation of women and youth in CVA taskforces, reinforcing inclusive participation and locally led accountability.

Despite its notable achievements, the Right2Grow (R2G) program encountered persistent challenges that affected its overall coherence and sustainability. One major issue was the lack of comprehensive national-level data, which limited the effectiveness of evidence-based advocacy and policy influence. In response, the R2G project actively partnered with local governments and aligned with the Seqota Declaration to help address these data gaps. Through strategic support to systems such as RTPM and UNISE, the program contributed to data strengthening efforts and succeeded in generating valuable evidence, including budget-related data.

The local government restructuring and the frequent turnover among government personnel disrupted continuity and institutional learning. Gender and inclusion were not consistently embedded in outcome-level indicators, limiting the program's ability to drive gender transformative impact. In conflict-affected and fragile settings, the shift toward emergency response diluted long-term development efforts. Platforms like SharePoint and GROW have been effectively used for document storage and administrative coordination within the Right2Grow programme. At the same time, the project invested in alternative, context-sensitive channels for knowledge sharing, where partners prioritized in-person reflection meetings, learning review sessions, and, to a certain extent, a comprehensive online learning catalogue due to connectivity realities. This strategic approach ensured that learning remained inclusive, practical, and responsive. Similarly, while the adoption of Bridge4Voice as a common advocacy strategy was a positive step toward unified messaging, its inconsistent implementation across consortium partners weakened strategic coherence and limited its overall impact. More deliberate and consistent use of shared platforms and advocacy tools could have enhanced collective learning, reinforced strategic alignment, and amplified the program's influence.

Lessons from the evaluation underscore that joint accountability mechanisms, particularly the integration of Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) and Accountability Action Taskforces (AATs), were effective in driving sustainable service improvements. Empowering CSOs proved essential for mobilizing local resources and influencing policy, while multisectoral coordination remains critical to addressing undernutrition. Locally led and adaptive approaches, such as CVA B4V, and HDPN, enhanced resilience and community ownership, and private sector engagement improved access and affordability of essential WASH and nutrition services. The HDP triple nexus approach needs further support and advocacy to address the current challenges of communities suffering due to

conflict, climate change, and outbreaks. To maximize future impact, the evaluation recommended the need for enforcing the consistent implementation and utilization of harmonized advocacy strategies, robust knowledge management systems, and outcome harvesting and learning process, harmonized gender-transformative tools specifically tailored to Right2Grow, and strengthening the national data systems like UNISE and RTPM to support evidence-based decision-making and long-term sustainability.

1. Background and introduction

1.1. Country context

i. Access to Nutrition and Undernourished Children

Ethiopia has registered several years of efforts being made to achieve institutional progress in nutrition, however, the results remain deeply concerning. Since 2015, the Government of Ethiopia has spearheaded a high-level multi-sector commitment through the Seqota Declaration (2015–2030) and the Food and Nutrition Policy of Ethiopia, working in tandem with the government-run Health Extension Program. These initiatives have fostered major gains: exclusive breastfeeding rates now approach 59%, complementary nutrition screening has become more widespread, and community-led behavior change models are increasingly embedded in frontline service delivery¹. Yet despite this structural and policy-level progress, undernutrition remains a critical public health emergency, and recent data from the Ministry of Health and WHO show that:

- As of May 2023, 39% of all children under age five in Ethiopia are stunted (a marker of chronic undernutrition), and 11% are wasted (signifying acute or emergency malnutrition) ([WHO | Regional Office for Africa](#)).
- Subnational disparities are profound: wasting rates vary from just 4% in urban Addis Ababa to a staggering 26% in Afar, with Amhara, Gambella, and Somali regions all exceeding 15% ([WHO | Regional Office for Africa](#)).
- Undernutrition is implicated in approximately 45% of all under-five child deaths nationwide ([moh.gov.et](#)).
- Meanwhile, UNICEF reported in March 2025 that some 70,000 severely malnourished children are at risk of being left without ready-to-use therapeutic food unless urgent funding gaps are filled, underscoring that fewer than half of children in need receive lifesaving treatment in many areas ([reuters.com](#), [reuters.com](#)).

The reasons for these gaps are multifaceted:

- Inequitable access to nutrition and health services persists; services such as vitamin A supplementation, mid-upper-arm circumference screening, and therapeutic feeding show usage well below national targets, especially in pastoralist and remote areas.
- Poor dietary diversity is widespread: only around 11% of children aged 6–23 months meet the minimum standard of consuming four or more food groups, fueling both stunting and wasting and often clustering in the same child.²
- Conflict, displacement, drought, inflation, and weak WASH coverage continue to severely disrupt food systems and health infrastructure, amplifying the severity and fragility of the nutritional situation even in “non-crisis” periods.³

ii. Access to basic WASH

In Ethiopia, access to basic drinking water is critically low, with just 49.6 % of the population having service that meets the “basic” JMP standard, signaling that over 60 % still contend with limited, unreliable, or unsafe sources (UNICEF, 2023). Only 8.9 % benefit from basic sanitation, leaving more than 112 million people without proper latrines, and around 22 million practice open defecation (World Bank feature story, Nov 2023) ([World Bank](#)). Access to basic hygiene facilities (soap + water at a handwashing station) is an abysmal (4.8 %), and just 8 % of the population has consistent access to any handwashing infrastructure at all ⁴⁵([UNICEF](#), [World Bank](#)).

This WASH deficit fuels diarrheal diseases, which cause over 25,000 deaths in children under five each year, making it the second leading killer after undernutrition in Ethiopia ([UNICEF 2023](#), [World Bank 2023](#)). Poor WASH conditions are a principal driver accounting for 60–80 % of all communicable illness and remain interlinked with high levels of stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies among young children (World Bank, Nov 2023)

Together, these gaps show that despite significant efforts, Ethiopia still faces major, overlapping WASH and nutrition challenges where nearly half the population lacks basic services, millions suffer the health impacts, and numerous children continue to grow up undernourished and disease vulnerable.

iii. **Hunger Situation in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is facing a severe hunger crisis, with over 10 million people currently experiencing acute food insecurity, including nearly 3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to the World Food Programme (WFP 2025). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2025) further estimates that approximately 15.8 million people are suffering from acute hunger. Among them, around 4.6 million women and children are affected by acute malnutrition.

The 2024 Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranked Ethiopia 102nd out of 127 countries, with a score of 26.2, placing it in the “serious” category of hunger levels (zehabesha.com). In total, an estimated 34.6% of Ethiopia’s population, roughly 41.5 million people, experience significant food insecurity, characterized by inconsistent access to sufficient and nutritious meals (zehabesha.com 2024).

Malnutrition remains especially severe among women and children. Approximately 4.4 million pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as children, currently require treatment for malnutrition (World Food Programme 2025). In certain regions, including Somali, Oromia, Tigray, and Afar, the rate of child wasting exceeds the emergency threshold of 15%.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by environmental and conflict-related factors. Conflict in northern regions such as Tigray, Amhara, and Afar has intensified the crisis, with famine-like conditions reported. In early 2025, nearly 400 starvation-related deaths were reported in Tigray and Amhara alone, with only 14% of targeted aid recipients receiving assistance (Associated Press News).

Funding gaps have also had a major impact on relief efforts. Due to financial shortages, the WFP was forced to suspend malnutrition treatment programs for 650,000 women and children (Reuters). Without immediate new funding, an additional 3.6 million of the most vulnerable Ethiopians risk losing access to life-saving aid (World Food Programme; Reuters 2025).

The economic consequences of the crisis are equally dire. Child malnutrition alone is estimated to cost Ethiopia 16.5% of its GDP annually, highlighting the profound long-term implications of the crisis on both humanitarian and economic fronts (scalingupnutrition.org 2009).

iv. **Economic and Poverty Impacts of COVID19 in Ethiopia**

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted Ethiopia’s fragile economic landscape. In early 2020, over 50% of Ethiopian households reported major income losses or complete income collapse, with urban self-employed workers and female-headed households suffering the most. Addis Ababa saw nearly 42% of registered businesses shut down, and about 37% of them reported zero revenue during March and April 2020, indicating the deep economic toll on urban centers ([World Bank Blogs](#); [Dove Medical Press](#)).

Job losses were widespread, with urban areas disproportionately affected. A World Bank survey revealed that 20% of urban workers lost their jobs compared to only 3% in rural areas. Women were hit particularly hard, with 13% of women losing employment versus 6% of men. While rural employment began recovering by late 2020, urban labor markets remained depressed due to lingering economic shocks and slower reopening of businesses ([World Bank](#)).

The impact on children and households was no less devastating. UNICEF estimated that between 400,000 and 1.2 million more people would fall into poverty due to the pandemic, with nearly half of them being children. In Addis Ababa alone, 29% of children were already living in monetarily poor households before COVID-19, and the economic fallout pushed many more families to adopt harmful coping mechanisms such as cutting meals, selling essential assets, and foregoing medical care. In total, over 20 million people were expected to be affected by job-related disruptions and income loss ([UNICEF](#); [UNICEF Report](#)).

Long-term setbacks in education were another major consequence of the pandemic. At its peak, school closures deprived 70% of primary and 60% of secondary students of education, which is expected to deepen inequality and limit the future earning potential of a generation. These challenges were later compounded by armed conflict,

drought, and internal displacement, leaving millions of students out of school for extended periods ([World Bank Blogs](#)).

v. **Civil society space**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in promoting advocacy and protecting human rights in Ethiopia. Through grassroots mobilization, policy dialogue, and monitoring government actions, these groups provide vital oversight and give voice to marginalized communities.

Although a revised CSO Proclamation formally restored civil society organizations' rights to engage in advocacy and human rights work, in practice the space for meaningful participation by CSOs and NGOs remains severely constrained. Legal amendments currently being drafted increase state control, impose vague administrative requirements, and undermine judicial oversight. Meanwhile, several organizations involved in human rights defense, election monitoring, or political advocacy have been suspended or shut down under the guise of regulatory noncompliance (EHRC, Ethiopian Civic Freedom Monitoring, 2025).

Despite these pressures, CSOs continue to push for accountability and reforms. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and several key watchdog organizations have actively engaged with authorities to defend the sector's role, resulting in the temporary lifting of bans on some groups. Nevertheless, proposed legislation threatening to centralize government control over CSO governance and criminalize foreign funding for advocacy activities poses serious risks to the sustainability and independence of civil society. Many CSOs, especially grassroots organizations, face challenges in developing and implementing effective advocacy strategies due to a lack of technical expertise.

Protecting and expanding the participatory space for CSOs and NGOs in advocacy and human rights is essential for democratic governance and respect for fundamental freedoms in Ethiopia. Continued support and legal safeguards are necessary to ensure these organizations can operate without undue interference and contribute effectively to the country's development.

vi. **Natural Crises and Conflict in Ethiopia**

Between mid-2020 and mid-2024, Ethiopia endured its most severe drought in over four decades, precipitated by approximately six consecutive failed rainy seasons. The 2022 Belg and Kiremt rains were the driest observed since the 1980s, according to analysis by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and FEWS NET / NASA, which warned of a near-record dry period stretching across eastern Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya.⁶

At its height in early 2022, an estimated 6.8 million Ethiopians across roughly 26 zones in Somali, Oromia, SNNPR, and South-West regions were classified as facing acute food insecurity, requiring urgent humanitarian assistance. Livestock losses were catastrophic; millions of animals perished, gravely undermining nutrition and income in pastoral areas such as Borena, Somali, and Afar.

Meanwhile, from November 2020 to November 2022, the Tigray war and its spillover into Amhara and Afar triggered massive displacement. Furthermore, beginning in late 2023 and extending into 2025, the ongoing conflict renewed violence, especially in Amhara and Oromia regions, has displaced thousands of civilians, caused deaths and severely disrupted public services and local governance structures, as reported by Reuters in April 2024. These overlapping crises, climate extremes, widespread livestock collapse, mass internal displacement, and prolonged armed conflict have collectively eroded Ethiopia's resilience. The consequences include the breakdown of livelihoods, collapse and overburdening of essential health and WASH infrastructure, and heightened inequality across affected regions. The convergence of shocks underscores the urgent need for inclusive governance frameworks, robust early warning and contingency planning, and scalable integration of social protection with humanitarian-development-peace, Peace programming nexus to prevent further systemic collapse.

1.2. Programme overview

The Right2Grow program is a multi-country initiative being implemented in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, South Sudan, and Uganda. In Ethiopia, the Right2Grow project is a five-year initiative (2021–2025) funded by the Dutch Government with a total budget of USD 4.7 million.

The program aims for the long-term impact of ensuring all children under five are well-nourished, with a midterm goal of decision-makers collaboratively and effectively tackling undernutrition through a multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive, and inclusive approach. This is achieved through four interconnected and interrelated outcomes.

- I. Communities in 21 target Woredas demand and invest in basic WASH and nutrition public services and adopt and maintain good nutrition and WASH practices, jointly addressing barriers with private sector partners' participation.
- II. Representative and empowered civil society organisations (CSOs) effectively navigate and engage in the existing civic space to advocate for leadership and good governance to reduce undernutrition.
- III. National government and decentralised entities mainstream an integrated and multi-sectoral approach to undernutrition in decision-making, action plans, implementation, M&E, and budget allocations through a participatory process of CSOs and the Private sector.
- IV. Donors and international development actors coordinate and collaborate along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to address the underlying determinants of undernutrition.

The Right2Grow programme promotes a citizen-led advocacy approach aimed at empowering individuals and influencing decision-makers at all levels to work collaboratively and effectively in addressing undernutrition. The project is being implemented in 21 woredas (districts) across the Amhara (8), Central Ethiopia (7) **and** Oromia (6) regions, in close coordination with local communities, civil society organizations (CSOs), government stakeholders, donors, and international partners.

Right2Grow is implemented through a consortium of partner organizations, including Action Against Hunger (AAH), the Center for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA), Max Foundation, The Hunger Project, and World Vision **in** collaboration with local partners Gurage Culture and Development Association (GCDA) Mothers and Children Multisectoral Development Organization (MCMDO), and Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA) Each partner has distinct and complementary roles at the district level, with World Vision Netherlands (WVNL) providing overall leadership at the national level.

Action Against Hunger, in collaboration with local partner Mothers and Children Multisectoral Development Organization (MCMDO), serves as the lead for the Oromia region. The partnership focuses on building the capacity of CSOs, CBOs, and government actors, providing technical support to enhance community and CSO oversight of nutrition and WASH-related resource mobilization, allocation, and utilization. It also strengthens budget research and advocacy skills at the community level.

Center for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA): provides technical support to community and CSO representatives to strengthen their monitoring of government resource mobilization, allocation, and utilization **for** nutrition and WASH services. It also builds their capacity in budget research and advocacy.

Max Foundation, in collaboration with its local partner ORDA, serves as the lead partner in the Amhara region. It engages with national-level sectors and supports its advocacy through evidence generation, including policy analysis, political economy and power analysis, action research, and studies on the integration of WASH and nutrition. The organization also brings practical experience from implementing the "Healthy Village Approach."

The Hunger Project, in collaboration with local partner Gurage Culture and Development Association (GCDA), is the lead partner in the Central Ethiopia region, coordinating activities under Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. With extensive experience in the Gurage Zone, it uses a community-led development approach to empower grassroots action, strengthen local leadership, and promote progress in food security, health, education, nutrition, and income generation.

World Vision, as the consortium lead, plays a key role in advocacy and representation at national and Central Ethiopia ECSC-SUN platforms. It leads on **evidence** generation for the CVA approach and nutrition-sensitive interventions, coordinates baseline and mid-term reviews, and builds the capacity of partners and CSOs/CBOs. With extensive experience managing multi-sector consortia on undernutrition and WASH, World Vision Ethiopia coordinated the implementation of activities under outcomes 1,2,3, and 4 while overseeing project implementation across all four regions and nationally.

1.3. Programme theory of Change

The Right2Grow Ethiopia Theory of Change (ToC) was built around four interrelated pathways: community empowerment, strengthening civil society, enhancing public authorities, and mobilizing international development actors. These pathways are interconnected and collectively influence efforts to address undernutrition and WASH-related challenges at multiple levels.

The Theory of Change (ToC) for the country program underwent several adaptations, ensuring that it remains broadly aligned with the global framework while addressing the country-specific challenges and opportunities. These adaptations, particularly in the areas of output, intermediate outcomes, and final outcomes, were carefully crafted to enhance the relevance and applicability of the ToC in the national context.

The core structure of the global ToC has largely been maintained, but key modifications were made to reflect the specific national realities, particularly regarding the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN), WASH, and nutrition programming. The most significant change is seen in Outcome G, which was fully revised to emphasize the role of HDPN in the country's WASH and nutrition efforts. The new phrasing "The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) concept materialized through WASH and Nutrition programming and implementation, achieving collective outcomes among international development actors" captures the national focus on advocating for a Nutrition-Centric HDPN national guideline. This shift underscores the program's alignment with national priorities while reflecting the pressing need for integrated humanitarian, development, and peace-building efforts.

The introduction of Output 9 under intermediate outcome G further solidifies the program's commitment to promoting inclusive spaces for HDPN engagement. By ensuring that the Right2Grow initiative fosters dialogue and coordination within the HDPN framework, this addition directly supports the achievement of collective and coordinated outcomes among stakeholders, which is crucial for driving systemic change.

The adaptation of the ToC also provided an opportunity to address several contextual gaps and limitations, particularly those identified through baseline studies and midterm evaluation. These revisions highlight several key areas:

1. **Community and civil society engagement:** The recognition of capacity limitations among community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in areas such as evidence generation, advocacy, and monitoring were critical insights. Revisions to Outputs 3 and 6 now focus more directly on strengthening these actors' roles, ensuring they have the tools and resources to effectively contribute to the program's goals.
2. **Private sector involvement:** The lack of engagement from the private sector in both WASH and nutrition service delivery, as well as in decision-making processes, was another important gap identified. The revisions emphasize the need for increased private sector engagement, ensuring that relevant stakeholders are integrated into decision-making platforms and service delivery models.
3. **Policy and Governance:** The updated ToC also addresses the critical issue of the lack of enabling policies and strategies related to WASH, nutrition governance, and HDPN. Intermediate Outcome "F" and "G" now more accurately reflect the national policy landscape, emphasizing the importance of strengthening governance structures, budget tracking, and strategy development for WASH and nutrition.

These adaptations have significantly improved the relevance of the Theory of Change to the national context. By tailoring the ToC to the country's specific needs, such as integrating the HDPN framework, addressing capacity gaps in CBOs and CSOs, and emphasizing the role of the private sector, the program is better positioned to respond to the challenges and opportunities within the national setting.

In terms of effectiveness, the revisions ensured that the program's objectives were more achievable by tackling the identified barriers and aligning outputs with implementation realities and national priorities. The focus on institutionalizing HDPN, promoting private sector involvement, and strengthening policy frameworks enhanced the program's potential to drive sustainable, coordinated outcomes across all sectors. Furthermore, by addressing the gaps in governance, advocacy, and evidence generation, the revisions support more effective implementation and long-term impact.

Figure 1: Right2Grow Ethiopia Program Theory of Change Updated Version



1.4. Changes made after Mid-Term Review

The Ethiopia's Right2Grow ToC was revised, updated, and validated in February 2022, following a joint reflection and analysis of the baseline study findings by all country partners. While the core structure of the original ToC remained intact, several adjustments were made to confirm its continued relevance. These included both major and minor refinements to outcomes, intermediate outcomes, outputs, and pathway specifications, ensuring stronger alignment with the country context and implementation realities.

The main modifications involved rephrasing and rewording of the output, intermediate outcome, and outcome statements. These revisions placed stronger emphasis on key national gaps, including:

- Strengthening the role of CSOs and CBOs in evidence generation, monitoring, and advocacy.
- Increasing private sector engagement in WASH and nutrition services as well as in decision-making platforms.
- Promoting the endorsement and implementation of national policies and strategies relevant to WASH and nutrition governance.

In addition to these refinements, the most notable changes included a complete revision of Outcome G, which has been fully rephrased to read: "The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) concept materialized through WASH and Nutrition programming and implementation, achieving collective outcomes among international development actors."

This adjustment was made to reflect the specific national context and the ongoing advocacy efforts aimed at the endorsement and approval of a nutrition-focused HDPN (Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus) national guideline. To further support the achievement of this outcome, a new Output 9 was introduced: "*Right2Grow navigates and positions for inclusive spaces within the HDPN framework.*" This change highlights the program's commitment to fostering inclusive dialogue and coordination mechanisms, tailored to Ethiopia's context. It reinforces the program's relevance in a setting where humanitarian, development, and peace-building efforts must be effectively integrated to address undernutrition and related challenges.

The endline evaluation findings confirm that the adjustments made to the country-specific Theory of Change (ToC) were well-aligned with Ethiopia's dynamic and evolving context. These revisions considered key

developments, including ongoing political instability and security challenges, as well as institutional advancements such as the establishment of the Food Systems Multisectoral Technical Core Team. This platform has provided a strategic opportunity for Right2Grow Ethiopia to further its nutrition policy advocacy agenda, particularly around strengthening multisectoral coordination and evidence-based decision-making to combat undernutrition among children under five, within the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (HDN) framework.

The revisions to the Theory of Change greatly enhanced both the relevance and effectiveness of the program. The changes ensured that the program remained responsive to the identified gaps and national context by addressing critical gaps in governance, private sector involvement, and community capacity. At the same time, the revisions improved the program's ability to achieve its objectives by aligning strategies with key institutional developments, policy shifts, and multisectoral coordination mechanisms. These refinements not only ensured that the program was better aligned with Ethiopia's current challenges but also enhanced its potential to generate sustainable and impactful outcomes.

