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# Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) and food systems policies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Vietnam

Mapping of MSPs and policies to promote a shift towards a food system framing for healthier diets

Jackie Owili, Katherine Pittore, Eunice Likoko



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This report brings together work carried out over the last four years of the Platforms for Healthier Diets Project. This research has sought to understand (i) what categories of multi-stakeholder platforms working on food systems issues are present in the A4NH focal countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Vietnam; (ii) where in the food system multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) are active; (iii) how the MSPs link to formal policy processes and; (iv) what potential role existing MSPs might play in supporting a shift to a more food system-based framing. Finally the report explores opportunities and challenge of using existing MSPs to support the anchoring and scaling of healthy diet narratives in the A4NH focal countries.

Key words: Multi-stakeholder platforms, Food system, Healthier diets, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Vietnam

This report can be downloaded for free at <https://doi.org/10.18174/549177> or at [www.wur.eu/cdi](http://www.wur.eu/cdi) (under publications).



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# List of abbreviations and acronyms

A4NH	Agriculture for Nutrition and Health
CGAIR	Consultative Group of International Agriculture Research
HLPE	High level Panel of Experts
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
MSP	Multi-stakeholder Platforms
NDHS	National Demographic Health Survey
NPC	National Population Council
UNICEF	United Nations Child Education Fund
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
WCDI	Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research
WHO	World Health Organization
WUR	Wageningen University & Research





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# Executive summary

## Background

The Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) Platforms for Healthier Diets project seeks to explore the role of existing multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) as mechanisms to support the anchoring and scaling of food system transformations for healthier diets in four countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Vietnam. Over the past four years, Wageningen Center for Development Innovation (WCIDI) has carried out research understand (i) what categories of multi-stakeholder platforms working on food systems issues are present in the A4NH focal countries, (ii) where in the food system are multi-stakeholder platforms active, (iii) how the MSPs link to the formal policy processes and (iv) what the potential role is that existing MSPs might play in supporting a shift to a more food system-based framing.

## Methodology

This report Brings together work carried out over the last four years of the Platforms for Healthier Diets Project. In the first year of the projects, a working definition was developed for MSPs and healthier diets based on a literature review. In the second year, this conceptualization was used to identify MSPs active in the food system in the four focal countries. Network mapping was used to better understand which organizations and platforms connected and linked other actors in the food system. This mapping was validated in workshops held in three of the four focal countries. In the third year of the project, the key food systems related policies were also mapped the food system, to better visualize where the MSPs and formal policy work in each country connect. This report brings together the four years of work in the four countries, and seeks to draw some general conclusions about the current and potential role of existing MSPs in food system transformations.

## Findings

There are a number of existing MSPs linked to various food systems activities all A4NH countries and all the countries have an extensive range of policies which cover most aspects of the food system. In general the food systems relevant policies more holistically cover all elements of the food system compared to MSPs, which tend to focus on specific issues, usually those which are viewed as societally relevant (child undernutrition) or urgency based (food safety), leading them to focus their activities on specific areas of the food system. Healthier diets, per se, are not a priority outcome of focus for either policies or MSPs, but rather the focus remains on a narrower definition of malnutrition, usually undernutrition in vulnerable groups, but increasingly also overnutrition and obesity. Few policies or MSPs focus on other food systems outcomes like sustainability.

## Conclusions

In the A4NH focal countries, MSPs link to existing policies, and there seems to be a stronger focus of the MSPs in supporting for formal policy process rather than setting the policy agenda. However, none of the MSPs or policies identified in this study are focused on the overarching healthier diets outcome. MSPs and policies could align their objectives to support a shift to a more system-based framing of the food system, that goes beyond nutrition, food availability, and strengthening agricultural systems, to align with the more comprehensive approach depicted in the food system narrative on healthier diets they are not yet doing so



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the project

Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) is a research program run by the Consultative Group of International Agriculture Research (CGAIR) which runs from 2017 to 2021. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) leads the program supported by four CGAIR centres and two academic institutions. A4NH is an integrative program that focuses on strengthening the food system to better deliver healthy and nutritious diets. The program seeks to establish strong links between the stakeholders in the agriculture, health, and nutrition sectors to improve agricultural practices and improve linkages to health and nutrition outcomes.

