NUTRITION *in* CITY ECOSYSTEMS

Governance & Systems leaflet 1

Fostering multisectoral collaboration

to link demand and supply of nutritious food, and alleviate food system limitations

Swiss TPH
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The current food system is failing to produce and deliver high-quality diets to meet the nutritional needs of more than 8 billion people worldwide. About a third of the world's population suffers from some form of malnutrition, and many countries face a triple burden of malnutrition, meaning the coexistence of overnutrition, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

The challenges of failing food systems get further aggravated by more and more people moving to cities. In city settings, poor diets often result from a mix of factors, including shifts in the food environment, e.g. easier accessibility to highly processed foods, and changing perspectives and behaviours toward more convenient food. Similarly, degradation of natural resources and pollution often go along with rapid and unplanned urbanization.

The Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project works to improve nutrition and reduce poverty by increasing the supply of and demand for nutritious food produced using agroecological practices in six secondary cities across Bangladesh (Dinajpur and Rangpur), Kenya (Bungoma and Busia), and Rwanda (Rubavu and Rusizi). The NICE project works closely with local governments at secondary city level and aims to facilitate locally led actions to improve nutrition through agricultural, food, and health sector collaborations and public-private engagements, with strong emphasis on the role of women and youth entrepreneurs (see › Project Factsheet).

Activities for increased and improved production and demand generation for participatively selected food value chains are at the core of the NICE project:

Secondary cities are geographically defined urban jurisdictions or centres performing vital governance, logistical, and production functions at a sub-national or sub-metropolitan region level. Generally, the population of secondary cities ranges between 10–50 % of a country's largest city.

Source: World Bank

Besides organizing smallholder farmers around so-called Farmers' Hubs and enhancing training on agroecological and good agricultural practices, public nutrition education and social behaviour change campaigns targeting consumers are run. Additionally, stakeholders involved in food system governance are empowered and supported to better collaborate. Peer-learning and information sharing sessions are other important components of NICE aiming at empowering and inspiring individuals active in food systems with knowledge and skills to drive meaningful food system transformation.

This leaflet presents more information about the work in the Governance and Systems field of NICE which aims that women and youth are involved in urban governance structures that incentivize food systems for improved nutrition *(Figure 1)*.
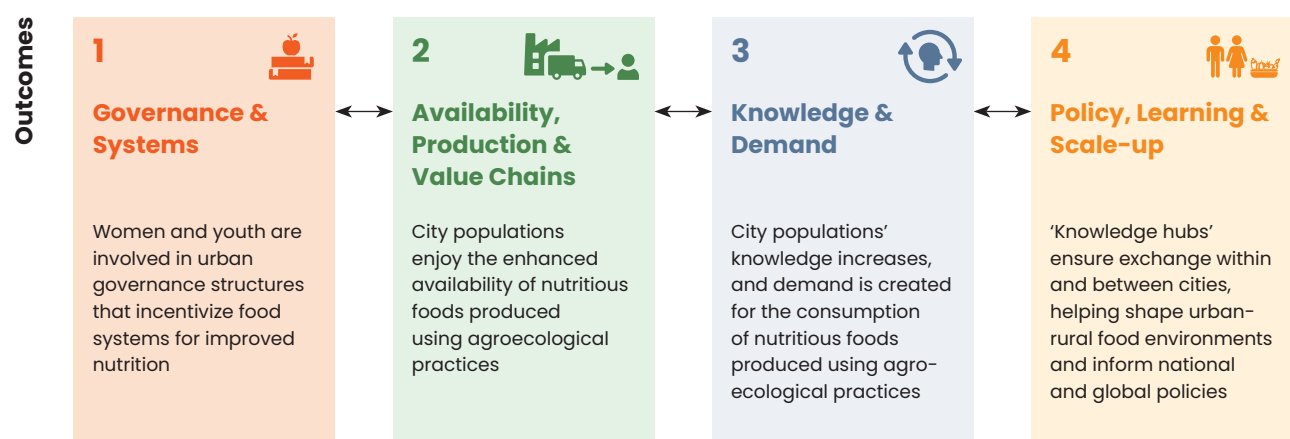
Outcomes

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Governance & Systems	**Availability, Production & Value Chains**	**Knowledge & Demand**	**Policy, Learning & Scale-up**
Women and youth are involved in urban governance structures that incentivize food systems for improved nutrition	City populations enjoy the enhanced availability of nutritious foods produced using agroecological practices	City populations' knowledge increases, and demand is created for the consumption of nutritious foods produced using agro-ecological practices	'Knowledge hubs' ensure exchange within and between cities, helping shape urban-rural food environments and inform national and global policies

Figure 1: The four main outcomes of the NICE project

Why is there an urgent call for urban multisectoral food system governance?