1.5. Description of endline evaluation process

i. Endline evaluation process and data collection

The evaluation adhered to a structured four-phase approach, encompassing inception, data collection, analysis and validation, and reporting and use, with the entire timeline spanning from June 2025 to October 2025. Due to the multi-sectoral and multi-level scope of the Right2Grow program, the data collection period was relatively short. Scheduling interviews with federal-level government stakeholders proved challenging, as several adjustments were needed due to their involvement in concurrent national and global nutrition summits, alongside competing national priorities during the data collection phase.

During the inception phase, the team successfully developed the inception report, drawing on a comprehensive desk review of country-specific program documents and consultations with key partners. The phase began with a kick-off meeting between the Global Consultant and the Right2Grow team, followed by an inception meeting with country-level stakeholders to ensure alignment on priorities and expectations for the evaluation. Key activities included conducting a detailed desk review to establish the context and scope of the evaluation, completing stakeholder consultations to align the evaluation approach with the needs of all relevant parties, and holding both global and country-level kick-off meetings to ensure clear communication and collaboration. The inception meeting helped to solidify a shared understanding of the evaluation priorities, providing clarity on the scope and methodology. These initial steps successfully laid a strong foundation for the next phases of the evaluation process.

The data collection phase took place from July 15 to July 31, 2025, and the endline evaluation data were collected from selected districts within the Right2Grow program areas. The data collection covered both federal and regional levels, specifically focusing on three purposively selected districts: Aneded in the Amhara region, Cheha in Central Ethiopia, and Habro in the Oromia region. These districts were chosen to represent the program's operational contexts.

In parallel, the endline evaluations of the Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) and the Linking and Learning (L&L) survey were conducted with the engagement of Right2Grow staff, aiming to inform and complement the broader Right2Grow endline evaluation.

Participants in the evaluation included a diverse group of stakeholders: community members, government officials at district, regional, and federal levels, private sector actors, civil society organizations (CSOs), and networks involved in the program. They contributed valuable insights on the program's impact, key learnings, and the effectiveness of partnerships and collaborations.

The evaluation primarily employed qualitative data collection methods. These included reflection workshops, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, direct observations, staff surveys, and capacity assessments.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure that respondents were deliberately selected based on their direct involvement in specific components of the program. This approach was critical to guaranteeing comprehensive representation across all key program areas during the endline evaluation. By targeting individuals who actively participated in various components, the evaluation was able to capture nuanced insights

and firsthand experiences that reflect the program's reach, effectiveness, and impact. This method also ensured that no major aspect of the program was overlooked in the data collection process.

Table 1: Data collection method and number of people who participated.

Data Collection Methods	Frequency	Number of participants by sex		Total Participants
		Male	Female	
Reflection Workshop	1	9	1	10
FGD	5	26	19	45
KII	13	13	8	21
Learning and Linking Survey	1			
Mutual Capacity Development	1			
Observation	3	7	1	8

In the Analysis and Validation Phase, primary and secondary data were used to answer the evaluation questions through a participatory process with partner staff and an analysis matrix. The country-level analysis produced insights for national validation sessions, addressing effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability, and partnership coherence. Contribution analysis was applied to examine causal links between program activities and observed changes. A validation workshop with country and global stakeholders followed, focusing on confirming findings, discussing lessons learned, and identifying future actions. While the findings could not be changed, the session provided a platform for interpreting results and discussing recommendations for follow-up.

In Phase 4: Reporting and Use, national consultants, supported by the global team, successfully prepared short country reports containing findings, primary data, conclusions, and recommendations, incorporating reflections from the validation sessions. Based on these country reports and the analysis from the previous phase, a draft global report was created. The report development began with an internal sense-making session between national and global consultants to identify key lessons learned and recommendations. In line with the evaluation's realist design, the reports outlined the program's Contexts, the Mechanisms employed (addressing relevance), and the Outcomes achieved (covering effectiveness and impact).

ii. Scope and key evaluation questions

The evaluation focused on the Ethiopia's Right2Grow program, covering the entire program period from 2021 to 2025 and examining its outcomes. A key element of the evaluation was the use of **Strategic Analysis Using Hotspots**, employing the hotspot technique within Contribution Analysis to explore Ethiopia's most critical interventions. This method provided deeper insights into the program's impact while preventing an overly broad evaluation that could dilute the learning and recommendations. The two hotspot areas identified for the Ethiopia program evaluation were:

1. **Community Awareness and Action:** The evaluation examined whether informed communities, implementing small actionable practices, could drive demand for essential social services and foster improved nutrition and WASH behaviors.
2. **CSO Engagement and Advocacy:** The evaluation assessed the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in programming and financial planning, evaluating their legitimacy, capacity to represent marginalized voices, and ability to advocate for strong governance to combat undernutrition.

While the endline evaluation conducted an in-depth analysis of the two primary outcome areas, it also assessed Outcomes 2 and 4 to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the programme's overall achievements and effectiveness. The evaluation questions were developed based on the primary objectives of the endline evaluation, guided by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria, the IOB (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands) quality standards, and participatory, gender-sensitive methodologies. Special attention was given to the following key OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: **Relevance, Effectiveness, Coherence and Partnership Dynamics, Impact and Sustainability**

These questions aim to generate evidence, promote learning, and provide actionable insights for future programming.

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Scope	Evaluation questions
1. Relevance	1. To what extent did the overall programme ToC and country ToCs match the key issues at country and global levels? 2. To what extent is the overall programme ToC and the country ToC, including assumptions, valid and of high quality? 3. To what extent have the programme strategies/initiatives responded to the needs of local communities / targeted population? 4. To what extent have the programme strategies responded to the need to strengthen policies and budgets at the country and global level?
2. Effectiveness and impact	1. What have been the main (intermediate) results achieved at end-line in relation to the country programme ToC pathways and the progress towards the achievement of the country program indicators (output and outcome level)? 2. To what extent were the programme's strategies and activities for the selected hotspots effective in producing the desired results? 3. In what ways did the programme contribute to its planned development impact? 4. What examples of positive or negative unintended effects did the programme encounter?
3. Sustainability	1. To what extent are the changes achieved by the programme long-lasting? 2. What factors contribute to the sustainability after the programme's conclusion? What happened in the case programmes had to be adapted due to changing security or political situations? 3. What steps have been taken to build local capacity and ownership (including integration into local systems or practices) to sustain and/or scale the programme outcomes over time? 4. How has the programme encouraged the change of WASH/nutrition policies to support the continuity of the changes achieved at the national and international level? 5. How has the programme encouraged the change in access to nutrition and WASH services in a sustainable way at the national and international level? 6. To what extent have local authorities pledged their continued support?
4. Coherence & Partnership and collaboration	1. To what extent has collaboration between the different Consortium Partners created added value in programme countries or at global level? 2. To what extent is collaboration with other partners - outside the Right2Grow Consortium - taking place in programme countries, and what has been the added value of those collaborations? 3. To what extent have adaptive management principles influenced programming within Right2Grow at country and global level?

	4. What has been the added value of MFA, and separately, of its embassies, to the Partnership? And what is the value added of this Partnership to MFA? 5. How successful was the programme in its localization and shift the power efforts at global and country level?
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2. Methodology

2.1. Approach

The evaluation adopted a participatory approach that actively engaged a wide range of programme stakeholders. This included community members, government actors at various administrative levels, civil society organizations (CSOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs). Through interactive reflection sessions, these stakeholders were consulted, and they contributed to the endline evaluation findings and recommendations, ensuring that diverse perspectives, especially those from the grassroots, were meaningfully integrated into the evaluation process.

To ensure robustness and credibility, the endline evaluation utilized a mixed-methods approach, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data. Multiple data collection techniques, such as staff surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, document reviews, and observation, were employed. This approach enabled triangulation, enhancing the validity of the findings by cross-verifying information from different sources and methods. The use of mixed methods allowed for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of programme outcomes, implementation dynamics, and contextual influences.

2.2. Data Collection Methods and Techniques

The endline evaluation employed a range of interconnected data collection and analysis methods to ensure depth, triangulation, and alignment with the programme's Theory of Change (ToC). Evidence Gap Mapping (EGM) was used to identify areas with strong evidence and highlight gaps, thereby guiding the focus of further analysis. Contribution Analysis deepened the understanding of how and to what extent the programme contributed to observed outcomes. Complementing this, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIs) helped validate contribution stories and added rich contextual insights.

The evaluation also included the Learning and Linking (L&L) survey, which applied the Sprockler methodology to collect both qualitative narratives and quantitative data, providing broad insights into participant experiences and perceptions.

Another key data collection method was the Endline Capacity Assessment, specifically designed to measure the cumulative effects of capacity strengthening efforts implemented since the programme's inception. This assessment focused on evaluating the progress and effectiveness of Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) interventions in enhancing the technical and organizational capacities of local civil society organization (CSO) partners. It also examined the extent to which these improved capacities enabled CSOs to more effectively influence policy and practice within their respective contexts.

Together, these complementary methods formed a robust, evidence-based evaluation approach that minimized potential biases and limitations. This integrated methodology enabled a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the Right2Grow programme's overall impact. The individual methods are described in more detail below.

1. Evidence Gap Mapping

An **Evidence Gap Map (EGM)** is a visual tool that illustrates the availability and strength of evidence across different components of a programme. In this evaluation, an EGM was constructed by plotting existing data, including monitoring results, harvested outcomes, midterm review findings, and earlier surveys, onto the programme's Theory of Change. The map used color-coded circles to reflect the robustness and coverage of evidence across various intended effects and underlying assumptions.

At the country level, the country Evidence Gap Map created by the Global team was further refined during participatory reflection workshops conducted on 15 July 2025, where the country program team collectively reviewed achievements, identified evidence gaps, generated evidence, and validated key findings and its contribution to the Programmatic Theory of Change.

2. Contribution Analysis and Validation through FGDs and KIs

Contribution Analysis is a theory-based evaluation method used to assess how, and to what extent, a programme has contributed to observed changes. It investigates the programme's influence on outcomes while accounting for the presence and role of other contributing factors and actors.

In this evaluation, contribution analysis was applied to deep dive into two key hotspot areas aligned with programme outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Community Awareness and Action
- **Outcome 2:** Civil Society Organization (CSO) Engagement and Advocacy

While the endline evaluation conducted an in-depth analysis of the two primary outcome areas, it also assessed Outcomes 2 and 4 to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the programme's overall achievements and effectiveness.

The analysis generated "contribution stories," a narrative summary that illustrates how the programme contributed to change in these areas. These stories were co-developed by country teams during reflection workshops held on July 15, 2025, and subsequently validated by external stakeholders through five focus group discussions (FGDs) and thirteen key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted across selected districts in the programme regions from July 16 to 31, 2025.

These FGD and KII sessions not only affirmed the contribution stories but also provided additional insights into the programme's four strategic pathways.

In addition, a light-touch contribution analysis approach was used during the collection of significant change stories, where participants were invited to reflect on both the changes they experienced and the roles played by the programme alongside other influencing actors and contextual factors.

3. Learning and Linking Survey

The evaluation aimed to assess progress and achievements in Linking & Learning (L&L) across the Right2Grow programme and ensure that L&L practices, centered on reflection, adaptive management, and knowledge sharing, would be sustained beyond the programme's lifespan. It focused on capturing, sharing, and using learning to drive long-term impact and behavior change among consortium partners.

An online survey was conducted in May 2025, targeting all consortium partners and eight respondents provided their feedback.

Eight respondents from Ethiopia participated in the endline survey, representing MCMDO (2), GDCA (2), ORDA (1), The Hunger Project (1), World Vision (1), and Action Against Hunger (1). All had been engaged with Right2Grow since its launch in January 2021. Their roles included MEAL specialists (2), senior management/program coordinators (4), and technical experts (2). Due to differences in analysis and reporting across the baseline and midterm reviews, direct comparison of findings was limited. Nonetheless, contrasting Ethiopian responses with overall trends may still offer valuable contextual insights.

4. CSO Capacity Assessment

The capacity assessment was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Right2Grow's efforts in two key areas: technical capacity strengthening and organizational development of civil society organizations (CSOs). Specifically, it aimed to measure how well the programme enhanced CSOs' ability to influence policy and practice, and to assess the impact of its support in building institutional resilience. The assessment built on tools developed during the baseline and midterm review (MTR), which were further refined to align with the Endline's specific objectives. This refinement process was led by the Global MEAL team in collaboration with external consultants from Impact House to ensure relevance and rigor.

Two online self-assessment questionnaires were used: one focused on technical knowledge and skills, and the other on institutional strengthening and organizational development. The technical questionnaire targeted all staff involved in Right2Grow implementation, and a total of 24 participants from Ethiopia took part in the Endline technical knowledge and skills self-assessment questionnaire, contributing feedback on the effectiveness of Right2Grow's capacity strengthening efforts. Additionally, 6 participants from Ethiopia responded to the institutional strengthening and organizational development self-assessment questionnaire,

offering insights into how the programme supported organizational growth and resilience. These combined responses reflect Ethiopia's active engagement in both dimensions of the Endline capacity evaluation.

Survey links were distributed via email to country leads and thematic focal points, who were asked to share them with relevant partners and encourage participation. The Global MCD team monitored progress throughout the five-week data collection period, issuing weekly reminders and conducting targeted follow-ups to boost response rates.

After data collection, responses were cleaned and analyzed using a dashboard that allowed for filtering and comparison. To deepen the evaluation, collaborative analysis, peer exchange, and reflection sessions were conducted during country-level Endline workshops.

5. Outcome Harvesting

Outcome Harvesting is a method for identifying, formulating, verifying, and interpreting the changes influenced by a programme, particularly outcomes that were not predefined. Throughout the five years of implementation, this method was used extensively by programme teams to document and validate results.

For the endline evaluation, the team built upon this existing body of harvested and substantiated outcomes during the reflection workshop held on 15 July 2025 during the evidence gap map exercises. These outcomes served as key evidence for the Evidence Gap Map, helping to map progress against the Theory of Change. They also formed the foundation for deeper analysis within hotspot areas, helping evaluators explore the pathways through which the programme contributed to meaningful change.

2.3 Bias and limitations

While the endline evaluation employed a participatory, mixed-methods, and theory-driven approach that was largely robust and inclusive, several potential biases and limitations are acknowledged.

The evaluation placed significant emphasis on qualitative methods, including reflection workshops, narrative tools such as Sprockler, and contribution analysis. While these methods enriched the evaluation by capturing diverse and contextually grounded experiences, they inherently rely on individual perspectives and self-reported narratives, which may be influenced by personal biases or social desirability.

Furthermore, although contribution analysis is a valuable method for evaluating complex programmes, it presents challenges in attributing observed changes directly to specific interventions. These limitations are particularly evident in multi-actor advocacy programmes that operate within broader social movements, where isolating the programme's unique contribution from that of other actors and contextual influences can be difficult.

3. Findings

3.1. Relevance

3.1.1 Quality and evolution of the country ToC

The revised Country Theory of Change (ToC) for Ethiopia, informed by baseline and midterm evaluation findings, demonstrates a strong alignment with national development priorities and the specific needs of local communities. Its design reflects a deep understanding of the complex challenges affecting WASH and nutrition service delivery in program implementation areas, including those in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The ToC has progressively evolved in response to contextual shifts and lessons learned from field implementation, drawing on insights from the baseline, midterm evaluation, and ongoing program monitoring. This adaptive approach ensures that the ToC remains both relevant and responsive to emerging needs.

A key strength of the ToC lies in its emphasis on increasing community demand for, and investment in, essential WASH and nutrition services. This focus is highly appropriate given the realities in many target areas, where access to such services remains limited, fragmented, and poorly structured. During the relevance reflection workshop, stakeholders emphasized that weak governance has been a major underlying driver of undernutrition, especially among children under five. Poor planning, limited accountability, and weak institutional capacity have led to widespread service gaps. For instance, many communities continue to face unreliable water access due to poorly maintained infrastructure and minimal investment in new water schemes.

The ToC's integrated, multisectoral approach has also proven valuable. While Ethiopia has strong national frameworks, such as the Seqota Declaration and the National Food and Nutrition Policy, the National Nutrition Program II, these have not always translated into effective implementation at local levels. The Right2Grow programme addresses this gap by supporting the establishment and operationalization of multisectoral Food and Nutrition Councils and Technical Committees across administrative levels. The programme also works to build the capacity of both CSOs and government actors, while strategically engaging private sector stakeholders to support service delivery and supply chain improvements. This holistic strategy ensures that the ToC targets not only immediate service delivery gaps but also the systems and structures needed for long-term change, leading to the conclusion of TOC quality and validity.

Social accountability has been central to the programme's implementation strategy. By promoting citizen-led monitoring and joint planning mechanisms, the ToC addresses both demand- and supply-side constraints while tackling the broader governance issues that hinder service delivery. Tools like Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) and Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) have enabled communities to participate meaningfully in decision-making, while enhancing the accountability of service providers. During endline evaluation, consultations with government and CSO stakeholders affirmed that the revised ToC is both relevant and well-integrated, reflecting the interconnected nature of challenges in WASH and nutrition.

This was echoed in stakeholder reflections, such as:

"...the Right2Grow programme is highly relevant to addressing the key issues of undernutrition in our country. Its components are well interconnected, addressing both the demand and supply sides of nutrition and influencing coordination and decision-making processes, which are the critical gap in our country..." (government stakeholders, Amhara Region)

The evolution of the ToC has also accounted for social and gender norms, which were identified during the endline reflection workshop as critical barriers to equitable access. Deeply entrenched norms continue to limit women's voice and participation in the planning and oversight of WASH and nutrition services, despite their central roles in caregiving and water collection. These challenges are further compounded by intersecting vulnerabilities related to age, disability, and socioeconomic status, particularly affecting adolescent girls, elderly women, and persons with disabilities.

Recognizing this, the programme has prioritized gender-sensitive programming as a cross-cutting pillar of its ToC. Right2Grow has worked to improve restrictive norms by promoting the participation of women and marginalized groups in programme structures, such as the CVA Task Forces and private sector partnerships. The programme

has also addressed harmful masculinities by encouraging men's involvement in caregiving and nutrition-related activities, efforts that have begun to shift entrenched community attitudes, proving the quality and validity of the TOC.

Participants in the endline evaluation acknowledged the programme's impact on gender norms, noting:

"...the Right2Grow programme placed strong emphasis on the equitable engagement of both women and men in household nutrition. This has brought about a remarkable shift in community attitudes, particularly regarding men's participation in activities traditionally seen as the domain of women, such as caregiving. We are now witnessing men taking greater interest and playing active roles in their household's nutrition..."

Another important evolution in the ToC has been the recognition of the private sector as a strategic partner. Historically, private sector actors in Ethiopia were not viewed as relevant stakeholders in WASH and nutrition. However, the Right2Grow programme has actively engaged them to address supply and service gaps, contributing to the affordability and availability of key products. This strategic shift has expanded the partnership landscape and supports long-term sustainability.

Government stakeholders and CSOs interviewed during the endline evaluation acknowledged this shift as a major step forward:

"...it is through the Right2Grow programme that we have, for the first time, seen the private sector recognized as a valuable partner in WASH and nutrition. Because they are business-oriented, we previously never considered them as potential collaborators in these areas. But now, they have made significant investments, helping ensure the availability and affordability of WASH and nutrition products for local communities..."

The evaluation also identified a few areas where the Theory of Change (ToC) could be strengthened to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. One key challenge highlighted in the contribution story from Hotspot-2 is the limited availability and reliability of national-level data. This data gap significantly hindered broader advocacy efforts and the ability to influence policy at the national level. The assumption that national data could be synthesized for effective advocacy was only partially valid, underscoring the need to strengthen local-to-national data systems to ensure more reliable and impactful decision-making.

Additionally, the ToC does not explicitly address potential risks or outline clear mitigation strategies, which is a significant gap considering Ethiopia's volatile civic space. This omission could affect the engagement and long-term sustainability of civil society organizations (CSOs), which are key to the program's success. Addressing these risks in the ToC would provide better guidance for navigating Ethiopia's dynamic context and enhance the program's resilience to external challenges.

Lastly, while gender equality is positioned as a central strategy in the program, its integration into outcome-level indicators could be more robust. Although the program made strides in engaging men and boys in nutrition-related activities, challenging traditional gender norms, and reducing gender-based discrimination, there is potential to embed gender and inclusion more deeply into the program's outcome metrics. By strengthening these elements, the program could ensure a more comprehensive and lasting impact on gender equality and inclusive participation.

In conclusion, the country-level ToC is of high quality and has evolved in meaningful ways. It reflects a strong understanding of Ethiopia's WASH and nutrition landscape, balances immediate community needs with systemic change, and remains responsive to shifts in context and evidence. Its emphasis on social accountability, gender equity, CSO capacity, government systems and private sector engagement further strengthens its relevance and potential for sustainable impact.

3.1.2 Alignment of ToC with key national & global issues

The overall programme Theory of Change (ToC), along with Ethiopia's country-specific ToC, reflects a high-quality design that is strongly aligned with national priorities. It is closely connected to Ethiopia's 10th National Development Plan and the Food and Nutrition Policy, with particular emphasis on nutrition awareness, service delivery, coordination, WASH, and Gender Equality. The ToCs are also well aligned with global development agendas, including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Both ToCs are grounded in a nuanced understanding of Ethiopia's context, especially the challenges related to WASH and nutrition. They are built on inclusive, adaptive, and evidence-informed strategies that reflect best practices in development programming. Field-based evidence and contribution stories gathered during the evaluation validate the relevance and effectiveness of these frameworks, demonstrating that the ToCs have supported measurable change.