Wageningen University and Research (WUR) leads flagship 1, Food Systems for Healthier Diets. The flagship analyses the key connections of the food system activities which promote the consumption of healthier diets in low-income countries. An inclusive and sustainable food system supports efficient access to safe and healthy foods acquired and delivered through in a just and equitable manner and seeks to understand the interconnectedness of agro-food systems and other related systems such as education and health.

The platforms for healthier diets study was implemented to assess the role of existing multi-stakeholder platforms as mechanisms to strengthen the process of scaling up and anchoring food systems transformation for healthier diets within the A4NH focal countries; Bangladesh, Nigeria, Vietnam, and Ethiopia. Over the past four years, Wageningen Centre of Development Innovation (WC DI) developed a conceptualization of MSPs (Bakker, Herens & Pittore 2019), mapped which MSPs are currently active in each of the focal countries, and sought to understand the connection between the MSP priorities and national policies in each of the focal countries. This paper seeks to bring this work together to understand if, where, and how MSPs might be able to support countries to shift to a more systems based framing of the food system which places healthy diets at the centre.

To be able understand the role of multi-stakeholder platforms, the study will seek to answer the following research questions:

### **Research questions**

1. What categories of MSPs are present in the focal countries and where in the food system are they active?
2. Where in the food system are national policies focused and how do the Multi-stakeholder platforms link to these policies?
3. Based on the above, what could be the role of multi-stakeholder platforms in supporting a shift to a more system-based understanding of the food system, and how might this support the anchoring and scaling of healthier diet narratives in the focal countries.

## 1.2 Key concepts in this study

This section focuses on defining the main concepts used in this study, as we have interpreted them.

### 1.2.1 Multi-stakeholder platform

Achieving sustainable food security requires addressing the problem of unhealthy eating by the world's growing population through provision of an affordable, healthy, and environmentally sustainable diets. Solving this challenge has proven to be a 'wicked problem' because the food system has many complex interdependencies, and uncertainties. Persistent malnutrition is caused by a complex

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interplay of health, socio-political, economic, and environmental issues and inequalities. These issues are coupled with the multiple perspectives and goals of various actors in the food system, which makes effective collaboration challenging. The interdependence of the activities, actors and problems within the food system are not easily governed through traditional governance mechanisms. There is a growing literature on food systems governance, and Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) are often suggested as one potential way to address some of the challenges of effectively supporting countries to transition narratives around food to a more food systems based framing (Termeer et al., 2018).

The term Multi-stakeholder platform is broadly defined as an approach of building synergies and partnerships with key actors, such as civil society organizations, governments, private sector, and the community, all groups who are crucial to engage in addressing food system problems. Multi-stakeholder partnerships support the development of long term relationships with partners in knowledge exchange, sharing risks and benefits, human and financial capital, and the innovative ideas that effect change for the common good of the society (Dentoni et al., 2018).

### 1.2.2 Food system

The food system is made up of a range of actors and their interlinked set of processes, activities, infrastructure, and environment that encompass the production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food, as well as the resulting waste products from this system. The High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) food system framework seeks to illustrate the dynamics of food system changes that can be understood from the interactions between several stakeholders who operate at various levels in the food system (HLPE, 2017). Food systems are multidimensional, including sociocultural, economic, environmental, and political aspects, and complex, with multiple actors managing multiple linked and nested agri-food value chains within dynamic and interactive food environments (IFPRI, 2017).

### 1.2.3 Healthier diets

While there is no universally agreed on definition of healthier diets, this study used diet quality as a proxy for healthy diet. Diet quality is central to healthy diets and encompasses aspects of both adequacy (getting enough of desirable foods or food groups, energy, macro- and micronutrients) and moderation (restriction of unwanted foods, food components or nutrients such as fat, sugar, sugar-sweetened beverages, and sodium) (Herforth et al. 2014; Alkerwi 2014). Using this definition allows for a more nuanced understanding of all forms of malnutrition, including both under and overnutrition as well as micronutrient deficiencies.

