

## Amplifying Our Expertise: The Hunger Project's Global Thought Leadership in 2021

2021 was a busy year for our advocacy and thought leadership work! From participating in high-level events at the United Nations to publishing our thoughts in top tier media outlets, Hunger Project experts from around the world powerfully shared their expertise in sustainably ending hunger. This work is crucial to our efforts to advocate for the widespread adoption of gender-focused community-led development and bring the voices of people living with hunger and poverty to the forums where decisions about the global development agenda are made.

It is important to note that the summary below is just the advocacy and influence work coordinated by the Global Office and does not encompass all of the national-level advocacy work our Program and Partner Country teams did throughout the year.

### Event Participation

In 2021, The Hunger Project leveraged digital advocacy and influence opportunities that stemmed from the pandemic to ensure that the voices of our Program leaders and community partners were present during some of the world's largest development and policy gatherings.

#### **UN Commission on Social Development, February 2021**

To start the year, The Hunger Project-Ghana hosted a parallel event during the UN Commission on Social Development, which this year focused on the “socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all.” In a lively panel discussion, The Hunger Project explored how bridging the digital divide supports community-led development initiatives and the innovative ways that private service providers, like Microsoft, and public interest nonprofits like AGRA and THP-Ghana, along with social entrepreneurs like Farmerline, are working with government to develop digital solutions that can enhance community-led development in rural areas of Ghana. Check out a recording of the panel [here](#).

#### **UN Commission on the Status of Women, March 2021**

The [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) is the pre-eminent international forum on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Each year, thousands of people from government, civil society, and the private sector gather to identify what's working and, importantly, what isn't in the pursuit of gender equity. Anna Slattery, Communications Officer, Global Office, represented The Hunger Project during the official proceedings of the Commission. Providing an [official interjection](#) during a session titled, “*Building back better: Women's participation and leadership*”

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*in COVID-19 response and recovery,”* Slattery emphasized the importance of investing in women’s leadership and working with communities to break down barriers to women’s participation in public life, saying, “It takes time to cultivate strong leaders at the grassroots-level but, as this year has proven, the investment is critical for ensuring the resilience of rural communities.”

### **Generation Equality Forum, March/April 2021**

On the heels of CSW, UN Women and the governments of Mexico and France hosted [Generation Equality Forum](#) (GEF), a global gathering that aimed to secure concrete, ambitious and transformative commitments to achieve progress towards gender equality. The Hunger Project showed up powerfully in the dialogues at GEF, thanks to the leadership of [THP-Mexico](#). The team played an especially integral role in shaping the agenda for the Forum and the government of Mexico’s official platform, taking on a leadership role within the Mexican Civil Society Advisory Group.

THP-Mexico also co-organized two spaces to elevate the voices of women, youth and indigenous people during the Forum. The first was the National Meeting of Rural, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Women, where more than 80 rural and indigenous women participated. In the second, THP partnered with Girls Not Brides, Save The Children, Women Deliver, International Planned Parenthood, Plan International and the Adolescent Girls Investment Plan to create a space for adolescents and young people to meet, dialogue and build advocacy strategies, not only for GEF, but beyond.

Additionally, Veda Bharadwaja, Senior Program Officer for [THP-India](#), spoke on one of the thematic panels, *"The Economy. The Crisis of Economic and Global Development Models and their Impact on Women and Girls, with Focus on the COVID-19 context,"* where she shared insights about how the pandemic is shaping economic opportunities at the hyper-local panchayat-level.

### **InterAction Forum, March 2021**

The Hunger Project hosted a Learning Lounge at the InterAction Forum to share our experience mobilizing women leaders for COVID-19 response. Tim Prewitt moderated a panel featuring Daisy Owomugasho, East Africa Regional Director and Country Director of THP-Uganda, Rita Sarin, Global Vice President and Country Director of THP-India and Montse Salazar Gamboa, Country Director of THP-Mexico. This interactive dialogue highlighted the work of thousands of women in communities that work with The Hunger Project. In response to a question about COVID response in India, Rita Sarin shared, “When you invest in a woman leader she becomes a leader for life...In India there were millions of migrant laborers who had lost all work because of lockdown and they were walking back to their villages—walking 10 days, 20 days on foot—no food, sick, stigmatized, deprived and then what happens when they enter their village? Who immediately takes care with full compassion and full responsibility? It was the women leaders. They immediately got on their feet, got the schools clean as quarantine centers, got clean water, got food, and got the doctors.