At the same time, the evaluation highlights areas for further improvement, such as strengthening data systems, integrating explicit risk mitigation strategies, and embedding equity and inclusion more deeply at the outcome level to enhance future programming and impact.

The strength of these ToCs lies in their realistic, contextually grounded assumptions, which have been consistently supported by on-the-ground experiences. One key assumption that communities equipped with knowledge about small, actionable practices will advocate for improved services and adopt healthier behaviors was strongly validated.

This has demonstrated the effectiveness of the assumptions under Pathway 1, where communities plan and implement small, achievable actions based on a shared vision. The assumption proved to be robust, generating significant multiplier effects that address both the supply and demand sides of WASH and nutrition services. The strategies within this assumption empowered communities by increasing their awareness of service entitlements and their capacity to claim their rights. At the same time, it strengthened the accountability of service providers and duty bearers, fostering joint investments for service improvements.

During the reflection workshop and stakeholder interviews (KIIs), participants observed the relative effectiveness of this assumption compared to others, sharing their insights. One participant highlighted,

...the social accountability assumption of the project has been very effective, bringing about significant improvements in WASH and nutrition services. The approach is comprehensive, fostering constructive dialogue between service users, providers, and duty bearers, leading to joint investments in service improvements. This has resulted in visible investments in WASH service maintenance and overall service improvements...."

Another foundational assumption was that capable and legitimate civil society organizations (CSOs), when engaged in planning and budgeting, could effectively advocate within the civic space. This, too, proved accurate as CSOs utilized tools such as Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) and Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) to influence local government processes and participate in broader advocacy. Their contributions were instrumental in forming the Food System and Nutrition (FSN) Council and shaping policy through platforms like ECSC-SUN and CCRDA, helping to amplify the voices of marginalized groups.

The programme's design adopts a systems-based, multi-sectoral approach that integrates WASH, nutrition, governance, and gender equality. This holistic model has led to tangible improvements in service delivery most notably through innovative partnerships with the private sector, which have helped reduce costs and strengthen supply chains, making essential services more accessible.

One of the most significant changes observed at the community level is a shift in household priorities from market-oriented production to home-based consumption of nutritious foods. This transition has contributed directly to improved child health and nutrition outcomes. During community consultations, many interviewed households reported that they now prioritize using their own produce such as poultry and vegetables for household consumption before selling to the market. This behavior change demonstrates increased nutrition awareness and a growing commitment to family well-being, both of which are key goals of the programme.

Various tools employed by the CVA taskforces such as interface meetings, Community Score Cards, monitoring standards and joint planning sessions have effectively strengthened community ownership and engagement. These participatory mechanisms not only encouraged communities to take part in programme activities but also motivated them to contribute their own resources and labor, reinforcing long-term sustainability.

Evidence gathered through outcome harvesting, mid-term evaluations, and community consultations revealed measurable progress. Notable improvements include reductions in undernutrition, enhanced water and sanitation infrastructure, and increased adoption of household, institutional and school gardening initiatives. These results highlight how community-driven approaches have translated into concrete development outcomes.

Despite these successes, the programme also revealed critical areas for refinement. A key challenge, highlighted in Hotspot-2, was the lack of reliable national-level data, which hindered advocacy and broader influence. The assumption that such data could be easily synthesized for policy engagement was only partially valid. Addressing this gap requires better integration of community-led data with national systems and investments in data harmonization.

To further strengthen the relevance of the current Theory of Change (ToC), it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on proactively assessing and regularly updating the programme's risk register. In Ethiopia's evolving civic space, the integration of a structured risk framework, along with systematic implementation and updates, would support more resilient programming and enable sustained engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs).

Additionally, while gender equality is acknowledged as a catalytic factor within the ToC, its deeper integration into outcome indicators alongside the development and application of a gender-transformative programming toolkit would significantly enhance the ToC's relevance and impact. Encouragingly, progress has already been observed in this area. For example, the intentional involvement of men and boys in nutrition initiatives has begun to challenge traditional gender norms and foster more inclusive community participation.

The programme's emphasis on community participation, civic space, and local leadership is well aligned with global priorities for rights-based and locally led development. By building the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage in advocacy at both local and national levels, the programme addressed critical gaps in advocacy skills and legitimacy. As a result, CSOs have played a more active and influential role in policy reform contributing to national policy platforms and monitoring public spending through tools like BMET. These actions have promoted greater transparency and accountability, reinforcing both the relevance and the practical application of the programme's Theory of Change.

The relevance of the country-specific Theory of Change (ToC) could be further enhanced by placing greater emphasis on climate resilience and digital innovation. This includes promoting drought-resistant crops, supporting nutrition-sensitive value chains, and leveraging mobile platforms for service tracking, community engagement, and education. Strengthening these areas would not only improve the programme's overall impact but also help ensure its continued relevance in a rapidly changing development context.

3.1.3 Responsiveness of programme strategies

i. **Responsiveness to the needs of local communities / targeted population/most vulnerable groups**

The Right2Grow program's strategies have been highly responsive to the local community's needs through adaptive implementation and targeted empowerment approaches. The program directly addressed these needs by empowering communities to voice their demands. Using Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) and Accountability and Action Taskforces (AAT), the program provided social accountability tools that enabled communities to identify, prioritize, and plan for their specific needs. This approach effectively connected community concerns with local authorities, leading to improved government responsiveness and accountability. For example, in targeted districts, communities used these taskforces to successfully advocate for the deployment of additional health professionals at local health centers.

Furthermore, the program's strategy of engaging private sector actors in the production and distribution of affordable WASH products, such as toilet slabs, liquid soap, and poultry farming resources, directly addressed critical local needs for accessible and affordable WASH and nutrition services. Additionally, the program built the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to mobilize communities, sensitizing them on their rights, entitlements, policies, and budgeting, which enabled more impactful and context-specific advocacy. The program also prioritized enhanced nutrition governance at all levels, aligning its strategies with local demands.

In the endline evaluation, participants representing government stakeholders from district and regional levels shared their strong opinions, stating:

"...the Right2Grow program's strategies effectively address key community-level issues related to child nutrition and WASH through a variety of impactful approaches. In particular, the program's social accountability strategies addressed gaps in community participation in WASH and nutrition, raised awareness about services, and helped

close knowledge gaps. By educating communities on their rights and entitlements, it has empowered them to advocate for better services and become more actively involved in governance processes..."

The program's strategies were recognized as comprehensive in addressing local needs for WASH and nutrition services through active participation, joint planning, and investments in WASH and Nutrition services. The endline evaluation participants, including those from the WASH and Nutrition National Forum, highlighted the program's responsive strategies in key areas, as noted below:

- One of the program's key responsive strategies is its focus on educating communities about the root causes of undernutrition. By raising awareness of rights and access to nutrition and WASH services, the program has empowered local communities to take an active role in improving their well-being.
- The program's focus on enhancing government accountability at the local level has contributed to a more responsive government, improving the delivery of essential services and ensuring strategies align with local needs.
- The program's social accountability efforts have successfully translated raised awareness into the adoption of small, actionable changes in daily practices, leading to tangible improvements in both nutritional status and hygiene at the community level.

Additionally, the program's gender-sensitive approach ensured the participation of women, girls, and marginalized groups in various program structures, addressing the gender gap in WASH and nutrition for example our filed observation and consultation with the community indicated that these groups (women and People with disabilities) are purposively targeted and represented in CVA taskforces and participated in different awareness raising programs This strategy has challenged gender norms that previously limited male participation in caregiving activities. Participants in the endline evaluation, including both community members and local government representatives, observed that the program's strategy has helped narrow the gender gap in caregiving. Men involved in the program have equally participated and engaged in caregiving responsibilities within their households.

While the programme is primarily advocacy-focused and has demonstrated responsiveness to local needs and development priorities particularly in addressing service gaps and enhancing service provider accountability through various advocacy strategies its relevance could have been further strengthened by integrating approaches tailored to WASH and nutrition services in conflict-affected settings. This includes internally displaced persons (IDP) centers and post-conflict areas, where priorities often shift toward life-saving interventions and post-crisis recovery.

Stakeholder consultations in the Amhara Region, where conflict remains an ongoing challenge, highlighted the need for continued programme adaptation to better respond to the evolving context. As one stakeholder noted, emphasizing that advocacy efforts must also be responsive to humanitarian realities on the ground.

"...the program is operating in both post-conflict and ongoing conflict areas. The crisis has increased the need for recovery, which has diverted government and community priorities away from long-term development and toward life-saving interventions. There is a high demand for the program to adapt with flexible contingency funding focused on emergency WASH and nutrition services in these areas..."

ii. Responsiveness to needs to strengthen policies and budgets at the country level.

The program's strategies are both relevant and responsive to addressing undernutrition at the national level by focusing on strengthening policy and budgetary frameworks. In Ethiopia, the core challenge of undernutrition lies not only in the absence of strong policies but also in ineffective implementation and poor coordination across sectors. The Right2Grow program directly addresses these challenges by encouraging both national and decentralized government entities to adopt and institutionalize an integrated, multisectoral approach to undernutrition. This includes embedding nutrition into decision-making, action plans, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and budget allocation processes. Moreover, effective collaboration with the government in translating the Seqota declaration into implementation was a good example. The approach is built on inclusive and participatory engagement with civil society organizations and the private sector, ensuring systemic gaps are tackled sustainably and collaboratively.

By linking with existing programs, the Right2Grow program played a crucial role in advancing the implementation of key national frameworks on WASH and nutrition, such as the Food and Nutrition Policy, the ONE WASH program, and the Seqota Declaration. By supporting the acceleration of these frameworks at all administrative levels, the program significantly contributed to improving children's nutritional outcomes.

Recognizing that good governance is key to effective implementation, the program's advocacy for the establishment of a strong Food and Nutrition Council is a responsive strategy to address national issues. This council is designed to coordinate multisectoral action and ensure accountability in addressing malnutrition.

Given the multifaceted nature of undernutrition, the program promotes cross-sectoral collaboration among WASH, nutrition, humanitarian, and peace-building actors. It also strengthens the capacity of key stakeholders, including civil society organizations (CSOs), government institutions, and private sector partners. These strategies are essential in addressing critical gaps in collaboration and coordination, ultimately tackling undernutrition in the country.

The endline evaluation findings highlighted the responsiveness of the program strategies, strengthening policy and budget frameworks at the national level, particularly in light of evolving contexts and shifting priorities. The CSO stakeholders interviewed during the endline evaluation strongly affirmed this, as reflected in the following quote:

"...the Right2Grow program in Ethiopia is playing a vital role in addressing pressing national challenges around child nutrition and WASH. While Ethiopia already has strong policy frameworks like the Seqota Declaration and the National Nutrition Program II, a persistent gap has been the lack of effective multisectoral implementation and coordination. Right2Grow is helping bridge this gap by promoting the establishment of formal Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Councils and Technical Committees. These structures are essential for ensuring coordinated efforts from the national level down to the grassroots. In addition, the program supports the practical implementation of these policies by building the capacity of civil society organizations and government stakeholders, and by involving the private sector in the process...."

Findings from the endline evaluation confirmed that the Right2Grow program's strategies are firmly rooted in strengthening national and subnational (regional and district-level) policy frameworks and budget allocations to effectively combat undernutrition. Several practical examples from the program's implementation highlight the responsiveness of the program strategies achieved:

- **Strengthen the food and nutrition system:** The Right2Grow program has played a key role in strengthening the Food and Nutrition Multisectoral Council, a coordination body at the regional, zonal, and district levels. This has been accomplished through targeted capacity-building trainings, as well as lobbying and advocacy platforms. As a result, the region has now officially assigned over 13 sectors, through formal letters, to participate in the food and nutrition multisectoral coordination efforts.
- **Community Engagement and Budget Monitoring:** Right2Grow has empowered communities to document and communicate their lived experiences and challenges related to nutrition and WASH. These community voices are used to inform and influence local decision-makers. A key strategy has been enhancing the budget literacy and policy analysis capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and local communities. As a result, these groups are actively monitoring local government budget allocations and expenditures in the areas of nutrition, food, and WASH. In target districts across Amhara, Oromia, and Central Ethiopia, community advocates have effectively used the Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) tool to successfully lobby for increased funding for child-focused WASH and nutrition services.
- **Institutionalizing Nutrition Dialogue at the District Level:** In districts across Central Ethiopia and the Amhara Region, district councils have formally recognized nutrition as a standing agenda item in their regular meetings, allocating at least 20 minutes to discuss it as a critical issue. During these sessions, the health sector shares updates on undernutrition trends, socio-economic impacts, and progress at the community level. Nutrition has also been integrated into the districts' monitoring and supervision tools, making it a regular component of performance tracking.
- **Increased Budget Allocation for Nutrition:** Through sustained advocacy efforts, the program has helped operationalize existing government policy commitments to dedicate budget for nutrition

commitments that were previously unimplemented. As a result, in year 2024/2025 most target districts such as Cheha (Central Ethiopia), Bedeno and Habro (Oromia), and Aneded (Amhara) have increased their nutrition budgets from 50,000 ETB in 2022 to an average of 500,000 ETB. This increase has also led to nutrition being prioritized in planning, budgeting, performance review, and decision-making processes across sectors. Furthermore, these districts have begun allocating additional administrative budget for multisectoral coordination 1% in most areas, and up to 2% in Central Ethiopia to support the newly established Food and Nutrition Councils and their technical committees.

In Ethiopia, civil society organizations (CSOs) face significant challenges in effectively advocating for WASH and nutrition, despite recent legal reforms that have improved civic space. Their limited engagement is mainly due to gaps in advocacy capacity, such as weak strategic planning, lack of practical skills, insufficient access to tools, and limited technical expertise. Many CSOs also lack confidence and structured frameworks to influence policy, hold authorities accountable, or mobilize communities, leaving them unable to fully leverage the improved policy environment to advance WASH and nutrition goals.

In this context, the Right2Grow programme strategies focused on empowering CSOs is highly relevant. It seeks to ensure that CSOs not only have the legitimacy to engage with decision-makers but also the capacity, tools, and space to effectively advocate for responsive and equitable WASH and nutrition services.

3.2. Effectiveness and impact

3.2.1 Effectiveness and contribution per ToC pathway

3.2.1.1 Community level

a. Progress on output and outcome indicators (link to Annex 2)

Progress on Outcome 1: enabling communities to actively demand and invest in basic social services, adopt improved WASH and nutrition practices, and collaboratively address service delivery barriers with private sector partners.

The endline evaluation findings, triangulated through outcome harvesting and field data, confirmed that the program successfully achieved its intended indicators under outcome 1 and significantly contributed to its underlying assumptions. Evidence gathered demonstrated that communities in the Right2Grow districts actively demanded and invested in basic WASH and nutrition services, adopting and maintaining improved practices while collaborating with private sector partners to overcome barriers.

The program's endline achievements reflect substantial progress across key outcome indicators, including increased community awareness and action led to visible improvements in WASH and nutrition, driven by grassroots planning, behavior change, and local resource mobilization. Community-based organizations emerged as credible and influential advocates, leveraging evidence-based advocacy and budget monitoring to push for governance improvements and better service delivery. Additionally, private sector engagement and business models in WASH and nutrition services improved accessibility and affordability, while also boosting the profitability of private sector partners through increased sales driven by the program's high demand.

From 2021 to 2025, the program demonstrated strong performance in community engagement, with results reflecting both immediate impact and long-term sustainability. Its systems-based, community-centered approach, which integrated behavior change efforts, local resource mobilization, and participatory planning, led to substantial improvements in service access and local practices. Under the Community Awareness and Action pathway, communities developed and implemented actionable plans, resulting in tangible progress in hygiene, nutrition, and the diversification of household diets, contributing to a reduction in undernutrition, particularly among children under five.

Intermediate outcome A: Communities plan and carry out small doable actions through **shared vision** and put them into practice.

Communities gained a deeper understanding of their rights and responsibilities, empowering them to take collective action to improve WASH and nutrition services. This newfound awareness prompted active participation

in planning and implementing small, practical actions to address local WASH and nutrition challenges, resulting in visible changes in hygiene practices, food preparation, and household nutrition. Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Task Forces played a key role in facilitating dialogue and guiding service improvement planning, encouraging collaboration among community members.

For instance, in Aneded, Cheha, and Habro districts, community members work together to construct household latrines and handwashing stations using locally sourced materials after CVA meetings revealed sanitation gaps. In most of the targeted districts, women's groups established backyard gardens, growing orange-fleshed sweet potatoes for the complementary feeding of children under five. Meanwhile, in Delanta woreda, youth groups rehabilitated a community water point, reducing the distance women had to travel to fetch water, thus improving access to clean water.

These community-driven efforts contributed to significant improvements in key indicators. There was a noticeable increase in community-led WASH and nutrition initiatives, including household and communal latrine construction. Household participation in food production, such as gardening and poultry farming, also rose, contributing to local food security. This approach not only enhanced hygiene and sanitation practices but also strengthened community ownership of service delivery, ensuring that improvements were sustainable and rooted in local needs.

The CVA Task Forces played a central role by facilitating interface meetings, developing joint service improvement plans, and reinforcing community ownership. Under Indicator Right2Grow.OC.1.1, the programme exceeded its target of 202 with 331 community-led advocacy actions to improve WASH and nutrition services, demonstrating increased local capacity and engagement with service providers. In parallel, 322 service delivery barriers were addressed through joint community-private sector initiatives (Indicator Right2Grow.OC.1.3), nearly reaching the target of 392. These actions led to tangible service improvements, including rehabilitated water points, deployment of health workers, replenished medicines, toilet construction, procurement of medical equipment, and expanded WASH and nutrition products. The WASH and nutrition service has considered an inclusive approach addressing the special needs of vulnerable groups. One notable example is the construction of an accessible restroom at Dinkula Health Center, influenced by community advocacy, with gender-separated and disability-inclusive facilities.

Civil society engagement was consistent and impactful. All eight targeted CSOs remained engaged (Indicator Right2Grow.OP.1), supporting community mobilization, advocacy, and accountability. The programme also surpassed expectations in social accountability: 124 CVA groups and task forces were formed (Indicator ET.OP.1.2), exceeding the target of 84. These groups effectively raised awareness, monitored service delivery, and held authorities accountable, with household interviews confirming shifts toward improved child feeding and dietary practices.

In terms of community-led implementation, 297 actionable items were completed under the CVA process (Indicator ET.IO. A.1), slightly exceeding the target of 294, showcasing how community feedback was translated into service enhancements. The implementation of the community-led action plan led to significant improvements in hygiene, with over 20 villages declared open defecation-free after constructing toilets using locally available materials.

Intermediate outcome B: Communities have access to affordable nutrition and WASH products and services through the involvement of the private sector.

Private sector engagement also advanced significantly. Under Indicator ET.IO. B.1, 50 private sector actors (target: 42) were supported to deliver context-appropriate WASH and nutrition services. These actors now provide essential items like liquid soap, poultry, fish, and toilet slabs at affordable prices, sustained by increased local demand. Additionally, 79 enterprises received technical and capacity-building support (Indicator ET.OP.2.1), nearly doubling the initial target of 43. This contributed to the sustainability and scalability of market-based solutions in underserved areas.

b. Evidence Gap Mapping and Outcome Mapping Results at Country Level

At the country level, the Right2Grow Ethiopia programme utilized a gender-sensitive outcome harvesting tool to systematically capture changes throughout its implementation. This approach allowed the programme team to document a wide range of program outcomes, particularly those traditionally difficult to measure, such as

behavioral change in nutrition and WASH practices, shifts in service quality, governance practices, and local accountability mechanisms. During the program period, a dedicated review meeting was created to review harvested outcomes, validate them with external stakeholders, and generate credible, actionable evidence. This process enabled the programme to demonstrate, with clarity, how its advocacy interventions translated into tangible results, particularly in WASH and nutrition service delivery. The combined Evidence Gap Mapping and Outcome Mapping exercises during the endline evaluation reflection workshop revealed significant changes under outcome 1, community engagement, highlighting both impact and areas for future focus.

One of the programme's most transformative contributions was the introduction of Community Voice and Action (CVA) and Accountability Action Taskforces (AAT). These platforms redefined local accountability mechanisms by involving communities and the private sector directly in service planning and monitoring, moving beyond the traditional model where service delivery is seen solely as the government's responsibility. This new approach fostered a sense of joint ownership, encouraging all actors, government, community, and private sector to share responsibility for service improvement. As a result, community members became more informed, empowered, and proactive in demanding their rights and monitoring service quality.

This shift in community engagement led to the development of 392 government commitments, of which 322 were already implemented by the end of the programme. These commitments included the deployment of health professionals to underserved areas, the rehabilitation of community and facility-based water points, the procurement of essential medical equipment, the fencing of health posts, and increased attention to nutrition infrastructure. Communities also made meaningful contributions, offering resources for infrastructure upgrades, constructing household latrines with handwashing facilities, and establishing backyard gardens for improved family nutrition. As one community member remarked during the endline evaluation:

"...we had been doing gardening and poultry before the project, but we did not use them for our nutrition. Now, we have started the real practice of nutrition, and you can see it in our children's health and energy..."

This quote summarizes the behavioral shift inspired by the programme's advocacy-driven, non-material intervention approach. Without direct financial input, communities experienced service improvements, policy responses, and changes in practice, demonstrating the power and sustainability of rights-based advocacy.

The programme also made significant strides in private sector engagement, a historically neglected area in Ethiopia's WASH and nutrition landscape. By supporting private actors with entrepreneurship training, marketing skills, and promotion strategies, the programme enabled the local production and distribution of affordable WASH and nutrition-related products such as liquid soap, poultry, fish, and SATO latrines. This approach addressed two critical bottlenecks: affordability and supply chain inefficiencies. Communities benefited from lower prices and improved access, while private sector actors gained better market opportunities and increased profitability, ensuring sustainability for all stakeholders involved.

b. Stories of change and observations on the community level collected through data collection.

