

## From available food system assets to locally-owned action plans for food system improvement through community asset mapping

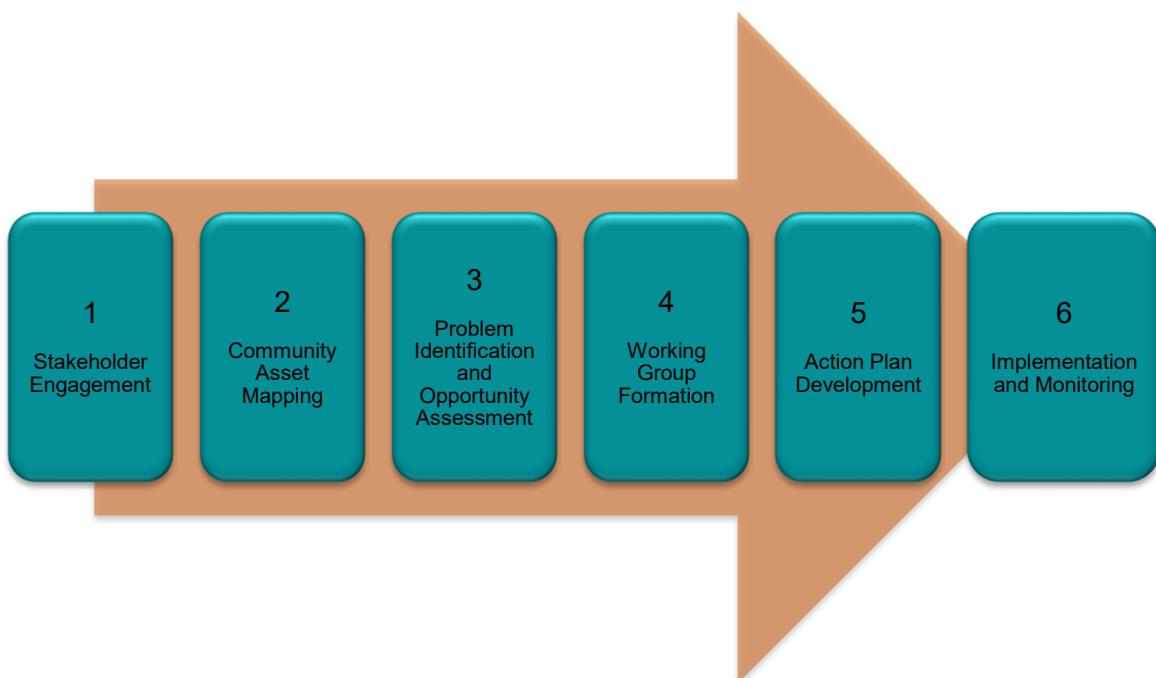
In order to **improve and better coordinate the local food system**, a full understanding of the available assets in a community and how they can be **best leveraged** to support food system transformation is a first necessity.

This **community asset mapping tool** is designed to help local communities identify and mobilize the people, organizations, spaces, and resources that already contribute to the local food system, either directly or indirectly. For example, although often not understood as food system components, many community assets such as schools, health or religious centers are key for food system transformation, acting as important aggregators, drivers or catalysts for produce, ideas and mindset.

By mapping their assets, communities can gain **a clearer understanding of their strengths, gaps, and opportunities**. Following the presented guide – pre-tested in Dinajpur and Rangpur, northwestern Bangladesh – this mapping ultimately results in co-created, **locally owned action plans** for food system improvement – plans that are grounded in local realities and **implemented collaboratively by both government and the community itself**. This tool thus supports more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems that reflect shared priorities and collective leadership.

### Step-by-step

A local, well connected (within all, community as well as government and associations) is suggested to mainly accompany and logistically organize the community asset mapping exercise.



- 1) To identify interested food system stakeholders in a ward / area (e.g. *producers, vendors consumers, vulnerable groups, government representatives etc.*) through respective associations and to advertise for a community asset mapping workshop through **repeated advocacy** with champions and multipliers (*individual meetings with associations, listening to the community, media articles etc.*) highlighting in context-adapted manner what communities can get out of the workshop / exercise.
- 2) To organize **a community asset mapping workshop** for identified community stakeholders where the food system assets (e.g. *health facilities, educational institutions, religious centers, slums, financial support organizations, distributors, markets, agricultural land used by sector, NGO offices, areas where NGOs are active etc.*) are mapped: After setting the scene by defining what is an asset, in a **joint exercise** all **local assets are positioned on a pre-prepared map** (see figure 1).