## 1.3 Nutrition profile for the A4NH countries

In this report we give a brief summary of the food system outcomes (nutrition status) for the four A4NH focal countries that were chosen for this study. These countries were chosen based, in part, on the high rates of malnutrition found in the country commitment by government to improve the population's nutrition status.

### 1.3.1 Bangladesh

According to the National Institute of Population Research (2018), Bangladesh's food insecurity situation is a national concern despite economic progress and poverty reduction. Stunting levels in the under-five population remain at 36 percent and wasting remains a problem affecting 14 percent of children. The undernutrition is linked to poor diet diversity, with high consumption of cereals and inadequate micronutrient and protein intakes (Magnani et al., 2019). Poor hygiene and sanitation are a contributing factor to undernutrition in children. In addition, gender inequality in household decision making affects decisions around food production and consumption resulting in poor nutrition in children and women (UNICEF, 2018). Bangladesh experiences high rates of maternal malnutrition, particularly among the adolescent girls, which contributes to an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition and poverty (WHO, 2017). Approximately 50 percent of pregnant women are anaemic. Zinc and vitamin B12 deficiency are also common. (USAID, 2018). Overweight and obesity are also growing challenges. In 2017, Bangladesh

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launched a second national plan of action for nutrition (NPAN2) and developed Bangladesh national nutrition council (BNNC) to coordinate nutrition initiatives across the country. The government plan seeks to reduce malnutrition through multi-stakeholder partnerships by using nutrition-sensitive interventions and provision of universal access to nutrition services (Bank et al., 2018).

### 1.3.2 Ethiopia

Despite Ethiopia's tremendous economic growth, it is still one of the poorest countries with about 23 percent of its population living below one dollar per day (Sachs, et al 2017). Ethiopia is the second most populated in Africa with a population of 112 million (World bank, 2019). In the Tigray region people are facing growing food insecurity, worsened by the ongoing ethnic conflicts (USAID, 2020). The prevalence of acute malnutrition and stunting has declined over the years, but still remain high. The prevalence of stunting in children under 5 is 38 percent and wasting is 10 percent. For women of reproductive age, 22 percent are undernourished. The causes of stunting are attributed to low levels of maternal education and low income levels (Berhane et al., 2020). In 2015, the government of Ethiopia expressed its commitments to improve the country's nutrition situation. Through the Seqota declaration, it established two multi-stakeholder bodies namely the national nutrition coordination body (NNCB) to handle policy decisions on nutrition and national nutrition technical committee (NNTC) to coordinate nutritional technical decisions with the Ministry of Health overseeing all sectors and development partners involved in nutrition activities. (SUN, 2017).

### 1.3.3 Nigeria

In Nigeria 37 percent of children under 5 are stunted, with even high numbers in several states in Northern Nigeria where the rates exceed 40 percent (NDHS, 2018). There has been little improvement in the nutritional status of the under 5 population over the last decade. Malnutrition challenges vary across the country: in the North of the country, ongoing conflicts lead to food insecurity and the need for emergency food aid. (FEWSNET, 2019), while in the South, diet related non-communicable diseases are on the rise due to the impacts of globalization, lifestyle changes, urbanization and socio-cultural factors. In 2016, the Nigerian government piloted "Zero Hunger initiative" as a measure to reduce undernutrition by 2030. Through concerted efforts from various actors in the government, civil society, private sector and donor agencies, a multi-stakeholder national committee on food and nutrition was formulated to scale up nutrition interventions and provide funding for regions facing nutritional emergencies (FMOH, 2018).

### 1.3.4 Vietnam

Since 2011, Vietnam has shown positive progress in reducing stunting in children under five which stands at 23 percent, although the double burden of malnutrition (underweight/overweight and obesity) is increasingly becoming a national concern. Micronutrient deficiencies such as vitamin A and iron, and other forms of nutritional deficiencies, have continued to affect 29 percent of the children under-five years and non-pregnant women (Hoang et al., 2019). In addition, iodine deficiency has become a major public health problem resulting from the laxity of the mandatory salt iodization laws (Wang et al., 2018). There is high level government support to improve the nutrition situation in Vietnam including support to improve infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF) and linked policy interventions (Kim et al., 2018). Policies also prioritize addressing high rates of malnutrition among the poor and ethnic minority groups and strengthening universal salt iodization policies and their implementation (UNICEF, 2018). In 2017, the SUN civil society alliance was established to support aligned advocacy efforts to improve nutrition through knowledge and information sharing on the importance of maternal, infant and young children, and adolescent nutrition in Vietnam (Minh et al., 2020).