- **Community awareness and collective action transforming WASH and nutrition service improvement.**

The implementation of outcome 1: community awareness and action has brought changes at the individual, household, and community levels. The endline evaluation captured compelling evidence of change brought by this outcome through a combination of community consultations, stakeholder interviews, and direct observation of WASH and nutrition practices during endline evaluation field visits. These findings reveal significant improvements in community behaviors related to hygiene, sanitation, and nutrition, alongside increased access to essential services, particularly for underserved and marginalized populations.

One of the most notable outcomes was the strengthened capacity of citizens to demand and invest in better WASH and nutrition services. The programme delivered targeted capacity-building training sessions that equipped community members with knowledge of their service entitlements, quality standards, and available accountability mechanisms. As part of this strategy, the programme established Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Task Forces, representative bodies composed of trusted individuals from various segments of the community. These task forces became key drivers of social accountability, advocating for improved service delivery and fostering meaningful dialogue between citizens and government actors.

In total, 124 CVA Task Forces were established across the targeted districts. Their presence played a vital role in raising community awareness around the right to quality WASH and nutrition services. Through their advocacy efforts, these groups amplified the voices of the community and helped bridge the gap between citizens and service providers. Participants in the endline evaluation, many of whom were part of these task forces, testified to the programme's impact on both knowledge and mobilization. As one member noted:

"...we did not know about the quality of WASH and nutrition services or about citizens' entitlements. But through the programme's training, our awareness increased. Now, we are not only demanding our rights but also supporting the government to fulfill these entitlements..."

On the supply side, the programme also worked to strengthen accountability among duty bearers. It established Accountability Action Task Forces that brought together local government sector offices and enhanced their understanding of social accountability principles. These groups, along with CVA TF, participated in joint monitoring of services and engaged in structured interface meetings with community members and service providers. These platforms enabled the co-creation of actionable service improvement plans, clearly outlining government commitments and corresponding community contributions.

Through this integrated approach, the Right2Grow programme succeeded in transforming both citizen engagement and government responsiveness. It institutionalized mechanisms for collaborative service monitoring and created a shared sense of responsibility for WASH and nutrition service improvement, an important foundation for sustainability and long-term change.

The Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Task Forces have played a vital role in laying the groundwork for sustainable progress by actively raising awareness and educating households on improved nutrition and WASH practices. Their efforts have significantly enhanced community knowledge and transformed behaviors across the targeted areas. Throughout the implementation of the Right2Grow programme, communities witnessed remarkable improvements in child nutrition, caregiving practices, and hygiene behaviors.

One of the most profound changes observed is the improved physical and cognitive development of children under five. During the endline evaluation, both community members and health service providers in Habro District (West Hararghe Zone, Oromia Region) and Cheha District (Central Ethiopia Region) reported that stunting, once a common concern, has been increasingly decreasing. Although data on children admitted to health facilities for nutrition treatment is not readily available, evidence from interviews with health professionals, stakeholders' consultation, and community discussion indicated that children in the Right2Grow targeted area are now showing clear signs of improved healthy growth and development compared to five years ago.

A key driver of this change has been a shift in caregiver behavior, especially among mothers. Rather than selling home-produced nutritious foods such as eggs, milk, and vegetables, caregivers have begun prioritizing these items for their children's consumption. This new approach to household nutrition has significantly improved dietary diversity and nutrient intake, establishing long-term benefits for child health and well-being. These behavioral changes reflect a deeper transformation in community attitudes, helping to ensure the sustainability of program outcomes beyond its duration.

Households have become more proactive in producing vegetables, fruits, and other nutritious foods, and this has greatly enhanced the availability and quality of food at home. Cooking demonstrations conducted in the community have further built caregivers' knowledge and skills in preparing balanced meals, ensuring that the food consumed by children meets their nutritional needs. The program focuses on gender sensitive programming engaging men in the caretaking has improved households' gender equitable decision over nutrition.

Sanitation in the program areas has improved significantly, driven by both household and community-level actions. Many families have constructed private latrines using affordable and improved sanitation products supplied by local private sector actors. This shift has greatly reduced exposure to harmful pathogens and the risk of diarrheal diseases, which are closely linked to undernutrition in young children. At the community level, the construction of communal and school latrines featuring gender-separated facilities has further enhanced hygiene standards, particularly benefiting school-aged children. This has resulted in a total of 20 villages in the Right2Grow districts across targeted regions being declared Open Defecation Free villages.

Additionally, the rehabilitation of water points through community-led service improvement action plans has enhanced access to safe water. A compelling example comes from Habro District in the West Hararghe Zone of

Oromia Region, where the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) platform successfully influenced local government to repair long-defunct water systems. Community members reported a significant change in daily life. One household interviewee shared:

"...this water point had been non-functional for years. We used to walk two to three hours just to collect water that wasn't clean or safe. During my pregnancy, the responsibility fell on my daughter, and eventually, she had to drop out of school to fetch water for the family. But now, things have changed. Thanks to the project, we have access to clean water nearby. This has greatly reduced the burden on women and girls, and my daughter is now able to attend school regularly. It has also significantly improved the health of our family, especially our children..."

Field observations during the endline evaluation revealed further positive changes in sanitation practices at the household level. Many homes now have functioning toilets within their compounds, and caregivers, especially mothers, reported improvements in hygiene routines. Children under five were observed to be cleaner, and mothers shared that regular bathing had become part of their caregiving practices. As a result, they noted a visible decline in illnesses, particularly in eye infections, highlighting the connection between improved hygiene and child health.

Health services have also become more responsive. Monthly growth monitoring is now institutionalized at local health facilities, enabling early identification of growth faltering and timely interventions. This proactive approach has become a cornerstone in preventing malnutrition and supporting healthy development. Additionally, improved WASH practices at both household and community levels, such as handwashing, water treatment, and safe storage, have contributed to a significant decline in waterborne diseases, enhancing the overall health and well-being of children.

The strategic engagement of community influencers, including religious leaders, elders, and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), has significantly enhanced the program's impact on improving WASH and nutrition practices. For example, the involvement of religious leaders in the Citizens Voice and Action (CVA) approach has been crucial in raising awareness about undernutrition and hygiene within their communities. These leaders have emerged as key advocates, inspiring their followers to adopt healthier nutrition practices and improve both personal and environmental hygiene. Their active participation has further strengthened the impact of local nutrition and WASH initiatives, fostering a more community-driven effort to address undernutrition.

In Central Ethiopia, for instance, religious leaders mobilized over 400 households to build their own toilets as part of a broader effort to improve sanitation and hygiene in their communities.

d. Unintended/unexpected (negative) effects

The program has led to unintended but highly positive effects on youth employment. By strengthening the business and entrepreneurial capacity of private sector actors engaged in WASH and nutrition-related product and service delivery, the program indirectly contributed to job creation. Private sector actors involved in the production of liquid soap, poultry, fish, and SATO toilet slabs reported increased profitability and expansion of their businesses. This growth was driven by heightened community demand, which the program helped stimulate through awareness and behavior change activities.

As a result, many of these businesses scaled up their operations and recruited additional staff, particularly young people. For example, a liquid soap producer in Habro District (West Hararghe Zone, Oromia Region) shared that due to the business expansion enabled by the program, they were able to open new branches and hire eight previously unemployed youths. This outcome highlights the program's broader economic impact and its role in supporting youth livelihoods alongside its core focus on WASH and nutrition improvements.

2. Reflections on contribution of programme strategies to achieved changes.

Contribution Story (Hotspot 1): Strengthening Community-Driven WASH and Nutrition Services

The program significantly increased community awareness of rights and entitlements to WASH and nutrition services, resulting in stronger demand for quality service delivery and enhanced accountability from service providers. Empowered by this awareness, communities began actively monitoring service standards, participating in interface meetings, and contributing to joint service improvement plans. Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) Task

Forces played a pivotal role by bringing together service users, providers, and local government to strengthen accountability mechanisms and improve outcomes.

These efforts led to over 392 government commitments, of which more than 322 were successfully implemented. Actions included deploying health professionals, rehabilitating health facilities and water points, and allocating budgets for WASH and nutrition. Communities contributed resources, constructed household latrines with handwashing facilities, and engaged in backyard gardening, poultry, and fruit production directly improving household nutrition and hygiene.

As a result, responsive and functional local governance structures emerged, with communities demonstrating greater ownership, participation, and both financial and in-kind contributions to local development. Hygiene and sanitation improved through the construction of WASH facilities at household, community, and institutional levels. Private sector engagement enhanced affordability by shortening supply chains and directly linking producers with users, reducing product and service costs.

Knowledge, attitudes, and practices around nutrition also improved. Awareness campaigns encouraged community members especially those involved in home production to incorporate nutritious foods into family diets rather than producing solely for sale. This shift contributed to a reduction in child malnutrition, as reflected in improved recovery rates and decreased prevalence of undernutrition children as confirmed by the targeted health institutions.

The program also challenged gender norms by promoting equitable involvement of both men and women in nutrition awareness, food preparation demonstrations, and CVA activities. These efforts fostered positive shifts in perceptions, reducing the stigma around male involvement in caregiving and nutrition.

A key driver of these changes was the active participation of traditional and religious leaders, local partners, CSOs, and community networks. These stakeholders amplified community voices, built capacity, and empowered citizens to advocate for their rights.

The program's impact was reflected in improved access to essential WASH and nutrition services, such as the availability of medicines, qualified health professionals, rehabilitated water systems, and upgraded health facilities. These achievements were largely driven by strong community advocacy and increased demand for quality services.

Another important outcome was the adoption of practical, low-cost, locally tailored solutions. Capacity-building efforts by implementing partners and CSOs enabled communities to develop and implement their own action plans, supported by local leadership and internal resource mobilization. CVA Task Forces were instrumental in holding service providers and local governments accountable, enhancing governance and service delivery.

Progressive change was achieved through key implementation mechanisms such as local advocacy, inclusive participation, and strategic engagement with CSOs and private sector actors. These approaches promoted transparency, accountability, and a strong sense of shared responsibility, laying a solid foundation for long-term impact and resilience.

The program led to tangible improvements across targeted areas, including reduced undernutrition in children under five, decreased open defecation through household latrine construction, improved access to safe water, and better health outcomes due to upgraded facilities. Household and school-based gardening, poultry, and dairy activities increased, contributing to dietary diversity and food security. Availability of WASH and nutrition-related products also improved, supported by private sector involvement.

Evidence gathered from outcome harvesting, case studies, mid-term evaluations, and community consultations supports the program's contribution to these outcomes, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving WASH and nutrition services through a holistic, community-driven approach.

3.2.1.2 Civil society organisations

1. **Sharing of and reflections on achievements to date**
 - a. **Progress on output and outcome indicators (link to Annex 2)**

Progress on outcome -2 empowered civil society organizations (CSOs) actively engage in civic spaces:

The program successfully achieved its outcome indicators for Pathway Two, focusing on strengthening the capacity and legitimacy of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in advocating for WASH and nutrition services. CSOs played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between communities and government by amplifying the voices of marginalized groups and holding duty-bearers accountable. Throughout the program, CSOs enhanced their skills in budget monitoring, policy dialogue, and engagement in multi-stakeholder platforms, which increased their legitimacy and influence in shaping governance at local and regional levels.

A notable positive change was made across the Right2Grow program regions, where Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) utilized Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) tools to monitor the government expenditure on WASH and Nutrition, leading to strong accountability. Through collaboration with the ECSC-SUN Coalition and the CCRDA WASH and Nutrition Forum, effective advocacy efforts integrated WASH and nutrition priorities into local development plans. In various locations, CSOs also organized Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) interface meetings, allowing community members to voice concerns about issues such as absentee health workers, medicine shortages, and inadequate facility conditions, resulting in measurable improvements in service delivery.

Progress on Intermediate Outcomes C and D: Strengthening Civil Society Influence

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have made significant progress in amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and influencing policy and service delivery systems. Over the reporting period, CSOs have strengthened both their legitimacy and technical capacity, particularly in areas such as budget monitoring, policy dialogue, and participation in multi-stakeholder platforms. These efforts have enabled them to become more effective advocates for community needs and priorities.

One of the most notable outcomes has been the improved responsiveness of local governments and service providers to the advocacy work of CSOs. For example, the ECSC-SUN coalition successfully lobbied for the inclusion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture in the Amhara region's development plan, a significant step toward integrating nutrition considerations into broader policy frameworks. Across the Right2Grow program area, CSOs utilized Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) tools to monitor government expenditure on WASH and Nutrition. Similar exercise in the Amhara region uncovers unspent WASH funds. Their findings led to the reallocation of these resources toward rehabilitating local water systems, demonstrating the tangible impact of CSO-led monitoring on service delivery.

Community engagement was further strengthened through Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) interface meetings, where CSOs facilitated direct dialogue between community members and service providers. These platforms created opportunities to address critical service delivery gaps, such as absentee health workers and frequent medicine stockouts, leading to more accountable and responsive local systems.

Progress toward key indicators reflects this growing influence. There has been an increase in the number of CSOs actively participating in policy platforms and technical working groups. Furthermore, local governments have begun to respond constructively to action plans submitted by CSOs, resulting in enhanced budget transparency and improved public service outcomes. These developments point to a meaningful shift in the role of CSOs from peripheral actors to central contributors in shaping inclusive and effective local governance.

These efforts led to increased CSO participation in policy forums and technical working groups, along with greater responsiveness from local governments to action plans and budget proposals grounded in community feedback. As detailed in Annex 2 of this endline evaluation report, the Right2Grow Ethiopia program showed strong performance in advancing civil society engagement, advocacy capacity, and influence across governance and policy platforms from 2021 to 2025. For example, under Indicator Right2Grow.OC.2.1, CSOs successfully created space for their demands 198 times, nearly reaching the target of 231. The program also fully met its advocacy initiative targets, with CSOs conducting four advocacy campaigns at national and international levels, as per Right2Grow.OC.2.2 and SCS041.

CSO involvement in budgeting processes proved to be highly impactful. According to the indicator ET.IO. C.1, CSOs participated in and influenced government budgeting processes 45 times, successfully meeting the program target. The initiative also achieved its objective of implementing four integrated nutrition and WASH advocacy campaigns (ET.IO. C.4). Although engagements in nutrition and WASH platforms fell slightly short of

the target (198 engagements compared to the planned 231 under ET.IO. C.3), the program's overall reach remained substantial.

Capacity strengthening emerged as a key area of success. A total of 168 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and CSOs received training in budget advocacy (ET.OP.3.1), and seven CSOs strengthened their lobbying and advocacy capacities (Right2Grow.IO.D.1), with both indicators meeting their respective targets.

These efforts led to significant shifts in government budget allocations for nutrition. For example, CSOs in Cheha District (Central Ethiopia), Habro and Bedeno Districts (Oromia), and Aneded District (Amhara Region) successfully influenced local authorities to allocate over ETB 500,000 toward nutrition coordination activities. Similarly, Shashogo District made a landmark move by allocating ETB 2 million for the implementation of the Seqota Declaration for the first time.

Moreover, the program prioritized inclusive advocacy by supporting platforms that represent the rights and interests of vulnerable groups and women. Indicator ET.OP.4.1 records 77 instances of such support, fully achieving the target. Overall, these results highlight a strong contribution to empowering civil society in governance, budgeting, and advocacy, ultimately advancing improved WASH and nutrition outcomes.

b. Evidence Gap Map and results of Outcome Mapping exercise at the country level

The program achieved significant and measurable outcomes under Outcome 2, which focuses on CSO engagement. Evidence generated during the evidence gap mapping exercise further validated the program's notable contributions toward the intended outcome areas. The advocacy capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) was meaningfully strengthened through targeted interventions. Key tools such as the Budget and Expenditure Monitoring Tool (BMET), policy dialogue frameworks, and formal mechanisms for CSO representation in planning processes were introduced. These tools enabled CSOs to participate more effectively in policy discussions, open new advocacy channels, and elevate community voices.

The capacity development of the CSOs has enabled them to engage in government budget monitoring and expenditure for the first time, advocating for better budget allocation and the program report and our endline evaluation confirmed that targeted districts were able to influence the budget planning and allocation for nutrition coordination. This initiative has been instrumental in strengthening the CSO's ability to influence local governance. In addition, the CSO played a pivotal role in supported the regional health bureau in the Amhara region to organize a TV panel discussion. This discussion addressed the barriers preventing active participation of the private sector in improving nutrition and WASH services at the local level. For the first time, the issue was publicly debated and brought to the forefront. Furthermore, the Nutrition Leadership Training provided to district leaders resulted in the district Administrators giving directives to their cabinet members to incorporate nutrition and WASH concerns into their monitoring and supervision checklists, with regular reporting expected thereafter.

A major achievement stemming from national advocacy efforts was the establishment of the ECSC-SUN Regional Support Platform in Central Ethiopia a newly formed region following the division of the former Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). This platform now serves as a coordination hub for multi-stakeholder advocacy on WASH and nutrition in the region. Furthermore, due to sustained CSO influence, several local governments have begun institutionalizing Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) as a core strategy within their nutrition programming signaling a long-term structural shift in how community input is incorporated into decision-making.

The CSOs have significantly strengthened their advocacy capacity and established a strong presence across key national government-led platforms, enabling them to effectively influence policy decisions on WASH and Nutrition. Their active engagement includes participation in National Nutrition Coordination Bodies. At the international level, CSOs have proactively engaged in major global advocacy forums. Notably, they contributed to the 14th Best Practice Forum (BPF) of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) in June 2024, and made impactful interventions during the Gender Is My Advocacy Campaign (GIMAC) at the African Union (AU) 2024 Heads of State Pre-Summit held on February 14, 2024, at the Inter Luxury Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership, in collaboration with the Nutrition and WASH forums under CCRDA, has issued a powerful call to action urging immediate and decisive steps. These include the establishment of Food

Systems and Nutrition (FSN) Councils at all levels, the formal legalization and empowerment of WASH Committees (WASHCOs), and the strategic alignment of Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) programs to improve coordination, resource allocation, and impact.

c. Findings from the Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) survey and Linking & Learning survey conducted by Right2Grow team.

The Right2Grow program has significantly enhanced the capacity and effectiveness of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Ethiopia by fostering a culture of intentional learning, adaptive management, and collaborative knowledge sharing. Drawing on endline data from the Linking & Learning (L&L) survey and Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) assessment, this report highlights how CSOs evolved from passive implementers into proactive agents of change, able to influence policy, refine strategies, and institutionalize learning practices beyond the program's duration. For example, training needs under Outcome 1 have decreased across all topics and countries, reflecting the cumulative impact of targeted capacity-strengthening efforts. In Ethiopia, this trend was evident through both quantitative and qualitative feedback. According to the assessment, 50% of Ethiopian respondents still reported a high need for training in inclusive and gender-sensitive community-led development, while 33% indicated a moderate need and 17% identified as expert providers. Similar patterns were observed in qualitative and participatory data collection, where 50% expressed a high need and 33% a moderate need, highlighting areas where capacity has grown but continued support remains essential. Participants from Ethiopia described a diverse range of training sessions and learning experiences that equipped them to contribute effectively to Outcome 1: Communities demand and invest in basic social services and adopt good nutrition and WASH practices, jointly addressing barriers with private sector partners. MCD workshops, held nationally and regionally, were frequently cited for their emphasis on peer learning and collaborative problem-solving. Respondents highlighted their active participation in community mobilization and engagement trainings, which focused on gender dynamics, social inclusion, and the empowerment of women and marginalized groups. These sessions deepened their understanding of local power structures, enhanced facilitation and communication skills, and strengthened their confidence to engage with diverse stakeholders, including private sector actors.

Ethiopian participants also emphasized the transformative impact of participatory governance and advocacy approaches, particularly through Citizen Voice and Action (CVA). CVA empowered them to amplify community voices, foster dialogue between citizens and duty bearers, and promote accountability in nutrition and WASH service delivery. Complementary trainings on Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET), policy advocacy, and the Bridge4Voices approach further equipped them with practical tools for influencing public financial processes and engaging communities through participatory communication. While Right2Grow delivered a broad portfolio of impactful trainings, many Ethiopian respondents also credited earlier capacity development initiatives from partners such as UNICEF, WFP, ACF, and Wageningen University. These foundational experiences were often complementary to what Right2Grow reinforced through its MCD component. For some, Right2Grow marked their first exposure to structured, inclusive learning, and they described it as a turning point in their professional development. Others with prior experience in health or nutrition noted that the programme significantly enhanced their ability to lead and facilitate community-based, rights-focused development.

Learning Culture and Strategic Adaptation

All eight Ethiopian respondents (100%) reported improved understanding of learning processes, with learning now integrated into planning, implementation, and review cycles. CSOs used structured learning sessions to identify gaps and adjust strategies. One organization redesigned its community mobilization approach to strengthen feedback loops and inclusivity. Some said that *"After a learning review, we adjusted our advocacy strategy to focus more on BMET, HDPN, and multisectoral collaboration."*

Outcome Harvesting was widely applied to trace how change occurred, reinforcing the program's commitment to reflective practice and adaptive management.