Food and cities have had a symbiotic relationship for centuries. Food strongly determined where cities developed, impacting their design, economical situation and even political structures. Furthermore, food united and strengthened community bonds and helped to maintain a common identity among citizens. However, in recent times, this relationship between food and cities has become increasingly opaque, with growing distances between cities and food production. Unique food cultures that once bound communities together are now more fragmented.

Despite major developments spearheaded by visionary local leaders and communities, many local governments still continue to face major challenges in integrating food security, nutrition and sustainable food systems into their agendas. **Food system and nutrition are multisectoral by nature.** Silos and entrenched ways of working do not fully grasp the holistic impact of food. For example, while a dominant focus on production may enable the desired positive food trade balance, it does not necessarily translate into food security at other scales if perception and mindset of the producers do not change.

The complex interactions and influences within a food system **call for a systemic, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder participatory approach.**

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal, called an elephant, had been brought to the town, but none of them were aware of its shape and form. Out of curiosity, they said: "We must inspect and know it by touch, of which we are capable". So, they sought it out, and when they found it they groped about it. The first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said, "This being is like a thick snake". For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan. Another person, whose hand was upon its leg said, "the elephant is a pillar like a tree-trunk". The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said the elephant, "is a wall". Another who felt its tail, described it as a rope. The last felt its tusk, stating the elephant is that which is hard, smooth and like a spear.

Source: Goldstein 2010

Picture: https://medium.com/betterism/the-blind-men-and-the-elephant-596ec8a72a7d (Artist: G. Renee Guzlas)
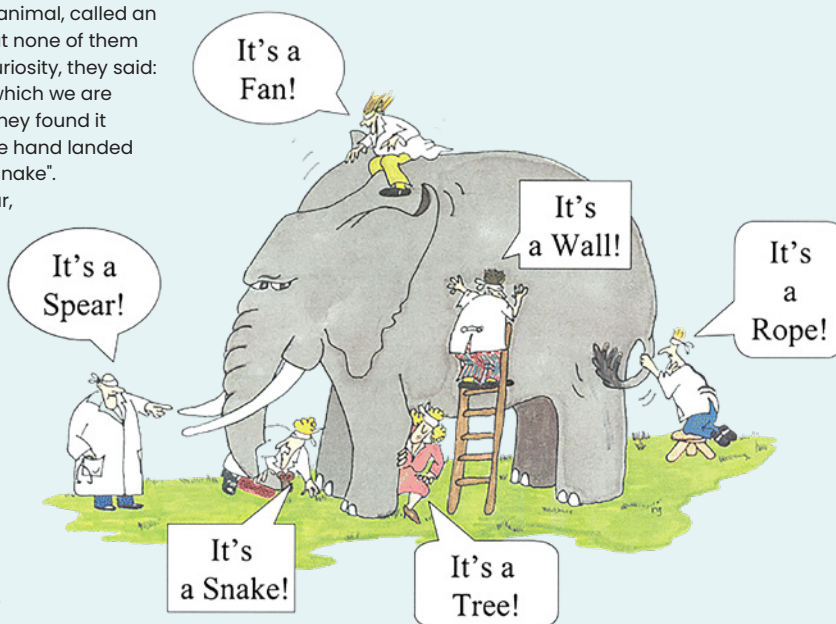

Figure 2: Visualization of the blind men and an elephant parable indicating how the same thing, e.g. the food system, can be grasped differently depending on the perspective and component that is seen, leading to completely different decisions, priorities and work packages

Multisectorality refers to collaboration among different (government) sectors / different line departments and a **multisectoral approach** is multi-stakeholder engagement for actions across different sectors.

Source: WHO

Governance refers to the control and regulation system in the sense of structures and collaboration mechanisms of a political-social unit or a topical network such as the state, a municipality, a private or public organisation or the food or health system more broadly.