‘When women become leaders they become the source and they become the resource. They become the compassion. We haven't used that word so far and I don't want that word to be seen as a soft word because for me COVID proved beyond a doubt that it is women leaders who bring leadership and compassion. No government, nobody could have handled what they did.’

### **Wayout Forum, April 2021**

In April, Daisy Owomugasho joined panelists from the Segal Family Foundation, Obama Foundation, Ericsson, S.A.G.E Innovation, Good Idea Drink, Marriott International, and Asilia Africa for a conversation about the Fifth Industrial Revolution, moderated by CNN anchor Richard Quest. This engaging conversation around sustainable change and finding an equilibrium between the wellbeing of our planet, and our own prosperity centered on access to digital technology and the need to bridge the digital divide, particularly for women.

### **World Hunger Day, May 2021**

This year we commemorated the tenth anniversary of World Hunger Day by highlighting the reality that more people are living in or at risk of experiencing chronic hunger than ever before—in large part due to COVID-19. We know, the end of hunger and poverty is possible when people have the necessary tools and resources and when solutions are community-led — by and for the people living in conditions of chronic hunger. When children receive education and women have access to healthcare and technology, they have the ability to build a better future for themselves and their communities. Bridging the gaps in access to these essential resources is a sustainable and critical step towards ending hunger and poverty. In partnership with Goodwill Ambassador, Dora Nyambe, Hunger Project experts from around the world highlighted the impact access to healthcare, technology and education can have for millions of people living in hunger. Watch the panel [here](#).

### **SID-Washington Annual Conference, May 2021**

The Hunger Project won first place in the SID-Washington Lightning Talk competition this year. In our submission, [Gunjan Veda, Policy Advisor, encourages](#) every member of the development sector to examine their mindsets and biases to truly shift power and resources from organizations' headquarters to those working closest to the communities living with hunger and poverty.

### **UN Food Systems Summit, Spring - Fall 2021**

This year the United Nations convened a new summit to launch bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food, as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Throughout the year, this summit focused on bringing all stakeholders in the food system together and leveraged digital platforms to create opportunities for all to engage, including participating in national and global Dialogues and opportunities to submit recommendations and solutions. Leveraging our role as the Secretariat of the [Movement for Community-led Development](#), and its convening authority, The Hunger Project led conversations with

stakeholders at all levels: community, national, and globally about how we can ensure the food system works for all.

In the lead up to the Summit, The Hunger Project was invited to be part of the World Economic Forum's [Transformation Leaders Network](#). During a 2-day virtual workshop, we were able to drive conversations around the mindset shifts needed in society and within institutions to achieve an equitable and sustainable food system. This workshop brought together over 100 selected leaders across public, private, social sectors from 36 countries in Africa, Europe, the Americas, and Asia.

Additionally, as part of the Food Systems Summit Science Days, which focused on highlighting the centrality of science, technology and innovation for food systems transformation, The Hunger Project hosted a panel discussion with our partners at AGRA, Farmerline and Microsoft to share about our work connecting smallholder farmers with digital resources to improve their farming practices.

### **UN General Assembly, September 2021**

The Hunger Project hosted two events on the margins of the UN General Assembly this year. The first event highlighted the importance of bridging the gender digital divide and our new partnership with BlueTown, Microsoft and USAID in Ghana. The event was co-hosted with the African Union and the Africa Women's Leadership Network, thanks to Global Board member Madame Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. The event featured a keynote address from H.E. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, former president of Mauritius. Stephanie Ashley from THP-Ghana represented the organization during a dynamic roundtable discussion. Watch the video [here](#). The second event, hosted in conjunction with Climate Week NYC, highlighted the importance of fighting climate change in our mission to ending hunger. Grace Chikowi, Country Manager, THP-Malawi and Irene Naikaali, Head of Programs, THP-Uganda shared about work in this area. The event was the first moderated by a student from FeelGood, a youth-led movement that invests in The Hunger Project. Check it out [here](#).

### **Global Washington Goalmakers Conference, December 2021**

In December, Rowlands Kaotcha, Global Vice President and Director for Africa and Mexico, will be a featured speaker at the Global Washington Goalmakers Conference. Sharing the stage with other leaders from Africa, Rowlands will discuss The Hunger Project's longtime leadership in decolonized and decentralized development. Tim Prewitt will be making his Global Washington debut during the Fast Pitch session and sharing more about The Hunger Project's commitment to shifting the power to the people closest to where we are implementing our programs.