Documentation as a Driver of Change

Documenting learning questions proved especially effective, with 87.5% of respondents reporting improved implementation quality. Ethiopia's focus on community mobilization and CVA led to strategic shifts, such as relocating CVA taskforces from woreda to kebele levels to enhance community ownership. Respondents stated that, *"In the learning question we reflected on the CVA TF establishment... we changed our strategy."*

Teams also documented good practices, challenges, and recommendations from broader activities. These insights were used to refine implementation and scale successful strategies. *“The documents helped as a reference and to scale up the strategies.” “Following the R2G program, the theme (learning theme agreed upon by consortium partners) has a dedicated focal point, budget, and plan to formally learn from R2G activities implementation challenges and linking of recommendations.”*

Sharing and Cross-Country Learning

Learning Week (one week of critical reflection and programme adaptation after midterm review with 80 participants from the 6 countries) emerged as a key milestone, enabling Ethiopian CSOs to exchange experiences with peers from Uganda and Bangladesh. This cross-country engagement led to the adoption of new facilitation techniques and community feedback tools. 75% of respondents agreed that learning sharing increased over time. In-person gatherings were consistently preferred over virtual platforms, reinforcing the value of relational learning. *“The R2G program learning added the exchange of skills and experiences among partners and the ability to motivate each other.”*

Training and Capacity Development

Training uptake in Ethiopia was notably strong, with 95% of CSO respondents reporting that the MCD activities implemented under the Right2Grow programme either met expectations or led to improved skills. Satisfaction was particularly high for in-person formats and collaborative learning sessions. However, 5% of respondents indicated that their skills remained the same, suggesting a small gap in perceived impact. While overall engagement was high, further support may be needed to ensure consistent application of tools and accurate sequencing of the learning cycle across all participating organizations. *“I enjoyed very much with the training, and the approach since it follows learning by doing and learning together from one another, even across countries.”* “Skill-based training on L&L would add more to our future performance.”

Under the MCD survey, training needs in community mobilization dropped from 39% to 29%, and BMET-related needs fell from 54% to 29%. CSOs used these tools to influence local planning and resource allocation in nutrition and WASH. *“...we engaged highly on budget advocacy areas... Right2Grow gave many practical and technical trainings such as leadership, CVA, DHIS2 etc...”*

Organizational Strengthening and Support

All respondents reported enhanced organizational capacity, including stronger strategic alignment, improved monitoring systems, and better staff development. CSOs demonstrated increased stakeholder engagement, coalition-building, and learning adaptability. While 83% supported inclusive decision-making, some uncertainty remained around internal governance and sustainability. *“...the capacity building tasks for stakeholders, CVA tools in the community, and related trainings and review meetings brought significant results in our intervention areas...”*

The result chart illustrates a strong positive shift in the advocacy capacity of partner organizations in Ethiopia. A significant majority, 67% of respondents, reported that their ability to engage in policy advocacy and influence decision-making had strongly improved, while the remaining 33% indicated a moderate improvement. Notably, no respondents reported a lack of improvement, underscoring the effectiveness of the Right2Grow programme’s capacity-strengthening efforts in Ethiopia. These results suggest that targeted trainings, participatory governance tools like Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), and strategic engagement with stakeholders have meaningfully enhanced the confidence and competence of Ethiopian partners to advocate for policy change and hold duty bearers accountable. Similarly, 100% of respondents reported either moderate or strong improvement in their CSOs’ ability to educate communities about democracy, rights, and responsibilities because of the Right2Grow programme. This unanimous response underscores the programme’s significant impact on strengthening the educational role of Ethiopian civil society organizations. Through targeted trainings, social accountability tools like BMET and CVA, and inclusive learning initiatives, Ethiopian CSOs have become more effective in raising awareness around governance, rights, and citizen participation.

Sustainability and Advocacy Impact

92% of respondents stated that MCD activities met or exceeded expectations, and the majority agreed that MCD activities were well aligned with their needs and local realities or addressed most of the key priorities. CSOs

expressed confidence in retaining technical knowledge and continuing to apply tools such as BMET, CVA, and Bridge4Voices, which are now embedded in both organizational and government systems. However, 33% expressed low confidence in maintaining funding post-program.

CSOs played key roles in establishing nutrition councils, influencing decentralized budgeting, and co-developing joint action plans with government partners.

“The added values I got are the way to formulate, implement, follow, document, and disseminate learning questions.”

Learning Summary

The Right2Grow program in Ethiopia demonstrated that intentional learning can transform CSO practices by embedding reflection into strategy, advocacy, and program design. Documenting learning questions and activity insights led to concrete improvements, such as restructuring CVA taskforces to strengthen community ownership. In-person, skill-based training on how to document lessons learned from programme implementation significantly boosted capacity, though refresher sessions are needed to deepen understanding of the learning cycle. While satisfaction with tools was high, limited awareness hindered broader uptake, highlighting the need for better communication. Informal peer learning, through exchanges like Learning Week, proved essential for fostering collaboration, innovation, and shared vision across countries. Support from the Linking & Learning team was appreciated but described as more operational than strategic. One organization developed an internal manual to guide new staff and partners, ensuring continuity.

d. Stories of change on the CSO level collected through data collection.

The Right2Grow Ethiopia programme is driving systemic change by significantly enhancing the capacity and engagement of CSOs in WASH and nutrition advocacy. For the first time, 25 CSOs developed comprehensive advocacy and lobbying agendas, outlining their key priorities, timelines, and core messages focused on the most critical WASH and nutrition issues. Interviews with CSOs and CSO networks confirmed that the programme has effectively strengthened their advocacy capacity. Through targeted tools and training, CSOs have gained enhanced knowledge, confidence, and skills.

A clear shift in approach is evident in several woredas where CSO-led Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) initiatives have started influencing decision-makers across various sectors. These efforts have led to increased budget allocations for nutrition activities aligned with the Seqota Declaration, signaling progress toward more coordinated, government-led investment in child nutrition. While more documentation is needed to capture the full scope of this change, early field insights suggest strong momentum in these advocacy efforts.

The CSOs' advocacy for a multisectoral approach to WASH and nutrition has driven a groundbreaking shift, leading to the active participation of the private sector in district-level Multi-Sectoral Coordination Platforms for the first time. This milestone is particularly evident in Right2Grow-targeted districts such as Bedeno and Girawa, where private sector stakeholders, after undergoing capacity-building training, have emerged as influential contributors to nutrition and WASH initiatives. This development marks a major step in integrating the private sector into regional development efforts.

An interview with the East Hararge Zone health office underscores the significance of this shift. The interviewee highlighted the transformative change, stating:

“...before, we never considered the private sector as key partners in multisectoral coordination, and neither were CSOs. But now, there's been a shift, the coordination platform has recognized and integrated the critical roles of both CSOs and private sector actors. We are seeing benefits in terms of resources, expertise, and collaboration, as the space for their participation has expanded...”

This shift represents a pivotal step forward in creating more inclusive and effective platforms for tackling nutrition and WASH challenges at the district level.

Furthermore, Right2Grow has reactivated and supported key national and sub-national platforms focused on WASH and nutrition, both technically and financially. This support has revitalized these platforms, enabling them to act more strategically and collaboratively. A prime example of this is the partnership with CCRDA's WASH and

Nutrition forums, which successfully issued a joint call to action for improved services. As one forum member noted,

“...the programme reactivated the WASH and Nutrition forums. It brought these platforms together where they previously worked in silos, emphasizing the integration of WASH and Nutrition in tackling malnutrition in the country...”

Through such efforts, Right2Grow is empowering civil society while promoting a more integrated, cross-sectoral approach to addressing malnutrition in Ethiopia.

The CSOs have also played a pivotal role in driving coordination among key stakeholders, including government bodies and NGOs, to strengthen WASH and nutrition initiatives. In the Oromia Region, CSOs influenced the regional president's office to issue a circular directing Zonal and Woreda Administration offices to lead nutrition multi-sectoral coordination bodies at their respective levels. This action has significantly bolstered the regional response to nutrition issues through stronger leadership and accountability.

Similarly, the CSOs have successfully engaged NGOs operating in the Right2Grow regions, encouraging them to adopt nutrition-sensitive programming. Following an advocacy workshop organized by Right2Grow, these NGOs have started integrating nutrition-sensitive practices into their food and agriculture programs, fostering more sustainable solutions to nutrition challenges in the region.

The CSOs' representation of community voices on WASH and nutrition issues at national and global platforms has significantly increased. In 2024, Action Against Hunger presented an analysis of the five-year public budget (2019/20 to 2023/2024) for the Amhara region, as well as the Derra and Libokemekem districts, to regional and zonal officials during a high-level workshop. This marked a significant milestone in advocating for local priorities at the policy level.

In June 2024, the local CSO MCMDO represented Ethiopia's Right2Grow partnership at the regional level in Arusha, Tanzania, for the first time, sharing best practices and amplifying community voices. In the same month, ACF-Ethiopia presented and published the best practices of the Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership at the 14th East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Ministers Conference (ECSA-HMC) in Arusha. These milestones underscore the growing influence of CSOs in shaping regional and global conversations about nutrition and WASH.

Despite these significant strides, challenges remain. Key gaps still undermine the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of CSO advocacy efforts. A primary limitation is the absence of a clearly defined role for CSOs within national platforms, which hampers their ability to drive systemic change and contribute meaningfully at the national level. The Learning and Leadership (L&L) survey highlights a clear preference among the Ethiopian team for in-person channels of knowledge exchange over online platforms. This preference has shaped their strategic investment in face-to-face formats such as annual reflection meetings, in-person learning review sessions, and collaborative workshops. These approaches have proven effective in fostering deeper engagement, contextual relevance, and inclusive participation, particularly among community-based actors and local stakeholders. While platforms like GROW and SharePoint were available for digital collaboration, connectivity challenges limited their accessibility and use for dynamic learning. As a result, Ethiopia prioritized formats that better aligned with local realities, ensuring that knowledge sharing remained active and meaningful. This adaptive strategy not only reflects responsiveness to infrastructural constraints but also reinforces the importance of tailoring learning modalities to participant needs. Moving forward, addressing digital access barriers while continuing to strengthen in-person engagement could enhance both national and cross-country collaboration within the Right2Grow consortium.

e. Unintended/unexpected (negative) effects

- Administrative Restructuring in Oromia and SNNPR, the splitting of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), and district-level restructuring in Oromia created confusion around roles and responsibilities. This led to delays in re-establishing coordination platforms and required re-engagement with newly formed institutions. This restructuring was unforeseen and disrupted program delivery and stakeholder alignment.
- Civic Space Volatility, increasing legal restrictions and administrative hurdles limited CSO operations, especially those involved in advocacy and rights-based work. Some organizations faced suspensions or

threats of closure, affecting their ability to participate in program activities. This constrained CSO engagement and reduced the effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

- High Government Staff Turnover, frequent turnover among government personnel at district and regional levels disrupted continuity and institutional learning. Newly appointed staff often lacked orientation on Right2Grow processes, requiring repeated engagement and slowing program momentum. This was not anticipated and weakened follow-up on commitments, affecting sustainability and coordination.
- Limited National-Level Data Availability: assumptions about the availability of reliable national data for advocacy were only partially valid. Data gaps hindered policy influence and made it difficult to scale local evidence to national platforms. This affected the effectiveness of national-level advocacy and evidence-based planning.
- Shift Toward Emergency Response in Conflict Areas, in regions affected by conflict, government and community priorities shifted toward life-saving interventions, diluting long-term development efforts in WASH and nutrition. This reprioritization was unplanned and reduced focus on sustainability and systemic change.
- Uneven Uptake of Learning Tools, despite high satisfaction among users, many CSOs were unaware of available learning tools or lacked clarity on how to apply them. Only 25% could accurately sequence the learning cycle. This slowed the institutionalization of Linking & Learning practices and reduced consistency.

2. Reflections on the contribution of programme strategies to achieving changes.

Contribution Story Hotspot - 2: Empowering CSOs to Champion WASH and Nutrition Advocacy

Under the Right2Grow program, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have emerged as powerful agents of change in advancing WASH and nutrition advocacy. Once limited in their influence and access to policy spaces, CSOs have now become vocal champions for marginalized and underserved communities, thanks to sustained and strategic capacity-building efforts. By enhancing their advocacy skills, technical competencies, and engagement strategies, these organizations have gained legitimacy and earned a seat at the table where critical decisions about public service delivery and resource allocation are made.

The progress made in this hotspot area was supported by an enabling environment that includes Ethiopia's CSO Proclamation, which encourages rights-based advocacy, and robust coordination mechanisms such as ECSC-SUN and the CCRDA WASH and Nutrition Forum. A national shift toward localization further strengthened the role of CSOs, creating opportunities for grassroots voices to shape local development priorities. Through targeted program interventions, including Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) capacity assessments, training on policy engagement, Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), and Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET), and Learning and Linking the CSOs were equipped to engage in governance processes with confidence and competence.

The program also provided technical and financial support for CSOs to participate in national and global advocacy platforms, while encouraging their leadership in technical working groups and advisory forums. These actions have empowered CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to advocate more effectively for equitable access to quality WASH and nutrition services. They now regularly engage with local governments to influence planning, budgeting, and implementation processes, ensuring that community priorities are addressed.

Notable achievements include CSOs' active and effective participation in both government- and CSO-led coordination platforms, where they have consistently pushed for more inclusive and accountable policies. Through improved lobbying skills and collective action, partner organizations have significantly shaped WASH and nutrition agendas at multiple levels. Tools such as BMET and CVA have become instrumental in holding duty-bearers accountable and ensuring transparency in budget use. One major milestone was the development of a joint advocacy call to action that contributed to the establishment of the Food System and Nutrition (FSN) Council, a critical step toward institutionalizing multi-sectoral nutrition governance.

This story from Hotspot 2 illustrates how empowering CSOs through structured support and systemic engagement can lead to tangible policy and service delivery outcomes, ultimately improving lives and strengthening accountability in the WASH and nutrition sectors.

3.2.1.3 National governments and decentralised entities

1. Sharing of and reflections on achievements to date

f. Progress on output and outcome indicators (link to Annex 2)

Progress on outcome -3 National government and decentralised entities mainstream an integrated and multi-sectoral approach: the Right2Grow Ethiopia programme has made significant strides in promoting and institutionalizing a multi-sectoral approach to combat undernutrition. Since the baseline, where no relevant structures or policies were in place, the programme has successfully supported the implementation of key laws and policies that contribute to sustainable and inclusive development, such as the Food and Nutrition Policy.

Progress toward the established indicators is evident, with a growing number of joint sectoral plans developed across target woredas. Additionally, coordination and integration of service delivery across sectors have improved, laying the foundation for more effective and sustainable solutions to undernutrition.

A major achievement has been the transformation of decision-making practices across sectors. By generating and sharing evidence on implementation gaps, the programme informed and influenced 26 platforms, including government sectors, community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs), to adopt more evidence-driven approaches.

Progress on Intermediate Outcomes E and F: Integrated Approaches to Address Undernutrition

In support of stronger coordination, the programme facilitated the establishment or revitalization of 25 Nutrition Coordination Bodies at the woreda, zonal, and regional levels. These structures have been vital in ensuring integrated planning and implementation across sectors. The Right2Grow partnership also played a critical role in directly supporting the setup and strengthening of 25 Nutrition Councils and Agencies across various administrative levels, contributing to more robust governance mechanisms for nutrition.

To promote learning and collaboration, the programme organized 24 events, including workshops, learning exchanges, and forums. These platforms served as essential spaces for stakeholders to share knowledge, reflect on challenges, and identify solutions for improved multi-sectoral coordination.

Collectively, these achievements reflect a strong foundation for sustained, systemic change in how undernutrition is addressed in Ethiopia, emphasizing integration, evidence-based decision-making, and inclusive governance.

Government and development partners have successfully adopted more integrated and inclusive strategies to combat undernutrition. A key achievement has been the strengthened coordination between the health, agriculture, education, and WASH sectors, facilitating a more holistic approach to addressing the issue.

At both local and national levels, mechanisms for joint planning and monitoring have been institutionalized, ensuring sustained collaboration. For instance, in Habro woreda, a Nutrition Task Force was established, bringing together representatives from various sectors and civil society organizations (CSOs). This task force meets quarterly to align strategies and review progress. Similarly, the launch of the Food System and Nutrition (FSN) Council at the national level has created a vital platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue, enabling more coordinated action across sectors.

g. Evidence Gap Map and results of Outcome Mapping exercise at the country level

The programme's multisectoral approach further reinforced its impact. Working across sectors such as health, agriculture, and water, and with ministries including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Water and Energy, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Right2Grow supported strategic reforms. These included the establishment of the Food and Nutrition Council in Central Ethiopia and progress toward the endorsement of similar councils in Oromia and Amhara regions. The programme also contributed to the implementation of the Seqota Declaration and One WASH National Programme, strengthening national coordination, planning, and financing systems to ensure long-term progress in WASH and nutrition governance.

Capacity strengthening for technical experts in the health sector on the effective implementation and use of the Resource Tracking and Partnership Management (RTPM) system, as well as the Nutrition Information System for Ethiopia (UNISE), has improved technical capabilities and enhanced transparency in resource management across Right2Grow's operational woredas. These platforms, introduced by the Ministry of Health, serve as multi-

sectoral nutrition scorecards that capture, manage, and monitor nutrition data at all administrative levels. The systems have streamlined the tracking of funding sources, monitoring of expenditures, and assessment of outcomes, thereby strengthening accountability at the local level.

In particular, the districts of Girawa and Bedeno have successfully adopted the web-based UNISE and RTPM systems following capacity-building training, web access, and coaching on data entry, analysis, and interpretation. An interview with the Zone Health Office, East Harerege, Oromia Region, confirmed that this support has significantly improved the efficiency of resource tracking and nutrition data management, enhancing both the effectiveness of the systems and the transparency of nutrition-related activities.

For the first time, public budget hearings were held in nine woredas, providing a platform for citizens to engage directly in discussions on how public funds are allocated and spent in their communities. These forums have empowered citizens and CSOs to actively participate in local governance. The Right2Grow partnership has strategically used these hearings to advocate for increased budget allocations for WASH and nutrition, drawing on evidence generated through Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) exercises.

As a result, targeted districts have shown concrete commitments. In Right2Grow, districts have pledged to allocate 1% of their budgets specifically for nutrition and WASH coordination. On average, an additional 500,000 ETB per woreda has been allocated to support WASH and nutrition services, demonstrating a growing commitment to prioritizing child well-being and integrated service delivery.

The program has made significant strides in influencing policy and addressing strategy gaps. Through strong advocacy, the CSOs successfully pushed for the endorsement of the Food System and Nutrition Council regulation, a major achievement for the Central Ethiopia Region. This regulation, under number 7/2024, was officially endorsed by the regional cabinet for the first time. Additionally, the Central Ethiopia Region Bureau of Finance sent an official letter to the regional Food and Nutrition Strategy Implementing Bureau, requesting the creation of a dedicated budget code for nutrition. This initiative aims to secure sustained financial resources for nutrition programs. Establishing a nutrition-specific budget code is a crucial step toward enhancing transparency, accountability, and focused investments in nutrition initiatives.

h. Stories of change on outcome 3, government coordination collected endline evaluation evidence.

The endline evaluation data, collected through various sources, reveal notable stories of change at the government level, underscoring significant strides in strengthening the multi-sectoral approach to nutrition and WASH services. These changes are reflected in improved decision-making, budget allocations, and policy implementations, all of which have contributed to addressing the gaps in undernutrition strategies. The process has been shaped by the active participation of CSOs and private sector actors, proving the power of collaboration in tackling undernutrition.

A remarkable shift toward a multi-sectoral approach has been observed, integrating nutrition and WASH into the core decision-making processes, action plans, and budgetary frameworks of both local and national governments. This transformation reflects a deeper commitment to improving nutrition outcomes and creating a more sustainable and inclusive system. Key to this success has been the emphasis on capacity building, advocating for increased investments, and strengthening data management systems, all contributing to enhanced coordination and oversight.

Across multiple districts, a growing commitment to addressing undernutrition through integrated, multi-sectoral approaches has been evident. Decision-makers have increasingly embraced responsibility for the delivery of nutrition and WASH services, fostering a culture of accountability, financial commitment, and active engagement. This approach has created an environment where stakeholders from government bodies to community leaders are actively involved in the planning, budgeting, and monitoring of these essential services. The interview with the community group revealed a notable transformation in the local government's approach to addressing gaps in nutrition policy and strategy. The government has become more proactive in listening to and acting on advocacy from both the community and CSOs. As highlighted by the community in Habro district, this shift is significant:

"...what stands out is that the local government has demonstrated its commitment not only through words but by acting. They have implemented our recommendations, filled critical gaps, and worked alongside us to develop joint action plans. These changes signify real progress in government accountability and responsiveness..."

The program has activated the functionality of the multisectoral food and nutrition council and coordination mechanisms. The council now convenes quarterly, with technical committee meetings held monthly, and additional ad-hoc meetings scheduled as necessary. This regular engagement ensures that all sectors are aligned in their efforts and that there is continuous progress monitoring. The structured meeting schedule has not only enhanced coordination but has also increased transparency and collaboration among the 13 sectors involved in the food and nutrition agenda.

In addition to better coordination, decision-makers have shifted their perspectives on the importance of nutrition and WASH services. These services are now viewed as direct responsibilities, with an increased focus on budget allocation, supportive supervision, and active participation in the review of performance. This comprehensive approach has led to tangible outcomes, as decision-makers have taken a hands-on role in overseeing implementation and ensuring the quality of nutrition interventions. Alongside financial investments, the active involvement of technical committees in planning and monitoring has significantly improved the overall effectiveness of the programs.

In Cheha district, the local administration has set an example by fully embracing the ownership of nutrition activities. From the initial planning and budgeting to ongoing follow-up and supervision, the district council has played an integral role in ensuring that nutrition programs are not only implemented effectively but also continuously assessed for accountability and responsiveness. This shift has established a robust system for monitoring and evaluating nutrition efforts at the district level.