What is the beauty of multisectoral food system platforms?

The focus on **common and shared knowledge, policies and legal frameworks, and issues associated with planning,** reflects a distinct trend in food system governance. Facilitating **constructive relationships** among policymakers, the business community, civil society, and academia and research institutions is pivotal for food systems transformation as these collaborations are crucial in addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges confronting current food systems – ranging from food insecurity, malnutrition, and rural poverty to biodiversity loss and the far-reaching impacts of climate change.

Many primate cities in low- and middle income countries have developed in an era of high globalization during colonialism. They thus had the opportunity to import food rather than to develop a proper local food system, resulting in primate cities' foodsheds and food producers often far distant from their clients and food consumers [Bloem and de Pee 2017]. Secondary cities, as the urban jurisdictions or centers performing vital governance, logistical, and production functions, have often developed as important platforms to trade agricultural produce, industrial products and services with the rural hinterlands. **Secondary cities thus offer the potential for food producers and food consumer and all their representatives and partners to come together and co-develop their local food system** in a geographical region in which flows of people, goods and ecosystem services operate across rural-urban continuum and include economic, societal, and environmental components.

Figure 3: Busy day at a vegetables washing and trading station in Rubavu.

By involving a **broad base of stakeholders,** municipal authorities are more likely to develop policies and programs that will meet the needs of both the municipality and its constituents, and that are more inclusive and successful in their implementation. **Food system platforms are thus emerging all over the place.** Including different actors at multiple levels to better align agendas and actions across sectors, jurisdictions, and fields, a plenum of relevant stakeholders, equipped with a holistic understanding of the food system, ensures that the opportunities and challenges of a food system are holistically addressed and understood. Several UN bodies recently collaborated on a guideline for the success of such food system platforms: *› https://is.gd/aFQbse*. Clear definition of the roles of all stakeholders and strong capacity in sharing resources, responsibilities, risks, and benefits among all stakeholders identified as the key enabling factors for food system platforms' success [UNEP, FAO et al. 2023]. Furthermore, defining a **shared and agreed set of norms and rules** is also essential for the development of a clear vision, a strategy and action plan for food system platforms, and for implementing a participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning system among them. Institutionalization or at least formal accreditation at the local government of the food system platform further increases its sustainability and long-term funding by calling for accountability of stakeholders' actions and financing.

> **Food system platforms** are structures that bring together ⓘ stakeholders from diverse food-related areas to examine how the food system is working and propose ways to improve it. A food system platform may be an official advisory body to a city, county, or state government, or it may be a grassroots network focused on educating the public, coordinating non-profit efforts, and influencing government, commercial and institutional practices and policies on food systems.
>
> *Source: Haysom 2015*

Municipality driven	Initiatives are financed by the municipality and directed by municipal staff with advice from external groups. They are housed within existing municipal government units.
Hybrid governance with direct government links	A hybrid of civil society organisations and government with a conduit to decision makers through municipal council, and with municipal financing, political champions, and supportive staff. Characterised by formal municipal endorsements, structural links, and accountability to a government body.
Hybrid governance with indirect government links	A hybrid of civil society organisations and government, but with markedly fewer formal attachments and lower levels of financing and government staffing arrangements. The conduit to council is less direct, via departments and government staff.
Links to government via a secondary agent	No formal connection to government but linked through secondary agencies. They may have important ties to government (a municipally endorsed food charter) or receive some government grants.
Civil society organisation with limited and informal government links	A civil society organisation or project, in which government officials may participate. The organisation may receive some government grants.
Independent organisations with no government links	No formal connection to government and do not seek to partner with government nor receive funding. The initiatives reflect clear structures and have the ability to engage government in food system change

Figure 4: Different governance typologies for multisectoral platforms
Source: MacRae and Donahue 2013, p. 8

Building Block **1**	**Broad multi-stakeholder participation**	
Building Block **2**	**A good understanding of the food system**	**Effective multi-stakeholder collaboration**
Building Block **3**	**Inclusive and effective collaboration**	
Building Block **4**	**A compass and a roadmap**	
Building Block **5**	**Sustainability of collaboration**	