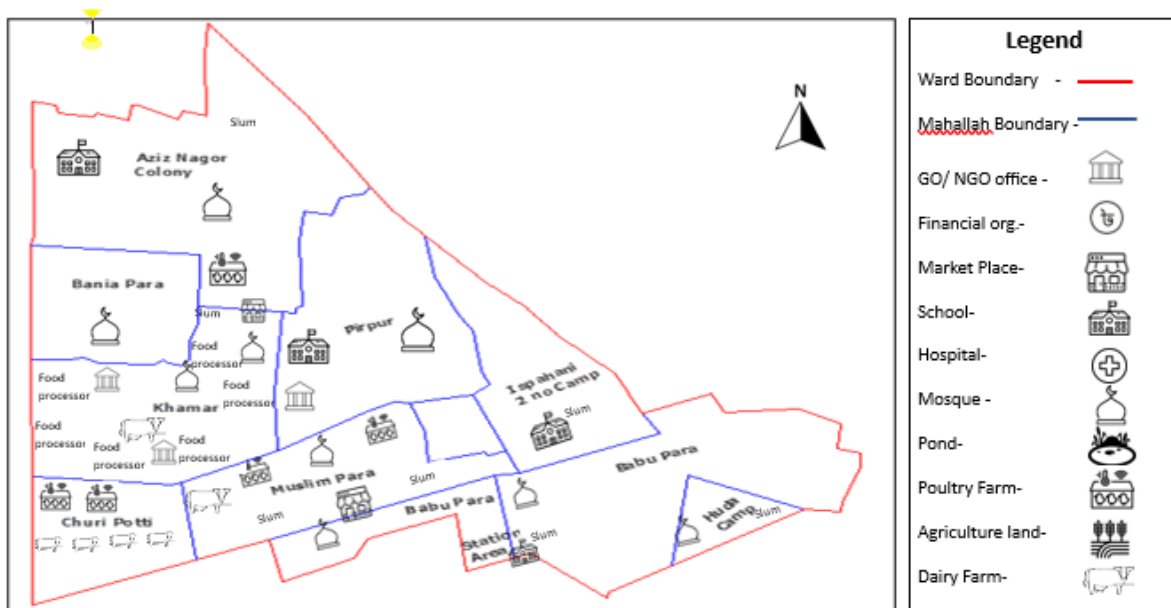
All assets are located based on perception rather than precise coordinates.

**Power imbalances** need to be carefully reflected and mitigated in these workshops, particularly if government stakeholders are part of the exercise. To ensure less empowered groups (e.g. *women in general, informal vendors etc.*) are speaking up, the repetition of this first workshop with several groups (e.g. *with women, with government representatives, with the private sector etc.*) might be considered.

- 3) Based on the finalized maps, workshop participants to **discuss all these assets' links to and potential for the food system** to prioritize what identified asset to prioritize to improve the local food system both short- and long-term. What is each of the assets ready to contribute to strengthen the local food system? Through this exercise, stakeholders **discuss and articulate the changes they would like to see in the local food system** resulting in the definition and formulation of mutually agreed, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals for the desired change (**SMART**).
- 4) After the asset mapping workshop, asset / topic specific **working groups** (ensuring diverse participation) will then be formed under the lead / organization of the implementing partner to convene a handful of interested community stakeholders to **dedicatedly and concretely formulate and address the different goals and tasks**.
- 5) Facilitated by the implementing partner, working groups to develop a **joint action plan** containing **clear timelines and identified responsibilities** for transparency and monitoring purposes. Often this is only moved forward, if either the implementing partner or a working group member drafts the action plan and seeks input / validation from the other members by email, bilateral meetings etc.

- 6) Action plan to be put into action through **tabling at the local government** – generally under the lead of the implementing partner – and community stakeholders to take on their committed responsibilities. **Regular monitoring** of the activities through the working group members or the stakeholders in charge through updating stakeholders not involved in the respective working group (such as e.g. the local community) or a dedicated board / institution (or general assembly) about the progress allows the identification of necessary adjustments and ensures accountability.

*In the case of NICE Bangladesh, NICE supports ward-specific **Food System Women and Youth groups** that followed the described procedure to change and monitor their respective food system. The different working groups regularly update each other during monthly food system women and youth group meetings while the city corporation is accountable for the progress.*



*Figure 1: Example of a food system asset map showcasing different food system assets located in respective wards based on perception rather than precise coordinates; mapped by participants of a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder community asset mapping and activity planning workshop in Rangpur city corporation.*