As can be seen, the food systems in the four focal countries are failing to deliver on a key outcome: supporting the population to access healthy and nutritious foods necessary to lead an active and healthy life. The remainder of this paper will seek to explore how MSPs might be one potential mechanism to improve the functioning of food systems and enable them to more effectively deliver healthy foods to those in need.

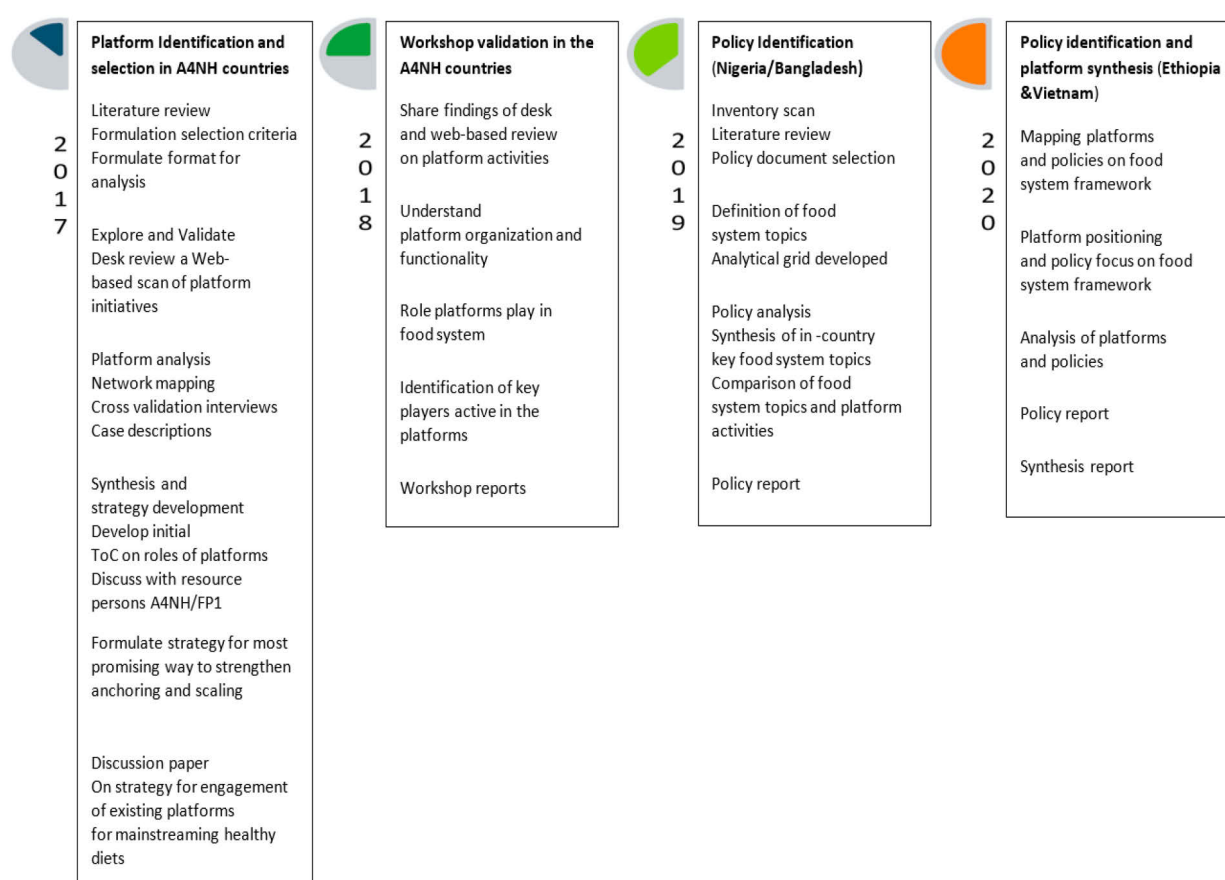
## 2 Methodology

This section focuses on the methods used in this study. It describes the research process carried out between 2017 and 2020 which included a number of key outputs which are mentioned briefly here. These include developing a working definition of an MSP (2017), operationalizing this definition by identifying relevant platforms in each country, and mapping the connections between the various platforms (2018-19), carrying out in country validation workshops (2019), mapping the relevant food systems policies (2019-2020) and finally analyzing the links between the policies and platforms (2020-2021).