## **Publications & Recognition**

### **A Call for Access to Vaccines**

Rowlands Kaotcha published an [op-ed in Reuters](#) calling for access to COVID-19 vaccines. In the piece he powerfully states in response to the idea that there is a lack of access to vaccines: "*That phrase,*

*“lack of access,” is tossed around a lot. But “lack of access” belies what’s actually happening. It frees anyone from taking responsibility—because no one can own ‘lack of.’ The phrase gives the impression that there is an underlying natural cause to this disparity. But there is no natural cause. Wealthy countries are making a choice to deny access to those living in poverty. It is time we take a closer look at the words ‘lack of’ and start calling this injustice what it is: “denying access to those most at risk.”*

### **SDG Good Practices**

The Hunger Project’s SDG Union Strategy, implemented throughout Bangladesh, was selected as an SDG Good Practice (check out our listing [here!](#)). The UN collects examples of good practices, including those that could be replicated or scaled-up by others across the globe, to support a path to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Union Strategy is one of 11 Good Practices implemented in Bangladesh.

### **Mobilizing Women Position Paper**

2021 marked a milestone in the implementation of global commitments to gender equality. Forty-five years since the first UN Women’s Conference, 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and with a decade remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the time is now to re-examine our global approach to fostering women’s leadership as a way to bring about transformative change. In March, The Hunger Project published a comprehensive set of recommendations for Donor Agencies, Implementing Organizations and Governments to improve the ways they mobilize women for transformative change. Read our recommendations [here](#).

### **Thought Leadership Writing**

In his [first piece for The Hunger Project’s Medium blog](#), CEO Tim Prewitt called for healthier and more equitable food systems. He wrote: *“Typically, conversations about improving food systems focus on complex, commercial agricultural systems, delivering products from farm to table, often across borders...What’s missing in this conversation? Community-level farming. Particularly trends driven largely by smallholder farmers. Smallholder farmers aren’t a footnote, they are the lifeblood of a global food system. According to IFAD, there are about 500 million smallholder farms globally. These farmers produce about 80% of the food consumed across Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and employ more than two billion people. If we don’t address the food systems that revolve around these people, we are missing a huge chunk of the world’s agriculture production and will likely design food systems that continue to perpetuate hunger.”*

## **Leading the Movement for Community-led Development**

The Hunger Project is the co-founder and the Secretariat of the Movement for Community-led Development. As such, we have been driving the Movement’s agenda at the global and the national chapter levels. In 2021, the Movement’s convening authority increased significantly. The highlights below represent just a portion of the Movement’s work and influence.

## **Collaborative Research Results Launch**

In 2019, the Movement began a multi-phase collaborative research study to better understand the current practice of community-led development, its impact and the complex relationship between this methodology and development outcomes. In phase one, a team of 35 Program and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) specialists from 23 organizations worked together to review over 400 evaluations submitted by 30 organizations to unpack the current landscape of CLD practice and develop tools to strengthen it. These tools, a CLD Assessment Tool and Quality Appraisal Tool, were launched at [a virtual gathering](#), with a keynote speech from former President of Malawi, Joyce Banda.

Phase 2 of the Movement’s collaborative research was funded under the IDEAL Activity supported by USAID. It included a rapid realist review of 56 programs to unpack “How and in what contexts do key aspects of CLD – particularly leadership and facilitation – contribute to resilience and equity in relation to food security?” It resulted in two guidance documents for funders and implementing organizations, outlining the key findings, their implications and recommendations. These documents were launched [during a call](#) with Ambassador Don Steinberg, Senior Advisor to the Administrator of USAID.

Then, on November 9th, Pablo Sanchez, Senior Data Scientist at THP, and our partners from World Vision, Outreach International and Pact, presented the findings of this research at the American Evaluators Association's 35th Annual Conference. The session demonstrated how and why these tools, which are now being rolled out by multiple organizations globally, can together address one of our weakest links: community-led monitoring and evaluation.

## **Engagement with USAID**

With Administrator Samantha Powers’ announcement that USAID aims to distribute 25% of its funding to local partners within the next four years, the Movement has become a thought leader and platform for ways that the Agency could manage such a transition. We are excited to work with the Agency to develop sustainable solutions and ensure that local, community-based organizations receive this funding.

## **Building the National Chapters**

Part of The Hunger Project’s mission is to advocate for the widespread adoption of community-led development everywhere that it is needed—including in countries where THP does not have a presence. Therefore, we have devoted significant time and effort to enrolling local leaders in countries around the world to host national chapters of the Movement. Thus far, there are 18 national chapters, including 8 in countries without Hunger Project offices.