Figure 5: Graphical representation of the 5 building blocks for successful and effective multi-stakeholder collaboration in food system platforms as per UNEP, FAO, and UNDP's Rethinking our Food Systems: A Guide for Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration pre-tested in Uganda

Enabling factors for engagement in multisectoral food system platforms

› Working toward one goal
› Multisectoriality/inclusiveness
› Permanent staff for secretarial work
› Value of sharing and gaining information/ experiences understood
› Co-creation of interventions
› Logistics clarified and provided
› Trust and mutual respect
› Networking opportunities

Disabling factors for engagement in multisectoral food system platforms

› Weak understanding of the FSP, vision and/or mission
› Weak understanding of roles and responsibilities
› Limited ownership (rather attending per delegation)
› Weak Platform recognition from senior and national level
› Power imbalances and conflicting interests
› Weak communication channels
› Insufficient platform composition
› No multisectoral M&E of food systems

Figure 6: Enabling and disabling factors for active participation in NICE-supported multisectoral platforms as identified in an analysis of the food system platforms (FSPs) in Rubavua and Rusizi, Rwanda, in January to March 2023

How did NICE support the formation of multisectoral food systems platforms?

Linking increased demand with increased supply of nutritious food produced using agroecological practices requires multisectoral collaboration and facilitation. Discussing the differences or compatibilities between grassroots or community interests and those of decision-makers and administrations can lead to precise, powerful understanding of whole systems and situations. All food system stakeholders should thus regularly convene in a joint forum for food system topics.

In line with one of its objectives, the NICE project works to strengthen food system governance through the support of joint fora for food system topics, so called **Food System Platforms (FSPs).** FSPs aim to bring people from different sectors together to **work collaboratively, to serve as a community voice** in terms of equity as well as to **support governments in food system-related topics** with technical expertise. All this in close line with the agroecology principles of co-creation of knowledge, social values and diets, fairness, connectivity, and participation.

Relations between the stakeholders lie at the core of well-functioning FSPs. Each actor has a different capacity to participate effectively and to share the joint actions. Still, what can be accomplished in an FSP depends on how well power relations are understood and can be mobilised so that all actors can participate equitably. Thorough facilitation, organi-

> **Agroecological practices** apply the concept of agroecology (utilization of ecological and social concept and principles in the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems) in agriculture. NICE specifically concentrates its efforts on five of the 10 main agroecology elements shaping sustainable food systems transformation: efficiency, recycling, diversity, resilience, and culture and food traditions.
>
> *Source: FAO*

zational support and especially **inclusive membership,** including from population groups less involved in decision-making such as farmer cooperatives, women- or youth associations etc. are thus key for the NICE supported FSPs.

When NICE started in August 2021, sector-specific coordination mechanisms targeting nutrition, agriculture or other topics in one or another manner were existing in some of the NICE cities. Still, not all of these mechanisms were active and not all of them were broad enough to include the whole food system rather than focusing on nutrition or agriculture only.

The lack of multisectoriality led to the establishment of new structures in Kenya and Rwanda while in Bangladesh, the existing structures were supplemented with a more diverse spectrum of stakeholders.

Visions of the NICE-supported food system platforms:

> To provide the food system with a broad, overarching perspective by bringing stakeholders from various sectors together

> To serve as a forum for learning, exchange of knowledge and best practices

> To act as a local voice for greater equity in the food system

> To give attention to power dynamics and balance influence among food system stakeholders

> To operate independently of government agendas

Current challenges of the NICE-supported food system platforms:

> Modest support from higher-ranking city officials

> Limited financial resources

> Limited platform composition

> Limited understanding of the holistic systems lens and food systems concept

> Women, youth and civil society underrepresented in the existing FSPs

Food System Platforms involved in the selection of beneficiaries for a small grant scheme to vulnerable groups

Figure 7: Malnutrition affected child receiving an improved, more balanced diet thanks to her mother seeking advise and support from a health center formed self-assistance group providing agriculture and nutrition advise and capacity