### 2.1 Stepwise approach

The study used a stepwise approach describing the systematic research process applied in identification and selection of MSPs, workshop validations, policy identification, and platform synthesis activities which have been carried out over the last 4 years. (Figure 1).

The activity overview in Figure 1 below depicts the project methodology and the stepwise progression of activities in the research process. The data collection methods build onto each other from one phase of the project to the next.



**Figure 1** Modified stepwise approach diagram, source: A4NH flagship 1 study.

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## 2.2 Data collection Methods

The study seeks to bring together work carried out by the platforms for healthier diets project led by WCDI over the last four years (see Figure 1). In the first year, the study began with a literature review to conceptualize MSPs and develop an analytical framework for MSP identification. In addition to conceptualizing MSPs, a definition for healthy diets was developed.(Herens, 2018). Country specific MSPs were identified in each country using internet search terms such as partnerships, platforms, country name, networks, nutrition, healthy diets and food security (Herens et al., 2018). The analytical framework was then applied to determine if the platforms and networks identified met our definition of an MSP. The identification of the MSPs was based on the shared aim, structure, urgency, functionality and linkages in the food system. For a full description of the methodology and findings see (Herens et al., 2018).

To validate the results of the desk-based research, validation workshops were carried out in three of the A4NH countries (Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Vietnam<sup>1</sup>). At these workshops, which were attended by key stakeholders from a number of the identified platforms, the MSP mapping was presented as well as key data about links and connections between the MSPs. The workshops provided an opportunity to check that data collected using the web-based scan matched the knowledge of stakeholders actively engaging in these platforms. These workshops also provided an opportunity to better understand elements of the platform that were harder to capture based on desk reviews as well as what role the platforms saw for themselves in supporting food systems transformations.

Having identified the MSPs working on various aspects of food systems, the research team was also interested to understand how MSPs saw their roles vis a vis the formal policy process. Did the platforms see their role as helping set the agenda (for example, suggesting or advocating for new policies?) or to support the implementation of existing policies? Or perhaps provide a coordinating function that was outside role of formal governance structure. To do this, relevant policy documents were identified and a desk based policy review was carried out in all four countries, using identifiers from the food system conceptual framework.

In the final phase of this work, the MSPs and identified policies were mapped into the food system framework (Figure 3-10) as a way of understanding where in the food system the policies and platforms are most active, where gaps are and what overall conclusions, we might be able to draw about the role that MSPs might play in anchoring and scaling healthy diet narratives in A4NH focal countries.