A key indicator of this increased commitment is the significant rise in the district's nutrition budget. The district's budget standing committee now prioritizes nutrition, ensuring that funds are allocated properly and monitored for impact. As a member of the committee highlighted:

"...as a member of the district budget standing committee, I am ensuring that the nutrition budget is critically monitored, and planned activities are implemented for the intended purpose with the required quality. Overall, I can say that Cheha district has embedded a mechanism for nutrition planning, budgeting, and monitoring..."

In a similar vein, significant steps have been taken in the Oromia region, where the president's office issued a circular directing Zonal and District Administration offices to lead the nutrition multi-sectoral coordination bodies at their respective levels. Meanwhile, in Central Ethiopia, a circular was also passed, mandating District and Zonal Administrations to integrate nutrition into their supervision and monitoring processes. These actions reflect a concerted effort to strengthen coordination and ensure nutrition is prioritized across all levels of governance.

At the regional level, a marked increase in political willingness has also contributed to the success of these initiatives. Local governments, alongside community leaders, have actively supported undernutrition interventions, creating an enabling environment for long-term sustainable change. This broad-based political will is pivotal in driving the agenda for nutrition and WASH, ensuring that these issues remain central to policy discussions.

These cumulative changes in decision-making ranging from enhanced coordination and budget allocations to the active participation of community leaders demonstrate a transformative shift in how undernutrition is being addressed in Ethiopia. The multi-sectoral approach has fostered more integrated, accountable, and sustainable solutions, ensuring that nutrition and WASH services are prioritized at every level of government and community engagement.

i. Unintended/unexpected (negative) effects

2. Reflections on the contribution of programme strategies to achieving changes.

The Right2Grow Ethiopia programme strategies have made significant strides in promoting and institutionalizing a multi-sectoral approach to combat undernutrition, demonstrating the powerful impact of its strategies on achieving desired outcomes. This approach has led to substantial shifts in decision-making, policy development, and budget allocations across both local and national levels. Through targeted advocacy and capacity building, the programme has influenced 26 platforms, including government sectors, civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and faith-based organizations (FBOs), to adopt evidence-driven approaches in tackling undernutrition.

A core achievement has been the establishment and revitalization of Nutrition Coordination Bodies at various administrative levels (district, zonal, and regional). These bodies have played a crucial role in enhancing

integration and coordination across different sectors. The programme further facilitated learning and collaboration among stakeholders through workshops and exchanges, strengthening multi-sectoral partnerships and improving service delivery in nutrition and WASH.

The shift toward a more integrated governance model has been driven by the systematic use of evidence in decision-making. Tools like the Resource Tracking and Partnership Management (RTPM) and Nutrition Information System for Ethiopia (UNISE) have improved resource management, transparency, and efficiency, particularly in districts such as Girawa and Bedeno, where these systems have been successfully adopted.

The programme's multi-sectoral approach has also had a lasting impact through strategic partnerships with key ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Water and Energy, and the Ministry of Agriculture. A major milestone was the establishment of the Food and Nutrition Council in Central Ethiopia, which aligned national nutrition goals with regional strategies. Additionally, the programme contributed to advancing the Seqota Declaration and the One WASH National Programme, which strengthened national coordination, planning, and financing systems for nutrition and WASH governance.

On the local level, the programme has been instrumental in transforming government practices related to nutrition and WASH. In districts like Cheha, the local administration has fully embraced the ownership of nutrition activities from planning and budgeting to follow-up and supervision. This commitment has led to increased budget allocations and enhanced oversight, ensuring that the allocated funds are used effectively.

A key achievement has been the regular convening of the Multi-sectoral Food and Nutrition Council, which now meets quarterly, along with monthly technical committee meetings and ad-hoc sessions as needed. This level of engagement has fostered a culture of accountability and transparency, ensuring alignment across sectors in the pursuit of shared nutrition and WASH goals.

Community involvement has been central to these changes, with local leaders and CSOs actively participating in advocacy efforts and the implementation of recommendations. As a community member from Habro district observed,

“...the local government has not just talked about change but has acted on our recommendations, addressing critical gaps and collaborating with us on joint action plans. This has led to tangible improvements in government accountability...”

Political will and commitment to undernutrition interventions have also increased significantly. In regions like Oromia and Central Ethiopia, circulars were issued directing Zonal and District Administration offices to lead multi-sectoral nutrition coordination bodies and integrate nutrition into their supervision and monitoring processes. These actions reflect strong political support for nutrition and underscore the alignment of local governance with national priorities.

The regional endorsement of the Food System and Nutrition Council regulation in Central Ethiopia and the advocacy for a dedicated nutrition budget code further demonstrate the growing political commitment to addressing undernutrition. This collective political will has fostered an enabling environment for long-term, sustainable change.

The programme has empowered citizens and CSOs by organizing public budget hearings in nine woredas, allowing communities to engage directly in discussions on public fund allocation. These forums have not only raised awareness but also encouraged the local population to take a more active role in governance and advocate for increased budget allocations for nutrition and WASH services.

Through advocacy and evidence from the BMET exercises, CSOs have successfully pushed for increased budget allocations for nutrition and WASH services. In response, districts like Cheha have committed to allocating 1% of their budgets specifically for these areas, reflecting a growing commitment to child well-being and integrated service delivery.

The integration of multi-sectoral approaches has significantly strengthened governance and decision-making by creating platforms for alignment and coordination across sectors. The establishment of Nutrition Councils, regular technical meetings, and the growing political commitment have led to more effective planning, budgeting, and monitoring of nutrition and WASH services.

Overall, these changes reflect a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance system, where stakeholders from government bodies to community leaders are actively involved in advancing nutrition outcomes. The active participation of citizens, CSOs, and the private sector has been key in driving a collaborative approach to addressing the complex issue of undernutrition, proving the strong contribution of the programme's strategies to achieving meaningful change.

3.2.1.4 Donors and international development organisations

1. **Sharing of and reflections on achievements to date**

j. **Progress on output and outcome indicators (link to Annex 2)**

Under Outcome 4, the Right2Grow Ethiopia programme has made meaningful progress in fostering collaboration and coordination among donors and international development actors around integrated WASH and nutrition programming within the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (HDN) framework. While the baseline reflected no prior engagement or integration in this area, the programme successfully advanced the degree of integration to a score of 4 out of the targeted 5, signaling strong momentum toward a more unified and multi-sectoral approach.

To promote dialogue and shared learning, the programme facilitated or participated in five key meetings that brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss best practices, lessons learned, and coordination strategies for effective WASH and nutrition implementation within the HDN context. These forums served as critical spaces for aligning priorities and enhancing joint action to address the root causes of undernutrition.

Additionally, three capacity-building workshops were conducted to strengthen stakeholders' understanding and application of HDN principles. These workshops helped to build a common language around integrated programming and equipped participants with practical tools for planning, implementing, and monitoring HDN-aligned interventions.

Together, these efforts reflect a growing commitment among development partners to move beyond siloed approaches and toward a more holistic, coordinated response to undernutrition in Ethiopia. Continued investment in integration and joint learning will be essential to fully realize the transformative potential of HDN programming.

k. **Evidence Gap Map and results of the Outcome Mapping exercise at the country level**

The Right2Grow programme has been instrumental in promoting the Nutrition-Centric Humanitarian-Development-Peace (NC-HDP) Nexus Approach in Ethiopia, driving forward a key shift in how nutrition, WASH, and humanitarian interventions are integrated within national and regional planning frameworks. Through strategic advocacy and collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Food Systems and Nutrition initiative, Right2Grow successfully brought together key stakeholders, including UN agencies, government ministries, and development partners, to establish the NC-HDP Technical Working Group.

As a result, Ethiopia now has its first-ever national guideline and roadmap for the NC-HDP Nexus, which has become a central document for operationalizing nutrition in humanitarian and development efforts. This marks a transformative change in how Ethiopia coordinates and delivers services in fragile, crisis-affected contexts, ensuring that nutrition is embedded within both development and humanitarian strategies.

A major milestone in this process occurred in 2023 when East Hararge Zone Administration established Ethiopia's first-ever NC-HDP-TN core team. This initiative, launched by the Ministry of Health, was a groundbreaking effort to integrate humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors to combat malnutrition and promote community resilience.

Building on this success, in June 2024, the approach was formally adopted in the 73rd East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Ministers Committee (ECSA-HMC) resolution, marking the first time the NC-HDP Nexus approach was officially recognized as a regional strategy for addressing malnutrition and humanitarian crises.

Right2Grow's strategic partnerships further amplified these gains, as ACF and MCMDO secured the first-ever funding for the NC-HDP-TN programme from the Swedish and Norwegian embassies. The three-year funding will support food security for 76,000 households and build resilient communities across 12 woredas, including two Right2Grow woredas. This achievement not only showcases the program's growing impact but also signals a significant move towards more integrated, sustainable solutions for nutrition and community resilience.

These milestones reflect the powerful contribution of Right2Grow's strategies in addressing the gaps in multi-sectoral coordination and driving evidence-based, systemic changes in Ethiopia's approach to malnutrition, humanitarian crises, and sustainable development.

I. Stories of change on the donor and NGO level collected through data collection.

Right2Grow has been working closely with key government ministries, especially the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ethiopia's Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), to bridge the gaps between the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace (HDP) sectors in nutrition and WASH across the country. Since 2023, Right2Grow has played a crucial role in supporting the development of the Nutrition-Centric Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Triple Nexus (NC-HDP TN) operational guide and implementation roadmap, led by the MOH and EDRMC.

The endline evaluation interview with civil society organizations (CSOs) highlighted that Right2Grow's support was instrumental in finalizing the roadmap and galvanizing various stakeholders to focus on HDPN (Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus) in nutrition programming. One interviewee noted:

"...the Right2Grow program support was pivotal in finalizing the national guideline and roadmap for the Nutrition-Centric HDPN. The program provided technical expertise and resources, bringing key actors together to promote the HDPN..."

Moreover, Right2Grow's country partners have enhanced their capacity to implement the HDPN approach, enabling them to secure additional funding for HDPN programming. For example, partners like ACF and MCMDO successfully obtained the first-ever funding for the NC-HDP TN program from the Swedish and Norwegian embassies.

Additionally, the partnership strategically leveraged advocacy platforms during the 2024 AU Summit and the N4G accountability workshop to promote the NC-HDP TN approach. These efforts are designed to improve nutrition outcomes through a more collaborative, coherent, and complementary approach to tackling the intertwined challenges across the HDP sectors.

2. Reflections on the contribution of programme strategies to achieving changes.

Right2Grow's strategic initiatives have played a crucial role in bridging gaps between the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace (HDP) sectors, particularly in nutrition and WASH programming in Ethiopia. A key aspect of this strategy has been the active collaboration with government ministries, especially the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ethiopia's Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), to design and implement the Nutrition-Centric Humanitarian, Development, and Peace Triple Nexus (NC-HDP TN) approach. This collaboration has been essential in creating a more integrated and holistic approach to addressing the country's nutrition challenges.

One of Right2Grow's significant contributions has been supporting the development of the NC-HDP TN operational guide and implementation roadmap, which has been ongoing since 2023. Right2Grow has played an instrumental role in the technical review of these documents, providing expert guidance and actively participating in technical working groups. Furthermore, the partnership provided financial support to finalize the materials, ensuring the successful convening of workshops and meetings that brought key stakeholders together, resulting in strong ownership and commitment from both government and non-governmental actors.

Right2Grow's advocacy efforts have also been vital in advancing the NC-HDP TN approach. During the 2024 African Union Summit, Right2Grow partners effectively utilized advocacy spaces at key events, including the AU pre-heads ministerial side event and the N4G accountability workshop. These advocacy efforts led to the institutionalization of the Triple Nexus approach, which was subsequently included in important resolutions, such as the 73rd East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Ministerial's Conference (ECSA-HMC) resolution. This contributed to program output 7, which focuses on the engagement of CSOs, government, and communities in national and subnational platforms for data sharing, peer learning, and adaptation.

The partnership's capacity-strengthening initiatives have also been instrumental in enhancing local actors' understanding and implementation of the NC-HDP TN approach. In 2024, Right2Grow organized multiple workshops to build capacity in networking, advocacy, and the principles of NC-HDP TN programming. These workshops significantly increased local actors' comprehension of the HDPN concept and improved their practical

skills in applying the approach. They also helped establish a shared understanding among stakeholders, facilitating the integration of the NC-HDP TN approach into local and regional programming.

The establishment of a Technical Working Group and the Nexus Accelerator Steering Group at the national level highlights Right2Grow's contributions in advancing the Triple Nexus program. These efforts support program output 9, which focuses on creating inclusive spaces for HDPN. By aiding in the development of the operational guide and implementation roadmap, Right2Grow has established a solid foundation for the long-term integration of the HDP approach across sectors. These materials were officially launched in July 2024, marking a significant step toward addressing Ethiopia's nutrition challenges in a more coordinated and efficient manner.

Right2Grow's networking and advocacy strategies, including consultations, panel discussions, and partnerships with organizations like CCRDA and ECSC-SUN, have been essential in gaining support from the government, donors, and other key stakeholders. These activities have played a pivotal role in promoting the idea of breaking down silos to build more resilient, integrated communities capable of addressing interconnected HDP challenges.

Furthermore, Right2Grow's capacity-strengthening efforts have enhanced its partners' ability to secure additional funding for HDPN programming, as demonstrated by ACF and MCMDO's success in securing funding. This aligns with program output 8, which focuses on lobbying donors to better align funding with programming needs.

In conclusion, Right2Grow's strategies, ranging from technical support and advocacy to capacity strengthening and networking, have significantly contributed to the successful development and implementation of the NC-HDP TN approach in Ethiopia. These efforts have resulted in the materialization of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) concept in WASH and nutrition programming, contributing to collective outcomes among international development actors. By fostering collaboration, coherence, and complementarity, these strategies have led to improved nutrition and development outcomes in Ethiopia.

3.2.2 Unintended (negative) effects on other stakeholders

The CVA program has brought about a significant transformation in schools across the Right2Grow-targeted districts. Many schools have adopted the CVA service improvement action plan, resulting in tangible improvements in school practices and environments. A key outcome has been the establishment and strengthening of school-based gardening initiatives and nutrition clubs. These efforts are playing a vital role in promoting nutrition education and instilling healthy habits in the younger generation, laying the foundation for long-term sustainability of nutrition knowledge and behavior.

This positive impact has also extended beyond the education sector. Local government institutions, including health centers, have embraced the CVA approach by initiating vegetable gardening within their compounds. This practice has been effectively implemented in most of the targeted health centers and integrated into the nutrition education delivered by health professionals.

An interview conducted with a health team member at the Habro District Health Center illustrates this shift toward institutionalized nutrition-focused gardening. The staff member shared:

"...as you can see, we have plenty of land in our compound, but we had never thought of using it to grow vegetables. Now, we have planted a variety of four to five different types, and we use the garden as a live demonstration during nutrition education sessions with service users, especially pregnant and lactating mothers..."

This example highlights how the integration of practical vegetable gardening into institutional routines enhances the effectiveness of nutrition education and demonstrates a growing commitment to sustainable, community-based nutrition practices. The program brought positive results to stakeholders but had unintended consequences.

While the Right2Grow program brought notable improvements in CSO capacity and community engagement, several unintended negative effects emerged that impacted other stakeholders. These effects were not anticipated during program design but became evident during implementation, particularly in fragile and transitioning contexts. These include:

- **Local Authorities Impact of Regional Restructuring**, the administrative restructuring in the Southern region disrupted coordination with local government offices, creating confusion around roles and responsibilities. Some authorities were unclear about their mandates under the new structure, which delayed decision-making and hindered program alignment. As a result, timely engagement with local stakeholders was affected, reducing responsiveness to community needs.
- **Community Members Reduced Access During Conflict and Insecurity**. Insecurity in certain implementation areas limited field visits and community mobilization efforts. Communities experienced interruptions in services and were less able to participate in planned activities. This weakened trust between partners and communities and disrupted continuity in engagement, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected zones.
- **Health Extension Workers Overburdened During Emergency Shifts**. In conflict-affected regions, frontline health workers were redirected to emergency response tasks, which reduced their availability for nutrition and WASH-related activities under Right2Grow. This shift diluted the focus on long-term development goals and placed additional strain on local service delivery systems.
- **National Platforms Missed Opportunities for CSO Representation**: CSOs lacked a clearly defined role in national coordination platforms for nutrition and WASH. Their absence reduced the visibility of community-level evidence in policy dialogues and weakened their systemic influence. This slowed progress on institutional reforms and limited the integration of grassroots perspectives into national decision-making.

3.2.3. Cross-cutting themes (gender, youth, climate)

The integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, persons with disabilities (PWD), youth, and climate is central to the Right2Grow program. These factors were considered in both target selection and the design of various program structures.

Inclusion of Persons with Disability (PWD): The program has successfully reached 6.6% of PWD, 23% of women, and 11% of youth across the 124 CVAs established, ensuring their voices played a key role in problem identification and decision-making. Moreover, the community service improvement action plan addresses the needs of PWD. As a result, WASH and nutrition services have been tailored to meet the needs of PWD. For example, washrooms constructed in health centers in Central Ethiopia have been designed to ensure accessibility for PWD.

Mainstreaming of Gender and Women's Participation: The program has significantly raised gender awareness among local government institutions and service providers, which is considered critical in structures like the Accountability Taskforce and the District Budget Standing Committee, dominated by men due to position-based structures. This increased awareness has enabled these bodies to more effectively address gender and women's issues within WASH and nutrition services. As a result, men are now demonstrating greater concern and collaborative action to address women's concerns in nutrition.

Moreover, capacity-strengthening training and awareness initiatives have empowered both men and women to equally advocate for nutrition-sensitive activities throughout the district. Interviews with service providers and local government institutions indicate that the program has positively shifted their perspectives on gender and women's issues, leading to more effective responses. One interviewee from Habro district shared how the program changed gender perspectives within the male-dominated local structures:

"...this program has helped improve our perspective on gender and women's issues. We were not very sensitive to these concerns before, but now we see things through a gender lens and are more focused on considering gender and women's issues in WASH and nutrition programs. For example, we make sure that women in the private sector are equally targeted by the program, and we encourage women to share their views during community meetings..."

Furthermore, the Right2Grow program guarantees 50% participation of women and girls in community meetings and gatherings by addressing gender barriers that hinder their involvement before organizing meetings and training sessions.

Youth Participation: The program has placed significant emphasis on the participation of youth. The CVA task force has enhanced awareness of inclusive approaches for youth, fostering proactive engagement from these groups. This inclusion has enabled youth in the targeted district to participate in the program's private sector engagement, providing WASH and Nutrition services.

Although the program did not have an independent gender-transformative programming toolkit specifically linked to its outcomes, the Right2Grow partners possess institutional gender capacity and guidelines that have significantly improved inclusion and the integration of cross-cutting issues into the program. These internal structures and frameworks have ensured that gender considerations are incorporated at every stage of the program, resulting in better inclusion of gender-sensitive practices and the promotion of equality within program activities. The partners' commitment to strengthening gender awareness and action has been crucial in enhancing the program's overall impact, even without a standalone gender-focused toolkit.

3.2.4 Impact

The program has had a positive and promising impact on children's nutritional health and growth, while also enhancing collaboration among decision-makers, leading to more effective outcomes.

Changes in Child Nutrition, Health, and Growth: The Right2Grow's integrated approach to improving WASH and nutrition services empowered communities to take ownership of their health and well-being, resulting in significant improvements in child nutrition and long-term resilience. These achievements are supported by evidence from endline evaluation findings, including community and stakeholders' consultation outcome harvesting, case studies, underscoring the program's success in addressing the underlying determinants of child malnutrition.

The program's holistic, community-driven approach led to tangible improvements in child nutrition and health outcomes. These include decreased open defecation through household latrine construction, improved sanitation due to awareness raising and Private sectors WASH service provisions, improved access to safe water and health due to community advocacy and increased joint investment in service improvements, and enhanced dietary diversity due to increased knowledge and practice on nutrition and household and school-based gardening, poultry, and dairy activities. Moreover, the involvement of the private sector contributed to improved access to nutrition and WASH-related products at affordable prices, further strengthening the community's ability to address their own needs.

The community's increased awareness and action have led to significant improvements in individual, household, and community practices related to sanitation and nutrition, ultimately contributing to positive changes in child nutrition, health, and growth. The endline evaluation consultations with the community revealed a clear shift in their knowledge and practices regarding sanitation and nutrition since the implementation of the Right2Grow program. Interviews with evaluation participants confirmed that before the program, WASH and nutrition were not primary concerns. Over time, they came to understand that these were crucial factors affecting their children's development. They are actively advocating for greater accountability, pushing for service improvements, and investing their resources to make meaningful changes. During community consultations, the program's impact on behavioral change was evident. One participant shared,

"...we were once unaware of our children's nutrition needs. Now, we are more aware and can easily spot malnourished children in the community. We advise families on the issue and how to prevent child undernutrition with simple solutions. We have seen significant progress in children under five; they have become stronger and healthier since we started feeding them properly. Thanks to the project, our knowledge and practices have greatly improved."

The enhanced household and community practices related to sanitation and nutrition have had a positive effect on the admission of children under five to nutrition feeding and treatment programs at the targeted health facilities. Although admission rate data is not readily available, interviews with health professionals across the program's targeted districts confirmed that the admission rate of children with undernutrition has been steadily decreasing since the implementation of the Right2Grow project.