A **vulnerability mapping and assessment** conducted by NICE in close collaboration with respective social welfare offices served as a foundation for discussions when the new FSPs started. These collaborative efforts with FSPs and social welfare representatives led to the identification of so called 'malnutrition pockets' to be further supported through FSP-steered project activities. In this context, as one of their first activities, the Kenyan and Rwandan FSPs actively discussed and selected beneficiaries for a NICE supported small grant scheme: District-/county-registered women and youth groups, or health center-formed self-assistance groups were selected to receive small start-up grants for new endeavours supporting the local food system in the identified malnutrition pockets. Active in agriculture and/or post-harvest processing, the selected groups benefitted from NICE support with small grants ranging from approximately 1,000 to 3,000 US$ each. The funds empowered them to invest into land expansion, new transportation facilities, or improved livestock input. Ultimately, all the supported interventions aim at increasing the nutritional quality of the beneficiaries' household diet.

NICE's main selection criteria for providing a small grant, but also most tricky challenges in all the proposal developments, included:

> Focus on nutritional value of the project

> Sustainability of the supported intervention

> Innovation of the proposal

Vulnerability mapping and assessments mapped and assessed who the most vulnerable people in a city are, how their vulnerability can be defined and how best to reach these vulnerable groups through interventions. The following four questions mainly steered the NICE vulnerability mapping and assessments:

> Who are the most vulnerable people regarding food systems?

> How to reach the most vulnerable people in food systems?

> Where are the most vulnerable people located in the city ('malnutrition pockets')?

> Why are people the most vulnerable, and how to assist them?

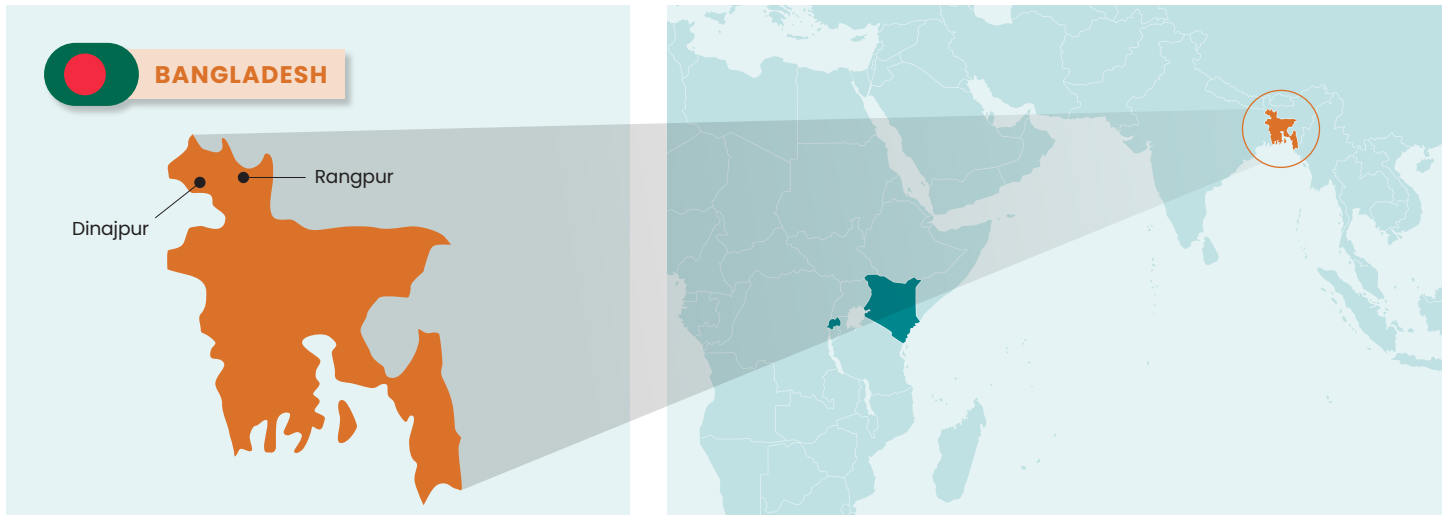# Multisectoral food system platforms in Bangladesh

Figure 8: City Level Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination Committee meeting with Md. Rahman Mostofa Mostafizar, Mayor of Rangpur City Corporation, as well as ward councillors, community and NGO representatives and journalists on 19 Sep 2023 in Rangpur city

Bangladesh's second National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2016-2025 (NPAN-2) pushes multisectoral collaboration. Under the mandate of the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC), District and Upazila Nutrition Coordination Committees (DNCCs/UNCCs) are thus coordinating the implementation of NPAN-2 among different stakeholders and sectors. Realizing the lack of government-led community level health and nutrition service delivery platforms in urban centers, along with the lack of coordination among the multiple platforms providing these services in

cities, including public, NGOs and private sector, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) set-up **City-Level Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination Committees (CLMNCCs)** in Bangladesh's 19 largest city corporations.