## 2.3 Analysis approach: Multi-stakeholder platform/ policy mapping in the food system framework

### **Where are MSPs active in the food system?**

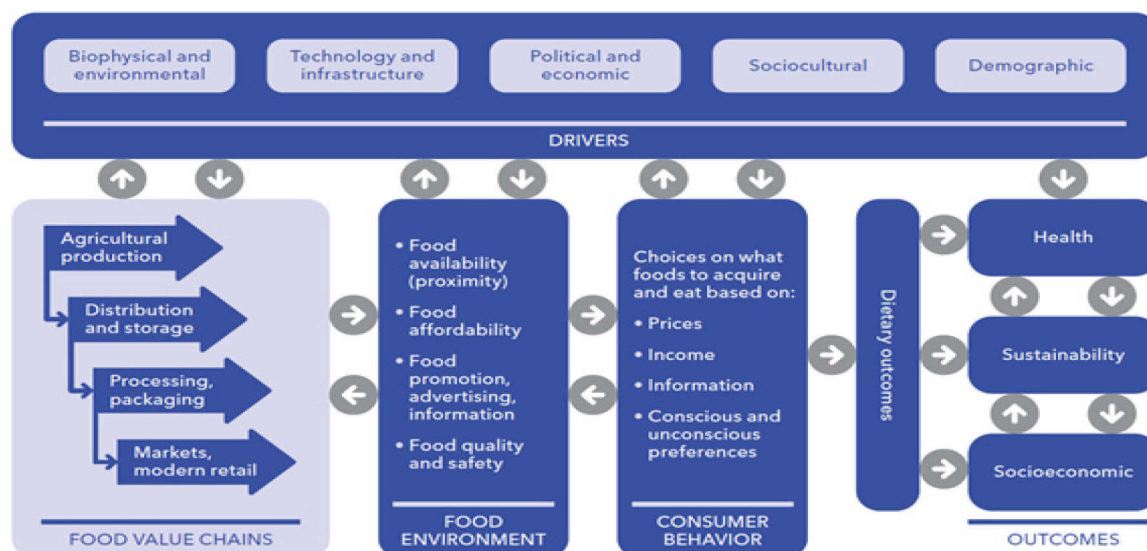
Using the revised HLPE food system framework (Figure 2) as the basis of mapping the MSP's activities, the mapping exercise sought first to identify the areas in the food system where the objectives and activities of the different MSPs are concentrated (see fig 3-6).

Figure 2 is the revised HLPE food system framework, that provides a framework for the country-based MSP mapping used in the subsequent sections (see Figure 3-Figure 6).

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<sup>1</sup> An attempt was also made to organize such a workshop in Ethiopia but this was not successful.





**Figure 2** Food system framework (HLPE, 2017).

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## 3 Multi-stakeholder platforms and policies mapping in the food system

This section presents an overview of the MSPs active in each country, including a classification of the MSP in terms of lead organization. An attempt was also made to place the MSP in the area(s) of the food system where they are most active, based on their key focus areas and activities. While this methodology may not always be perfect, the visual illustration of the MSPs and where they focus their activities into the food system is helpful in understanding their priorities.

### 3.1 MSP classification and positioning in the food system

At the beginning of the mapping exercise, the MSPs were classified based on their seven key focus areas: Policy driven MSPs, Emergency driven MSPs, research driven MSPs, donor driven MSPs, NGO/civil society driven MSPs, UN driven MSPs and Private sector driven MSPs (see Figure 3- Figure 6).

**Policy driven MSPs** were defined as those MSPs working on activities that focus on evidence-based decision making that informs policy implementation for nutrition related interventions. An example of a policy driven MSP is the Bangladesh National Nutrition Steering Committee (BNNC) which coordinates nutrition initiatives and supports efforts to reduce malnutrition in the country.

**Emergency driven MSPs** are those which are actively involved in nutrition programming in humanitarian crisis and emergencies. Two examples of such MSPs include the Disaster Risk Management Group (DRM) in Ethiopia, and Food Security Working Group (FSWG) in Nigeria.

**Research driven MSPs** are supporting research activities that promote better dietary outcomes. An example is the National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN) in Ethiopia, which supports strengthening national information systems to support policy makers to make more evidence informed choices.

The **donor driven MSPs** are focused on the alignment of their resource mobilization activities with key nutrition thematic focus areas. In Ethiopia, the Feed Future Working Group focuses on promoting better farm inputs to facilitate diversified food production.

**NGO/civil society driven MSPs** tended to focus on nutrition advocacy, and nutrition information dissemination activities. For example, the Alliance of Green Revolution Nigeria (AGRA) focuses on supporting smallholder farmers with better seed varieties. Vietnam Standards and Consumers Association (VINASTAS) is focused on promoting key nutrition messages on consumer behaviour and food safety standards in the food system.

**Private sector driven MSPs**, were those which engage and support business networks to act and invest in activities by collaborating with multisectoral actors to improve nutrition outcomes. Examples include the SUN business network which focuses on promoting improved nutrition activities within the different sections of the food system.

**UN driven MSPs**, are MSPs led by one of the UN agencies and are usually focused on global advocacy and coordination of initiatives that are addressing food and nutrition related interventions. In Ethiopia, UNN-REACH and is the UNN's intensive support arm for improving nutrition governance, which works in close collaboration with nutrition coordination structures and SUN networks and including the UN Network.