Changes in decision makers' coordination and collaboration fighting undernutrition: The Right2Grow program has played a pivotal role in improving child nutrition outcomes in Ethiopia by strengthening the capacity

of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to influence decision makers through strong advocacy. Through intentional learning, adaptive management, and collaborative knowledge sharing, the program empowered CSOs to become proactive agents of change in policy, strategy, and governance. The Learning & Linking (L&L) survey revealed that all participating CSOs gained a deeper understanding of learning processes, which were integrated into their planning and implementation cycles, enhancing the quality of their work. For instance, one CSO adjusted its community mobilization strategy based on lessons learned, leading to more inclusive and responsive community engagement.

Training and peer learning were also critical to the program's success, with 62.5% of CSOs benefiting from capacity-building efforts. This led to notable improvements in technical areas such as budget monitoring, advocacy, and evidence-based decision-making, which directly influenced local planning and resource allocation for nutrition and WASH services.

Key advocacy milestones included the establishment of nutrition councils at various levels and the institutionalization of CVA tools, enabling CSOs to co-develop joint action plans with government partners. These efforts led to improved coordination and stronger accountability in child nutrition services. Despite challenges like staff turnover and funding sustainability, Right2Grow has left a lasting impact by embedding key tools into CSO and government systems, ensuring that gains in child nutrition will be sustained in the long term.

The program's success is reflected in the positive feedback from the Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) assessment, which reported a marked improvement in both technical and organizational capacities. The prospect for sustainability is high, with 92% of CSOs confident in applying the skills and tools learned, further contributing to the ongoing improvement of child nutrition, health and growth across the targeted communities.

3.3. Sustainability

3.3.1 Perceived sustainability of achieved changes

Despite the complex challenges faced throughout implementation, including political instability, government restructuring, and recurring humanitarian crises, the program has laid a strong foundation for the sustainability of its outcomes. Through deliberate strategies and adaptive approaches, the program has built a platform for continued advocacy, local ownership, and long-term impact in WASH and nutrition.

One of the most critical areas of focus has been preserving institutional memory and ensuring structural continuity. Recognizing the high turnover of government staff, the program invested in ongoing technical support and refresher training for newly assigned officials. These efforts helped to maintain program momentum and re-establish governance and coordination structures disrupted by regional and district-level restructuring. This proactive support has proven vital in mitigating knowledge loss and sustaining institutional engagement.

The program also demonstrated strong conflict sensitivity and adaptive programming. In regions affected by instability, implementation strategies were adjusted to ensure continuity. For instance, when access to district-level offices was restricted, activities were shifted to the village level, and remote monitoring tools were introduced. Staff were trained to uphold principles of neutrality and impartiality, which not only protected their safety but also preserved community trust during sensitive periods. These adaptations allowed the program to remain functional and responsive, even in challenging contexts.

To promote financial and operational resilience, the program prioritized local resource mobilization and joint prioritization of actions. By strengthening collaboration between communities and local government partners, the program ensured that available resources were used effectively, particularly in high-need or resource-constrained areas. The co-development and implementation of joint action plans fostered a sense of shared responsibility and accountability, further embedding the changes introduced.

The transformative knowledge and skills gained by communities through the CVA approach, particularly in service advocacy and understanding entitlements, have significantly strengthened their capacity to claim their rights and actively engage in the joint investment of service improvements. These competencies are deeply rooted within the community and are key to ensuring the sustainability of the results achieved and the continuation of community-driven practices beyond the life of the program.

Community members interviewed across the region expressed strong confidence in their ability to sustain this momentum. They emphasized their commitment to continuing to demand quality services and holding local government accountable. Respondents from Habro District in Oromia Region and Aneded District in Amhara Region affirmed this, stating:

“...we are now aware of how to raise our voices and demand better services. Since WASH and nutrition services are essential to us, we will not stop advocating and contributing to investments by mobilizing community resources. In fact, we plan to apply this approach to other services beyond WASH and nutrition...”

This testimony demonstrates the long-term impact of the CVA approach in fostering empowered, proactive communities capable of sustaining improvements and expanding civic engagement across multiple sectors.

The program also played a proactive role in coordination platforms and policy advocacy. By engaging in national and regional nutrition coordination bodies, the program helped ensure that its goals were aligned with broader policy frameworks and sectoral strategies. It also advocated for the inclusion of private sector actors within these platforms, diversifying stakeholder engagement and strengthening collective ownership of nutrition and WASH agendas.

Another key factor supporting sustainability has been the strategic alignment with national development frameworks, including the Sekota Declaration. By embedding program activities within existing government-led initiatives and policy tools, the program increased the relevance and uptake of its interventions. This alignment has enhanced the chances that program approaches will continue under national leadership.

Finally, the program invested heavily in capacity strengthening at all levels: individual, household, community, and institutional. Through comprehensive training and behavior change efforts, stakeholders across the system gained the knowledge and practical skills needed to sustain improved WASH and nutrition practices. These efforts not only supported immediate outcomes but also laid the groundwork for the continued scaling and institutionalization of program achievements.

The exit strategies implemented by the program have proven sufficient to support the sustainability of the outcomes achieved. Central to this approach is a strong focus on building the capacity of community-based structures, including Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) groups and Accountability Task Forces. By equipping these groups with skills in using social accountability tools such as community scorecards, interface meetings, and joint service improvement action plans, the program empowered communities to continue advocating for quality services and asserting their rights independently.

Additionally, the development of tools and targeted capacity strengthening around budget monitoring and expenditure tracking has been a crucial element of the exit strategy. These efforts have significantly increased community awareness of their rights to engage in budget hearings, fostering ongoing accountability and transparency that extend well beyond the program's direct involvement. This comprehensive exit approach lays a strong foundation for lasting community-led governance and service oversight.

3.3.2 Factors contributing to sustainability (incl adaptation to changing contexts)

The long-term sustainability of the program's outcomes has been influenced by a combination of enabling and constraining factors. While several external challenges have posed risks to continuity, the program's strategic design and implementation have established a strong foundation for sustained impact, particularly in the WASH and nutrition sectors.

A key driver of sustainability has been the establishment of national and regional nutrition coordination platforms. These include national and regional steering committees composed of high-level representatives from 13 sectoral ministries, as well as technical working groups from relevant government sectors. These platforms have strengthened multisectoral collaboration, enhanced policy alignment, and fostered a culture of joint ownership and accountability. Additionally, the creation of the Ethiopian Civil Society Coalition for Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (ECSC-SUN) at the regional level has reinforced civil society's role in nutrition governance, ensuring continued advocacy, oversight, and policy influence.

Another major enabler is the alignment of program outcomes with national development strategies and priorities, such as the Sekota Declaration, the One WASH National Program, and the Nutrition-Centric Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus (HDPN). The integration of program interventions within broader national initiatives, such as the “Bounty of the Basket” campaign promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture, has enhanced both relevance and institutional ownership, improving the likelihood of long-term adoption and scaling.

The program has also made significant investments in capacity strengthening at the individual, household, and institutional levels. Through targeted training and behavior change initiatives, communities and institutions have developed the practical skills and knowledge required to sustain improved WASH and nutrition practices. These efforts have led to early signs of lasting behavioral change, helping embed new practices beyond the project’s direct support.

Moreover, the promotion of low-cost, community-led solutions has emerged as a critical pillar of sustainability. Joint service improvement plans developed by communities and local governments have encouraged strong local ownership and accountability. By relying on locally available resources and context-specific approaches, these solutions are not only cost-effective but also institutionally and socially sustainable.

Despite these positive drivers, several challenges continue to threaten the sustainability of program achievements. High turnover of government personnel has disrupted institutional memory and slowed progress, as newly appointed staff require orientation and capacity-building support. This lack of continuity weakens follow-up on commitments and reduces program momentum.

Government structural changes, including the administrative restructuring of districts in Oromia and the splitting of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR), have also posed coordination challenges. These changes often result in shifting roles and responsibilities, requiring renewed engagement with newly formed or restructured institutions.

Political instability, particularly in the Oromia and Amhara regions, has further constrained implementation. Periods of unrest have interrupted planned activities, diverted government attention away from long-term development priorities, and reduced stakeholder engagement in WASH and nutrition efforts.

In addition, limited financial and human resources at both government and community levels have restricted the capacity to maintain and expand improvements. Budget shortfalls, competing priorities, and staffing gaps have hindered the full realization of program commitments.

Lastly, recurring humanitarian crises and insecurity, especially in the Amhara region, have shifted focus toward immediate emergency responses. These conditions have made some areas inaccessible, disrupted service delivery, and reduced space for the implementation of long-term joint action plans, including monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

In conclusion, while challenges such as political unrest, structural changes, and resource limitations pose ongoing risks, the program has made significant strides in establishing sustainable foundations. Its alignment with national priorities, inclusive governance structures, investment in capacity building, and promotion of community-driven solutions all contribute to the durability and relevance of its outcomes.

3.3.3 Reflections on four identified aspects of sustainability

3.3.3.1 Communities

Communities have continued to access and, in some cases, expand their use of nutrition and WASH services and facilities as a direct result of the program’s integrated support and systems strengthening. This sustained access has been largely driven by enhanced government accountability mechanisms and the empowerment of community members through the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) approach, and the engagement of the private sector provided accessible and affordable WASH and nutrition services. Through CVA, communities have built strong advocacy skills and the capacity to claim their rights to essential services. These efforts have translated into tangible improvements, with community members not only demanding better services but also actively contributing resources and taking part in implementing Joint Service Improvement Action Plans. This co-ownership has reinforced the relevance and sustainability of services at the local level.

The private sector has also played a key role in sustaining access by developing viable business models that ensure the ongoing availability of affordable WASH and nutrition products. The program supported the creation of market linkages that have enabled these businesses to operate efficiently and profitably, often by leveraging economies of scale. As a result, local markets are better equipped to meet community needs without relying solely on external or project-based support.

Interviews conducted with community members during the endline evaluation across the targeted districts revealed significant improvements in access to WASH and nutrition products at the local level. Focus group discussions in Habro District highlighted how private sector actors have enhanced their service delivery capacity within villages:

“...nowadays, we can get liquid soap right in our village, and the producers distribute it directly to us. So, we no longer need to travel to the district markets. The prices are also fair compared to others...”

This improved access was also confirmed by private sector representatives interviewed in the same district. One entrepreneur explained:

“...thanks to the program’s support in building our marketing capacity, we began transporting our products directly to the village and selling them ourselves. Over time, as our sales volume and profits increased, we started working with local agents. While this slightly reduced our profit margins, it allowed us to reach more people without increasing costs for end users...”

These insights demonstrate the program’s success in strengthening local market systems, enabling both communities and private sector actors to create sustainable access to essential WASH and nutrition products at the grassroots level.

At the local government level, institutional progress has further supported long-term service access. Notably, district councils have begun to integrate nutrition into routine budget planning and approval processes. Nutrition is now a standing item on council agendas, signaling a significant shift toward sustained public investment. This institutionalization is critical for ensuring consistent funding and political commitment to nutrition and WASH priorities in the years to come.

Collectively, these developments point to a strong foundation for continued and increasingly self-sustained access to essential nutrition and WASH services at the community level.

3.3.3.2 Governments

The Right2Grow program has contributed meaningfully to the adoption, maintenance, and implementation of WASH and nutrition policies at both regional and national levels. One of the most significant achievements has been the strengthening of the multisector nutrition coordination platform and the formal establishment of the Food System and Nutrition Council. This council has institutionalized nutrition and WASH coordination within high-level regional governance structures, receiving direct backing from regional presidents and top administrators. Their involvement has elevated the visibility and prioritization of nutrition and WASH across multiple sectors, embedding it into the region’s long-term planning and policy frameworks.

A notable policy advancement resulting from the program’s advocacy is the increased implementation of existing government policy on nutrition budget allocation. While policies on nutrition financing were already in place, they were inconsistently applied. Through targeted advocacy and capacity building, the Right2Grow program has played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between policy and practice. As a result, many targeted districts have begun to allocate dedicated budgets for nutrition. In some regions, this allocation has now become a mandatory criterion for budget approval, significantly enhancing accountability and ensuring the sustainability of financial commitments to nutrition services.

Interviews with CSOs and local government actors across the Right2Grow endline evaluation districts confirmed a significant shift in practice and accountability. This change was strongly echoed by regional government stakeholders, who highlighted the tangible progress made in translating policy into action. One stakeholder explained:

“...nutrition budget allocation has long been a government policy requirement. However, there were critical gaps in turning these policy commitments into actual implementation. The Right2Grow program has brought a positive

shift in this regard. Now, all targeted districts are actively implementing the policy, and nutrition budget allocation has become a key agenda item during budget planning hearings and approval processes...”

This statement underscores the Right2Grow program’s effectiveness in bridging the gap between policy and practice, leading to more accountable and responsive governance in nutrition planning and budgeting contributing to the sustainability of the action.

In addition, the program has contributed to the development and approval of the National Guideline for Nutrition-Centered Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus (HDPN). This strategic guideline ensures that nutrition remains a cross-cutting priority across HDPN interventions, guiding both planning and implementation. The program’s involvement in this process has helped institutionalize a multisectoral, integrated approach to nutrition that will continue to influence programming beyond the lifespan of the initiative.

Together, these efforts demonstrate clear evidence that government bodies are not only adopting and maintaining key WASH and nutrition policies but are also actively implementing them, supported by improved coordination, policy alignment, and sustained financial planning mechanisms.

3.3.3.3 Civil society

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have notably enhanced their capacity to sustain and scale up programme outcomes through the Right2Grow initiative. The program has been instrumental in strengthening their advocacy skills, enabling them to effectively utilize existing platforms for advancing improved WASH and nutrition services. Today, these organizations actively engage across multiple levels, local, regional, national, and even international forums, advocating with greater confidence and influence.

A notable transformation has been their increased ability to generate credible evidence and participate in policy dialogues that drive evidence-based advocacy. Before the program, many CSOs recognized that their skills in these critical areas were limited. Through targeted and needs-based capacity strengthening and practical experience, they have acquired essential knowledge and tools to advocate persuasively. This was further reinforced by their direct observation of service delivery improvements achieved purely through advocacy efforts, without additional external program inputs. This success has boosted their confidence in advocacy as a powerful and sustainable mechanism for influencing decision-makers and advancing systemic change. Endline evaluation interviews with representatives from the CSO sector confirmed the significant impact of the Right2Grow program not only in strengthening their advocacy capacity but also in shifting their perspective on the role of advocacy in improving service delivery. One interviewee highlighted this transformation, stating:

“...at the beginning, most of us were skeptical that the program could improve WASH and nutrition services without financial investment in infrastructure solely through advocacy. But we have now seen and appreciated that the Right2Grow program has led to substantial service improvements without any direct financial support for infrastructure. Its advocacy approach has been powerful in mobilizing community resources and in turning government commitments and promises into concrete action...”

This testimony underscores how the Right2Grow program successfully reshaped perceptions within the CSO sector, proving that strategic advocacy can be a highly effective tool for driving sustainable service improvements. This strengthened advocacy capacity represents a key and lasting contribution of the Right2Grow program. It has equipped CSOs to integrate advocacy effectively into their ongoing development and humanitarian activities, thereby positioning them to sustain and expand positive outcomes within existing local systems and practices over the long term.

3.3.3.4 Local authorities

Local authorities have demonstrated a strong commitment to sustaining WASH and nutrition services beyond the life of the Right2Grow program. Across all target regions, district councils have formally pledged ongoing support by committing to allocate dedicated budgets for these critical sectors. This shift reflects growing ownership and prioritization of WASH and nutrition within local governance systems.

A particularly notable example comes from the Amhara Region, where the regional council has institutionalized WASH and nutrition as standing agenda items. At every council meeting, 20 minutes are now formally reserved to

discuss challenges, progress, and policy needs related to these sectors. This structured attention ensures consistent visibility, dialogue, and accountability.

Moreover, the integration of WASH and nutrition into budget approval processes marks a key step toward financial sustainability. In many districts, the inclusion of WASH and nutrition allocations has become a mandatory criterion during sector budget hearings, ensuring that financial commitments are not only discussed but required for budget endorsement. These actions signal a significant move toward embedding WASH and nutrition priorities into formal planning and resource allocation systems, laying a strong foundation for continued service delivery and impact under local leadership.

The regional government sectors have consistently demonstrated their support for WASH and nutrition services. They have shown their commitment by coordinating the Food and Nutrition Council and designating relevant sectors for coordination. The approval of the Food System and Nutrition Council in the Central Ethiopia region, along with its endorsement in the Amhara and Oromia regions, is a clear example of local authorities' ongoing commitment to providing continued support.

3.4. Coherence and partnership

3.4.1 Internal coherence & partnership functioning

Added value of working together

The Right2Grow Ethiopia country coalition has consistently demonstrated strong collaboration, underpinned by well-established governance structures. These include a Steering Committee, which provides strategic oversight through the CEOs of all Prime and local partner organizations. Program Management Unit (PMU) from all Prime and local partner organizations are responsible for operational coordination, and multiple Technical Working Groups focused on key thematic areas such as WASH, nutrition, and advocacy. These working groups, comprising technical experts from both prime and local partners, have played a crucial role in ensuring consistent and high-quality technical support across all program components.

Each governance body within the programme has clearly defined roles and meets regularly to promote inclusive and coordinated decision-making. Representatives from both Prime and local partners hold equal decision-making power, a principle that has been consistently upheld throughout the project's implementation. In addition, technical working groups such as Learning & Linking (L&L) and Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) are chaired by technical experts from local partners within the consortium. This inclusive governance structure has been a critical factor in the programme's success, ensuring strong alignment between strategic direction and technical implementation across all consortium members.

At the global level, the Ethiopia team remains actively engaged. The Country Steering Committee (CSC) Chairperson participates regularly in Global Coordination Committee meetings, while the Country Consortium Manager takes part in the Global Program Management Unit. Both maintain consistent communication with their global counterparts through quarterly and monthly calls, respectively.

Moreover, Ethiopia-based staff contribute actively to global technical working groups, including those focused on Learning & Linking, MEAL, Advocacy & Communication (Bridge for Voice), Mutual Capacity Strengthening, and Finance. These engagements not only allow the Ethiopia team to influence global decision-making but also facilitate cross-country learning, helping to ensure that local insights inform global strategies and vice versa.

This collaboration, both within the country coalition and with global structures, is systematic and structured. It is facilitated by clearly defined roles, regular communication, and meaningful participation in global platforms. The program's collaborative efforts extend beyond knowledge-sharing, moving into active joint action and shared decision-making. Partners are deeply engaged in shaping strategic direction within global platforms like the Global Governance Coordination Committee (GGCC) and the Global Program Management Unit (GPMU). The program also employs adaptive management principles, ensuring responsiveness to local contexts and

leveraging local capacities, while promoting local leadership. Joint learning events further solidify shared understanding and strengthen mutual capacities.

Overview of what changed in working together since MTR

Since the mid-term review, there has been a notable shift in how partners collaborate, particularly regarding partnership, governance, and decision-making. Significant changes in governance structures, both at global and country levels, have created more space for country-level actors to meaningfully participate in decision-making. This restructuring has amplified local voices in shaping priorities, resulting in collaborations that are more aligned with local contexts and needs.

A clear example of this shift is the strengthened coalition-building at the country level, where local stakeholders are now taking a more active role in agenda-setting and leading key initiatives. At the global level, there has been a notable increase in local partner participation within governance structures and technical working groups, promoting more inclusive decision-making and enhanced knowledge sharing across contexts. Roles and responsibilities at all levels have been clearly defined, and the overall governance structure has been revised to strengthen the participation and leadership of local organizations throughout the programme.

Survey results and visual data from the Right2Grow Partner Ethiopia dashboard (Sprockler Visualizer) also support the strength and adaptability of the consortium's collaboration. All 12 respondents reported gaining valuable insights from the partnership, with 10 regularly applying these learnings in their work, demonstrating significant knowledge uptake and practical implementation. Many respondents (7 in Tier 1 and 6 in Tier 2) have been involved since the program's inception, highlighting continuity and deep engagement. While collaboration between country partners and CSOs was generally rated positively, a few respondents were neutral, and one described it as "not good at all." This suggests that while the partnership is broadly effective, some partners may experience challenges in coordination or recognition. Advocacy efforts, particularly from national to regional and international levels, were seen as "very successful" by most respondents, reinforcing the program's strength in multi-level influence.

Application of adaptive management principles

The program has made notable strides in supporting localization and advancing a locally led development approach, particularly since the mid-term review. One of the key shifts has been the transfer of ownership to country coalitions, allowing them full responsibility for setting national agendas, managing grants, designing strategies, and overseeing governance. This shift has empowered local actors to take the lead in shaping interventions based on their own priorities and realities. The program has also embraced adaptive management and the "shift the power" approach, creating more space for grassroots actors, including local CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs), to participate meaningfully in decision-making and implementation.

Success of localisation and shifting the power efforts

Tangible outcomes from this commitment to localization include community members leading the identification of priorities around WASH and nutrition through the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) approach. They are now setting agendas, holding service providers accountable, co-designing improvement plans, and contributing local resources, demonstrating genuine ownership. Similarly, CSOs have become strong advocates, holding governments accountable and pushing for improved service delivery. Their advocacy led to the creation of a Call-to-Action paper focused on governance gaps and policy solutions in WASH, multi-sectoral collaboration, and the nutrition-centered Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) approach.

Local partner representatives are also taking on leadership roles within national governance structures such as the Country Steering Committee, Program Management Unit, and Technical Working Groups. Their active participation extends to global platforms, promoting cross-country learning, decision-making, and knowledge exchange. These actions demonstrate that the program has not only supported but operationalized locally led development, ensuring that local voices are central to both strategy and implementation.

The program's local governance, management, and technical structures have not only been active within Ethiopia but have also contributed to global platforms, ensuring that local realities inform global decision-making. Solutions proposed at both global and country levels are carefully reviewed, risks are assessed, and challenges openly

discussed. This collaborative approach has been essential for maintaining the program's relevance and effectiveness in a dynamic operating environment.