NICE's analysis of the existing CLMNCC in Rangpur revealed the potential to make Rangpur's CLMNCC more inclusive by integrating broader food system perspectives such as from agriculture and education, from women and youth associations and from various

civil society organizations. Similarly, seeing the added value of CLMNCCs for city nutrition (and food systems) coordination, a new **Municipality-Level Multisectoral Nutrition Coordination Committee (MLMNCC)** was established in Dinajpur in January 2023.

Members from both the Rangpur CLMNCC and the Dinajpur MLMNCC quarterly convene by invitation from the respective city corporation/municipality. The meetings serve as collaborative time for **joint capacity building and sharing of information on their activities. Joint city plans of action for nutrition** have also been developed by the respective committees, implementation of which is regularly monitored through the platforms in their meetings. Following the example of CLMNCC and MLMNCC, NICE recently also supported gatherings of food system stakeholders in several city wards to work on their own ward-level food system action plans under the mandate of CLMNCC/MLMNCC.

Emphasizing the importance of institutionalizing nutrition and food system governance at the city level and ensuring nutrition remains on the agenda of city corporations and municipalities, NICE also actively advocated for having standing committees on city nutrition and food system in the local governments. Rangpur city corporation and Dinajpur municipality

Figure 9: Gathering of city food system women and youth group members in Dinajpur to map community assets and develop a ward-level food system action plan in November 2023

understood this nudge and established official **Standing Committees on City Nutrition and Food System** as per legal provision of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 in August and October 2023, respectively. The standing committees on city nutrition and food system strengthen the city food system on behalf of the city administration and in collaboration with the nutrition and food system related stakeholders. *Figure 10* provides a further overview about their roles and duties.

› **Supervising organ** for multisectoral, multi-stakeholder regularly convening food system or nutrition platforms as human nutrition, food system resilience, environmental sustainability, inclusiveness, job creation, and urban development etc. should all be understood as key areas of improvement for urban food system transformation

› **Advocacy and push** for city government food security programs

› **Multisectoral, multi-stakeholder collaboration** to facilitate safe and nutritious food products to the city through short and traceable value chains

› **Sensitization and awareness raising** on nutrition, food safety and healthy, balanced diets, and promotion of balanced diets in general

› **Food systems monitoring** for evidence generation

› **Women and youth empowerment** in the food system

› **To transform Rangpur/Dinajpur into a model nutrition vital city** with a food system charter summarizing each food system stakeholder's commitment

Figure 10: Roles and responsibilities of the newly established Standing Committees on City Nutrition and Food System under section 50(2) of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 in Rangpur and Dinajpur

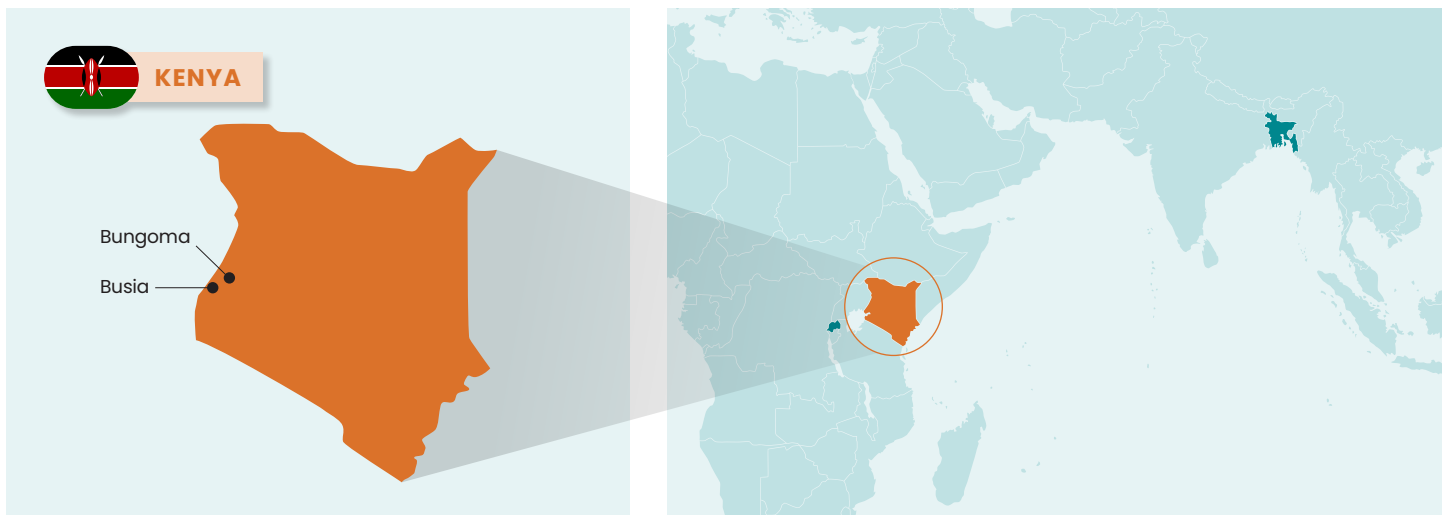# Multisectoral food system platforms in Kenya

KENYA

Bungoma
Busia

Figure 11: Food system stakeholders from Bungoma and Busia county listening to the experience of the Food Liaison Group (FLAG) in Kisumu in the frame of a mutual peer-learning event on 31 Jan 2023, paving the road for food system platforms in Bungoma and Busia later on

The mission of Kenya's Nutrition Action Plan *"To reduce all forms of malnutrition in Kenya, using well-coordinated, multisectoral and community centred approaches for optimal health for all Kenyans and the country's economic growth"* is devoted to the county-level. In the counties, County Nutrition Action Plans (CNAP) are in place, discussed, reviewed and coordinated by County Nutrition Technical Fora (CNTF) that coordinate funding for nutrition activities ensuring buy-in from various stakeholders. Similarly, food production and respective accountability and

coordination from an agricultural perspective are steered by the County Agricultural Sector Steering Committee (CASSCOM) inputting, amongst others, to the County Agri-Nutrition Implementation Strategy (CANIS) and fostering collaboration between the public and private sector actors.

With the intension of fostering joint multisectoral responsibility and coordination **among all** food system stakeholders for speeding-up the efficient eradication of malnutrition in all its forms and making

Figure 12: Members of Bungoma's and Busia's food system platforms working on the platforms' terms of reference

the city food system more resilient, new broad food system platforms have emerged in Bungoma and Busia in April 2023. These platforms operate with a clear focus beyond simply discussing government agenda and intend to keep all stakeholders and the food system actions central to its operations, ensuring that components such as nutrition, urban agriculture, food policies, waste management and many other interconnected actions are well articulated. Chaired by non-governmental institutions, e.g. the chamber of commerce or civil society organizations, the food system platforms have a particularly multisectoral, multi-stakeholder character while still ensuring that government agencies are well represented.

Understood as an addition to the existing CNTF (in Busia only) and CASSCOM, Bungoma's and Busia's food system platforms strongly follow the model of Food Liaison Advisory Groups (FLAG) in Kisumu and Nairobi, with whom they regularly exchange for peer-learning purposes. Inclusive and comprehensive city

food system strategies as recently launched in Kisumu and Nairobi thus also mark the common objective of the food system platforms. Institutional-ization and legitimization of the food system platforms should further provide the food system platforms with additional power to monitor and coordinate the local food systems.