Despite the program's successes, challenges persist. Key contextual issues, such as conflicts in Amhara and Oromia, administrative changes in SNNPR, and government restructuring, have impacted program delivery. However, the operationalization of the Nutrition-Centered HDPN provided strategic entry points to strengthen Results for Growth (Right2Grow) efforts. The program's flexible, adaptive approach through inclusive engagement of all partners, both prime and local has ensured that opportunities were seized, and challenges addressed.

Survey results further highlight areas for improvement. While most respondents are familiar with adaptive management principles, only four consistently apply them, and one knows about them but does not use them. This suggests a need for broader operationalization of these principles. Additionally, responses varied on whether all partners feel equally included in decision-making, which may reflect power imbalances between Tier 1 and Tier 2 actors. Despite these challenges, the outlook for sustainability remains strong, with most respondents confident that collaboration will continue post-program. Localization efforts were rated as moderately to highly successful, indicating strong country-level ownership. However, external coherence particularly with Dutch MoFA and other partners was rated as neutral to positive but not uniformly strong, pointing to opportunities for further strategic alignment and visibility with external stakeholders.

The Ethiopia Netherlands Embassy, through a Key Informant Interview for the Right2Grow project, emphasized its interest in fostering cross-learning, localization, and policy influence, particularly in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). The Embassy has established a bi-annual sharing platform and clarified that its primary role is capacity building, offering support to both international and local organizations based on its available resources. A key recommendation is to develop a consultative network or networking hub where partners can connect, exchange learning, and collectively influence policy. The Right2Grow project is expected to actively facilitate and engage in this network, beginning with the creation of a realistic and contextually grounded learning document tailored to the Ethiopian setting. Sustainability was highlighted as a critical concern, with a call to strengthen the capacity of local organizations and explore strategies for local actors to mobilize resources or generate sustainable income, especially considering shifting aid architectures. The Embassy's existing learning and capacity-building platforms can be leveraged to support this initiative and enhance collaborative impact.

3.4.2 External coherence

Outside the partnership strong and strategic collaborations were established with a broad range of external stakeholders. These include federal ministries such as the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), as well as regional sector bureaus responsible for Health, Agriculture, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). These government actors are central to the implementation of WASH and nutrition policies and strategies, and their involvement has significantly enhanced the program's effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Their commitment to budget allocation, coordination, and leadership particularly within the National Steering Committee of the Nutrition Coordination Platform has been critical in anchoring the program's outcomes within national systems.

Other actors

Partnerships have also been strengthened with civil society networks, including the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations (CCRDA) and the Ethiopia Civil Society Coalition for Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (ECSC-SUN). ECSC-SUN has played a key role in driving forward the national nutrition movement and supporting the scaling-up of efforts, thus contributing directly to the sustainability of the program's achievements.

Engagement with academic institutions and media agencies has also proven highly valuable. Academic partners have supported the generation of evidence critical for policy dialogue and advocacy, while media collaborations have helped amplify key messages and improve public awareness of WASH and nutrition services. These efforts have strengthened the program's reach and influence at both community and policy levels.

Private sector engagement has emerged as another essential area of collaboration. By working with private actors, the program has been able to promote sustainable and cost-effective access to WASH and nutrition supplies, reinforcing local ownership and long-term service delivery.

Other partnerships such as bilateral or UN (UNICEF normally coordinates government-donor WASH networks)

Furthermore, collaboration with development partners, UN agencies, and the African Union has contributed to unified advocacy efforts at national and regional levels, ensuring collective voices are heard in relevant platforms. Finally, the partnership with the Embassy of the Netherlands has been especially critical, not only for its financial support but also for its role in enhancing accountability and strategic alignment. Together, these diverse collaborations have played a vital role in strengthening the program's impact, scalability, and sustainability.

4. Lessons learnt and best practices

4.1. Programmatic

1. Joint Accountability Strengthens Service Delivery

Tackling both the demand and supply sides of WASH and Nutrition services has led to joint investments that enhance service quality and accessibility. The integration of Community Voice and Action (CVA) and Accountability Action Teams (AAT) approaches has demonstrated that collaboration among local governments, communities, and service providers fosters shared responsibility. This collective accountability has reinforced ownership, strengthened trust, and driven a long-term commitment to improving service delivery. The result is a more sustainable and impactful approach to addressing basic needs.

2. Empowering CSOs Enhances Local Resource Mobilization

Building the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in advocacy skills and tools has proven effective in turning policy commitments into concrete improvements in WASH and Nutrition. Through the Right2Grow program, CSOs have not only advocated for change but have also played a pivotal role in mobilizing local resources. Remarkably, WASH and nutrition infrastructures were established using financial contributions solely from the community and government, without external funding demonstrating the power of local ownership and the effectiveness of community-driven advocacy.

3. Private Sector Partnerships Boost Access and Affordability

Engaging the private sector is critical to making WASH and Nutrition services more accessible and affordable to communities. By aligning market incentives with public health needs, the CVA approach has increased community demand for essential products and services. This has not only improved access for underserved populations but has also driven growth for private companies through increased product uptake. Such win-win partnerships ensure that development outcomes are sustainable while also supporting private sector viability.

4. Importance of Integrated, Multisectoral Approaches in Tackling Undernutrition

Addressing deeply rooted and complex challenges like undernutrition demands more than isolated interventions; it requires a well-coordinated, multisectoral strategy that brings together various sectors such as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), food security, and health. A holistic approach that recognizes the interdependence of these sectors is critical to achieving sustainable and impactful nutrition outcomes.

One significant learning from the Results to Growth (Right2Grow) initiative is the successful integration of WASH and nutrition interventions two sectors that have traditionally operated as independent programs in the Ethiopian context. Typically, coordination mechanisms for these sectors have been fragmented and sector specific. However, Right2Grow has demonstrated that aligning and harmonizing efforts across sectors not only improves program efficiency but also enhances the overall impact on nutritional outcomes, especially at the community level. This integrated approach should be strengthened and institutionalized for future programming.

6. Strengthening Advocacy Capacity to Empower Communities and Foster Collaborative Development

Strengthening the advocacy capacities of stakeholders through skill development, strategic tools, and effective methodologies has proven instrumental in creating a more inclusive and collaborative environment among partners, government actors, and civil society.

More importantly, this capacity strengthening effort has led to the emergence of “demanding communities” local populations who are not only aware of their rights but are also equipped and motivated to hold service providers and decision-makers accountable. These empowered communities have become central actors in driving and sustaining positive change. By demanding better services, increased transparency, and fulfillment of commitments, they serve as a catalyst for more responsive governance and sustainable development. Supporting and scaling this approach will be essential in future efforts to ensure citizen-led accountability and long-term impact.

7. Advancing Gender Equity for Sustainable WASH and Nutrition Outcomes

A key lesson from the Right2Grow (Right2Grow) programme is the vital role of gender-transformative approaches in achieving equitable and sustainable WASH and nutrition outcomes. By integrating gender sensitivity and feminist principles, the programme not only avoided reinforcing existing gender inequalities but actively promoted inclusive participation of women and marginalized groups. It also challenged harmful gender norms particularly those limiting men's involvement in caregiving and nutrition thereby creating a more enabling environment for lasting behavioral and systemic change.

4.2. Partnership collaboration

The Right2Grow (Right2Grow) Ethiopia country coalition has showcased the power of robust and sustained collaboration through a well-organized program governance structure. This framework comprising the Steering Committee, Program Management Unit (PMU), and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) has been crucial in ensuring seamless partnership at all levels. The coalition's capacity to effectively integrate both local and international partners has fostered a strong model of shared responsibility and accountability, which has been key to the program's success.

Key Insights and Lessons Learned:

- **Flexibility, Inclusivity, and Results-Driven Approach:** The Right2Grow partnership's model has proven to be adaptable and inclusive, enabling meaningful local participation while also ensuring global engagement. Its ability to continuously adapt to changing contexts has not only boosted the program's effectiveness but also laid the groundwork for sustainable, locally led development.
- **Structured Governance Framework:** A clear and well-defined governance structure is fundamental to success. The Right2Grow program's governance framework, with explicit roles and responsibilities, has created an environment that fosters collaborative decision-making. This alignment has ensured that all partners are actively engaged and committed to shaping the program's strategic direction and execution.
- **Empowering Local Stakeholders:** Providing space for local stakeholders including community representatives and CSOs to take the lead in decision-making and agenda-setting has been essential in ensuring that the program is contextually relevant. This local leadership has resulted in more effective, sustainable interventions that reflect community needs and priorities.
- **Connecting Global and Local Technical Expertise:** The integration of global and local Technical Working Groups has proven to be invaluable. It facilitates a dynamic exchange of knowledge, ensuring that global strategies are tailored to local realities, while local insights help shape broader, more effective strategies.
- **Adaptive Management Principles:** The adoption of adaptive management practices in response to challenges such as conflicts, administrative changes, and high staff turnover has been essential in maintaining continuity and impact. A collaborative approach to problem-solving has enabled the program to overcome these obstacles while staying true to its objectives.

These lessons underscore the importance of structured collaboration, adaptability, and local ownership in driving successful, long-term development outcomes.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Key conclusions

The Right2Grow (Right2Grow) Ethiopia program has made a significant contribution to addressing the complex and interconnected challenges of undernutrition, limited WASH services, and weak governance structures in a context marked by conflict, poverty, and restricted civic space. Over its five-year implementation period, Right2Grow has effectively demonstrated that a community-driven, multi-sectoral, and advocacy-based approach can yield meaningful and sustainable results. By empowering citizens, strengthening civil society, and fostering inclusive governance, the program has helped communities articulate their priorities, hold duty-bearers accountable, and directly influence service improvements in water, sanitation, hygiene, and nutrition. Through tools like CVA and BMET, over 300 advocacy actions have led to concrete service enhancements, while the institutionalization of nutrition councils and increased public budget commitments at the district level reflect systemic progress.

Importantly, the program's success rests not only on its technical interventions but also on the strength of its partnerships and adaptive management. The Right2Grow program learning and linking and mutual capacity development catalyzed a strategic shift from fragmented to intentional, evidence-driven learning, reinforced through improved documentation, real-time adaptation, and strengthened collaboration. These outcomes have positioned Ethiopian CSOs as more resilient, capable, and effective actors in governance, nutrition, and WASH.

The Right2Grow coalition comprising international NGOs, local CSOs, and government actors has built a coherent, participatory structure that integrates local realities with global strategies. Strategic collaboration with ministries, academia, private sector actors, and development partners has expanded the program's reach and policy influence. By aligning with national initiatives like the Seqota Declaration and pioneering efforts within the Nutrition-Centered HDP Nexus, Right2Grow has laid a foundation for long-term impact. Despite the challenges posed by Ethiopia's volatile operating environment, the program has proven to be resilient, context-responsive, and a model for locally led development. As Right2Grow concludes, its legacy is one of empowered communities, strengthened governance, and a scalable framework for tackling undernutrition and WASH service gaps in a sustainable, inclusive manner.

5.2. Key recommendations for the future (including the opinion of the consultant)

1. Adapting the Program's Theory of Change to Evolving Development Trends

The current Theory of Change (ToC) remains relevant and well-aligned with national priorities while also responding to global development agendas. However, to further enhance its effectiveness and further proof its impact, it is recommended that in the future program the ToC be updated to better reflect emerging global and country-specific priorities. There is significant potential to integrate cross-cutting themes such as climate resilience, food systems transformation, and digital innovation, which are increasingly critical to sustainable development outcomes.

This enhancement could involve promoting climate-smart and drought-resistant agriculture to safeguard nutrition in the face of climate variability and strengthening nutrition-sensitive value chains to improve food accessibility, affordability, and rural livelihoods. Additionally, embracing digital tools and platforms can support real-time service monitoring, expand access to nutrition and WASH education, and facilitate broader community engagement.

By embedding these dimensions into the ToC, the program will not only amplify its impact and sustainability, but also ensure its continued relevance in an evolving development landscape, positioning it as a forward-looking model that adapts to changing needs and global trends.

2. Strengthening WASH and Nutrition Outcomes in Fragile Contexts through Adaptive Programming

The programme has achieved notable improvements in WASH and nutrition services by promoting community-led action plans and strengthening government accountability through community advocacy via the CVA approach. These efforts have led to the enhancement of key infrastructure and service delivery. However, ongoing

humanitarian crises particularly in conflict-affected areas like the Amhara Region have significantly disrupted service delivery and reprioritized both community and government resources away from WASH and nutrition investments. For future programming, it is strongly recommended to, integrate contingency funding mechanisms in the program adaptive management strategies, to ensure continuity and resilience of WASH and nutrition services in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

3. Strengthen Government Systems for Sustainability

The program has effectively enhanced the capacity of government actors at various levels, laying a strong foundation for sustainable service delivery. To ensure these gains are preserved despite challenges such as staff turnover and limited institutional memory, it is recommended to establish permanent knowledge-sharing platforms and structured mentorship programs. These mechanisms will help embed the multi-sectoral approach to WASH and Nutrition within government systems and ensure its continuity across leadership transitions.

Additionally, sustained advocacy and capacity-building efforts alongside support for legal frameworks are essential to secure long-term government commitment, particularly in areas like nutrition-sensitive budgeting. By institutionalizing these practices, government ownership and leadership can be further strengthened.

4. Foster Sustainable Private Sector Engagement

The involvement of the private sector has played a valuable role in enhancing access to affordable WASH and Nutrition products and services. To build on this progress, it is essential to advocate for stronger support from local governments to create an enabling environment for private enterprises. This includes providing dedicated production spaces, shaded market areas, offering low-interest loans, extending tax incentives, and promoting Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models. These measures will help sustain existing businesses and attract new private sector actors to invest in WASH and nutrition-related ventures. This will enhance their ability to deliver quality products and services while ensuring financial viability. Strengthening private sector engagement in this way positions them as long-term, reliable partners in achieving national development goals, particularly in improving community health and well-being.

5. Enhance CSO Advocacy and Policy Engagement

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have taken meaningful steps toward engaging in advocacy and rights-based development. However, there is further opportunity to deepen their understanding and influence, especially in navigating civic space, engaging with national policies, and integrating WASH and Nutrition into broader advocacy agendas.

To advance these gains, future programming should prioritize targeted capacity-building initiatives that strengthen CSOs' strategic planning, policy literacy, and coordination. Supporting stronger networks and platforms will foster collaboration and shared learning, while promoting localization ensures that advocacy remains relevant and impactful at the grassroots level.

6. Expand and Deepen Community-Level Reach

The Right2Grow program has successfully raised awareness and shifted community attitudes toward improved WASH and nutrition practices in selected villages. To scale these impacts and ensure they take root more widely, it is recommended to expand the geographic scope of community-level interventions while also strengthening the capacity of local governments to support these efforts.

A strategic combination of facility-based and community-based interventions will enhance both access to services and community uptake of positive behaviors. This expansion will allow the program to reach underserved populations, ensuring that the benefits of improved WASH and nutrition extend to all children and families in need.

7. Deepen and Sustain Behavioral Change

The Right2Grow program has initiated encouraging behavioral shifts in nutrition practices, growth monitoring, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture. These changes have laid important groundwork, but transformative, lasting behavioral change requires sustained investment.

To move from awareness to action, the program should adopt a targeted behavioral change communication strategy, focusing specifically on women, male caregivers, and families of children under five. Tailored messaging, community-led visioning exercises, and the use of relatable success stories can make these behaviors more meaningful and habitual.

Ongoing community engagement and information-sharing aligned with cultural norms and family dynamics will be key to embedding these practices into daily life and ensuring long-term impact. Empowering community members as change agents will further reinforce sustainability.

8. Gender-Transformative Programming Enhances Equity and Inclusion

The development and implementation of an independent Gender-Transformative Programming Toolkit along with community dialogues focused on gender norms is crucial to further strengthened the program's ability to mainstream gender considerations effectively. This approach not only promotes transformative masculinity but also positions gender equality as a core driver of improved health and nutrition outcomes.

This experience reinforces that deliberate and structured gender-transformative programming toolkits and strategies are **essential** for creating lasting change in both community behaviors and institutional practices.

8. Optimizing Partnership Synergy and Inclusivity

The Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership demonstrates a strong and adaptive collaboration, with high knowledge uptake and practical integration among consortium members. While the program has successfully fostered continuity and deep engagement, particularly through multi-level advocacy, there are areas for strategic improvement. The operationalization of adaptive management principles should be prioritized to ensure consistent application across all partners. The positive localization ratings and strong post-program sustainability prospects suggest that deepening country-level ownership will support long-term impact. Furthermore, aligning more strategically with external stakeholders, such as the Dutch MoFA and embassies, can enhance visibility and coherence, contributing to the overall success of the partnership.

Annexes:

Annex 1 – Indicator progress

Code	Indicators	Baseline Values (2021)	Overall Targets (2021 - 2025)	MTE Value	Endline Value	Performance Remarks
Outcome 1: Communities demand and invest in basic social services and adopt good nutrition and WASH practices, jointly addressing barriers with private sector partners)						
Right2Grow.OC.1.1	# of actions in which communities formulate demands for improved (WASH and nutrition) services	0	202	89	331	Target Surpassed
Right2Grow.OC.1.3	Number of targeted barriers to good nutrition and/or WASH services successfully addressed by joint community and private sector initiatives	0	392	46	322	
Right2Grow.OP.1	# of CSOs involved in Right2Grow	0	8	8	8	Target Surpassed
ET.OP.1.2	# of CVA and another social accountability Taskforce Established	0	84	76	124	Target Surpassed
ET.IO. A.1	# of Doable actions planned during CVA0 implementation and carried out by the Community	0	294	-	297	Target Surpassed
ET.IO. B.1	# of private sectors able to provide WASH and nutrition products and services based on local knowledge, innovative way adapted feasible technology and inputs.	0	42	-	50	Target Surpassed
ET.OP.2.1	# of private sector enterprises provided with technical and capacity building support	0	43	-	79	Target Surpassed
Outcome 2: Representative and empowered civil society organizations (CSOs) effectively navigate the civic space to advocate for leadership and good governance to prevent undernutrition						
Right2Grow.OC.2.1 <i>Donor indicator SCS 3</i>	# of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions.	0	231	51	198	
Right2Grow.OC.2.2 <i>Donor indicator SCS 4</i>	# of advocacy initiatives carried out by CSOs, for, by or with their membership/constituency	0	4	3	4	Target met
SCS041	# of advocacy initiatives carried out by CSOs, for, by or with their	0	3		3	Target met

	membership/constituency at national and international level					
ET.IO. C.1	# of times the CSOs with their membership/constituencies participate and influence in government budgeting processes at different government levels in each budget cycle.	0	45	25	45	Target met
ET.IO. C.3	# of times consortium Partners and local partners engaged in different nutrition and WASH platforms.	0	231		198	Target not met
ET.IO. C.4	# of times Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership developed and carry out integrated nutrition and WASH advocacy initiative	0	4		4	Target met
ET.OP.3.1	# of CBOs and CSOs capacitated with budget advocacy in WASH and Nutrition.	0	168		168	Target met
Right2Grow.IO.D.1	# of CSOs with increased L&A Capacities	0	7		7	Target met
ET.OP.4.1	# Of times (frequency of) Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership provided support for the existing/new platforms to include the interests (right) of the most vulnerable and women.	0	77		77	Target met
Outcome 3: Adoption and mainstream of a multi-sectoral approach to address undernutrition.						
Right2Grow.OC.3.1	# of laws, policies implemented for sustainable and inclusive development	0	4		4	
ET.IO. E.1	# Platforms, government sectors, CBOs, FBOs and CSOs with informed decision-making practices based on the evidence generated and shared on implementation gaps by Right2Grow	0	26		26	
ET.IO. F.1	# of Nutrition Council (Coordination bodies) established/revitalized at woreda, Zonal, and regional levels with the support of Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership	0	25		25	
ET.IO. F.3	# of meeting workshops, and events	0	24		24	

	organized, such as learning exchanges, learning forums/days and information dissemination.					
ET.OP.5.2	# of support Right2Grow Ethiopia partnership provided for the establishment/strengthening of the Nutrition Council and Agency at Woreda, Zonal and Regional levels	0	25		25	
Outcome 4: Donors and international development actors coordinate and collaborate along the humanitarian development nexus to address the underlying determinants of undernutrition						
Right2Grow.OC.4.2	Degree of integration of the WASH-Nutrition programming by donors along the humanitarian-development nexus to address the underlying determinants of undernutrition.	0	5		4	
ET.IO. G.1	# of meetings organized/attended to discuss lessons learned and best practices on HDN WASH & Nutrition programming and implementation.	0	5		5	
ET.OP.8.1	# of capacity building workshop organized on Human Development Nexus (HDN) programming	0	3		3	

Annex 2 – Limitations encountered and mitigation strategies used

While the endline evaluation employed a participatory, mixed-methods, and theory-driven approach that was largely robust and inclusive, several potential biases and limitations are acknowledged.

The evaluation placed significant emphasis on qualitative methods, including reflection workshops, narrative tools such as Sprockler, and contribution analysis. While these methods enriched the evaluation by capturing diverse and contextually grounded experiences, they inherently rely on individual perspectives and self-reported narratives, which may be influenced by personal biases or social desirability.

Furthermore, although contribution analysis is a valuable method for evaluating complex programmes, it presents challenges in attributing observed changes directly to specific interventions. These limitations are particularly evident in multi-actor advocacy programmes that operate within broader social movements, where isolating the programme's unique contribution from that of other actors and contextual influences can be difficult.