Figure 13: Busy lunch time in a typical canteen

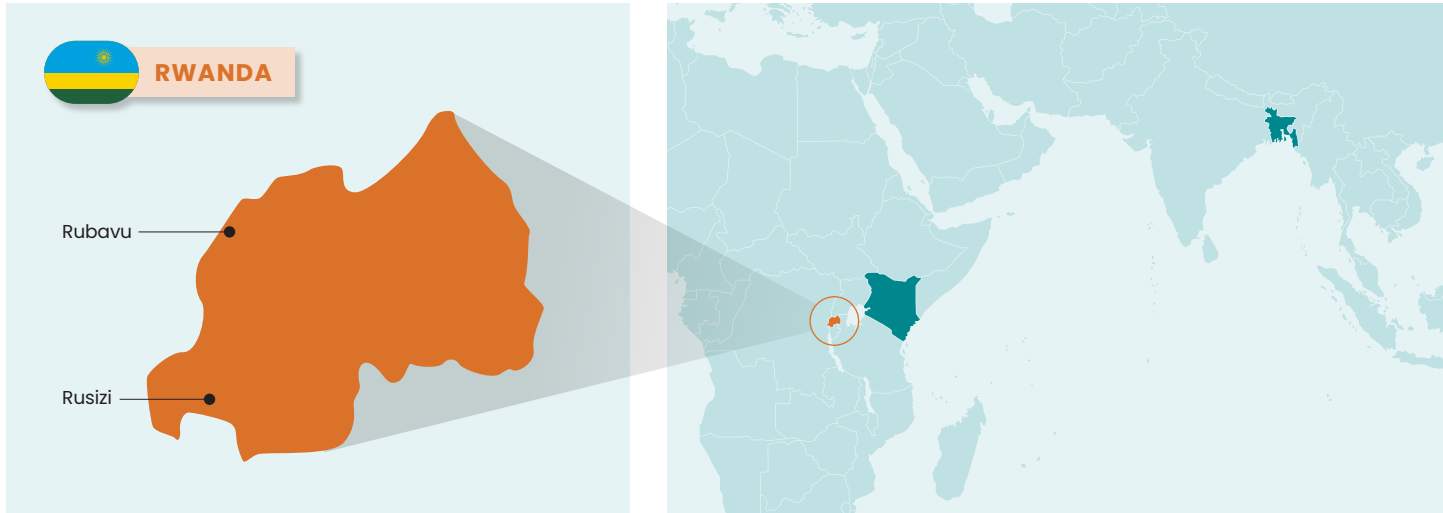# Multisectoral food system platforms in Rwanda

Figure 14: Rwandan vegetable sellers waiting for customers in Rubavu, influenced by a broad range of different stakeholders and factors

Development stakeholders play an important role in the implementation of District Development Plans in Rwanda. Given the resulting need for stringent coordination among all the stakeholders involved, Rwanda's Prime Minister's office issued District Joint Action Development Fora (JADF) in 2015. JADFs have the mission of ensuring sustainable socio-economic development and improved service delivery through i) dialogue, ii) active participation, iii) accountability, iv) information sharing, and v) coordination of stakeholders' interventions in decentralized entities.

Inspired by the JADF's concept and following informative consultation with the JADFs in early 2022, city food system platforms were formed as informal JADF sub-committees in April 2022 in Rubavu and Rusizi, and now regularly convene under NICE support. Adopting a rather municipality-driven governance structure *(see figure 4),* government representatives from various sectors are supplemented by civil society (e.g. national women and youth councils), NGOs (e.g. Caritas, Kilimo Trust etc.), and private sector stakeholders (e.g. private sector federations, different

cooperatives, business development entities etc.) to **work collaboratively,** to **serve as a community voice** in terms of equity and to push and support **food system-related topics** with technical expertise.

In their first year, Rubavu's and Rusizi's food system platforms already worked on internal activity plans and guided the NICE project to materially support several of the most vulnerable Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers in the cities. Also, after receiving several trainings on food systems to strengthen the holistic food system lens among the stakeholders food system platform members started to extensively map their urban food system in June 2023. Furthermore, in parallel, the platforms started joint advocacy to integrate more holistic, food system-specific indicators into administrational activity plans and performance contracts and sensitized lower administrational levels, such as the city sectors, on the importance of a holistic approach to food systems. In order to further increase buy-in from senior and national level for ownership purposes and to ensure sustainability of the platforms, Rubavu's and Rusizi's food system platforms are currently working on internal working guidelines on responsibilities and roles for the sustainable organization of their meetings and discussions (e.g. agenda preparation, physical con-vening, resource mobilization) and formal recogni-tion at the district.

Figure 15: Potpourri of people with various motivations (selling, buying, transporting etc.) in front of a Rwandan market

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Further information is available on the **NICE webpage:** ❯ *nice-nutrition.ch*