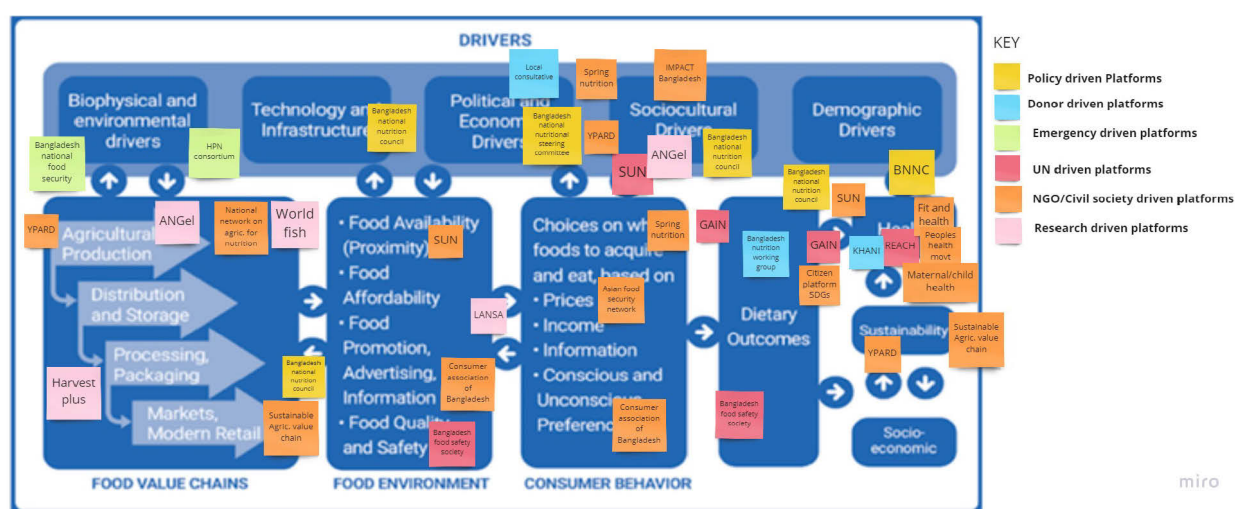
## 3.2 Country specific Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) mapping in the food system

This section presents the key focus areas of the MSPs active in each country, mapped on the food system framework, based on the platform's specific focus area(s). The choice of where to place certain MSP was done by reviewing the key types of activities carried out by the MSP. Some MSPs work in multiple food systems domains, to reflect this they are placed in multiple food system domains.

Each country section starts with a review of the MSPs working on various food systems drivers and then presents MSPs working on the food value chain, food environment and issues of consumer behaviour. Finally, the priority outcomes considered by the various MSPs are presented.

### Food system based Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) mapping for Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, mapping of the identified MSPs and where they are active in the food system is illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Food system based Multi-stakeholder platform mapping for Bangladesh

Source: Adapted from food system framework (HLPE,2017).

MSPs which focus on the **Biophysical and environmental** drivers include two emergency driven MSPs: the Bangladesh National Food Security (BNFS) and Health Population and Nutrition (HPN) consortium, these MSPs focus on providing emergency relief services during crisis (often environmentally driven, e.g. flooding or drought). Several MSPs work on **political and economic** drivers including the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC), Bangladesh National Nutrition Steering Committee (policy driven) and Local Consultative Group (donor driven).

In mapping the MSPs in Bangladesh, we see that the MSPs are distributed across the food system. At the agriculture production section of the **food value chain**, there are a number of the NGO/civil society platforms including YPAR and National network of agriculture for nutrition, as well as research-driven MSPs: ANGEL and World Fish. Despite both working on agricultural production, the focus of the civil society driven platforms and the research driven ones are quite different. Organizations like YPAR seek to link young people working in agriculture and support youth voices in agricultural development whereas ANGEL is a research program which seeks to directly support the government to roll-out evidence informed nutrition sensitive agricultural policies. At the end of the food value chain, Harvest Plus (research driven MSP), and Sustainable Agriculture Value Chain (NGO/civil society driven MSP) focus on issues related to markets and retailing including monitoring market availability and market prices.

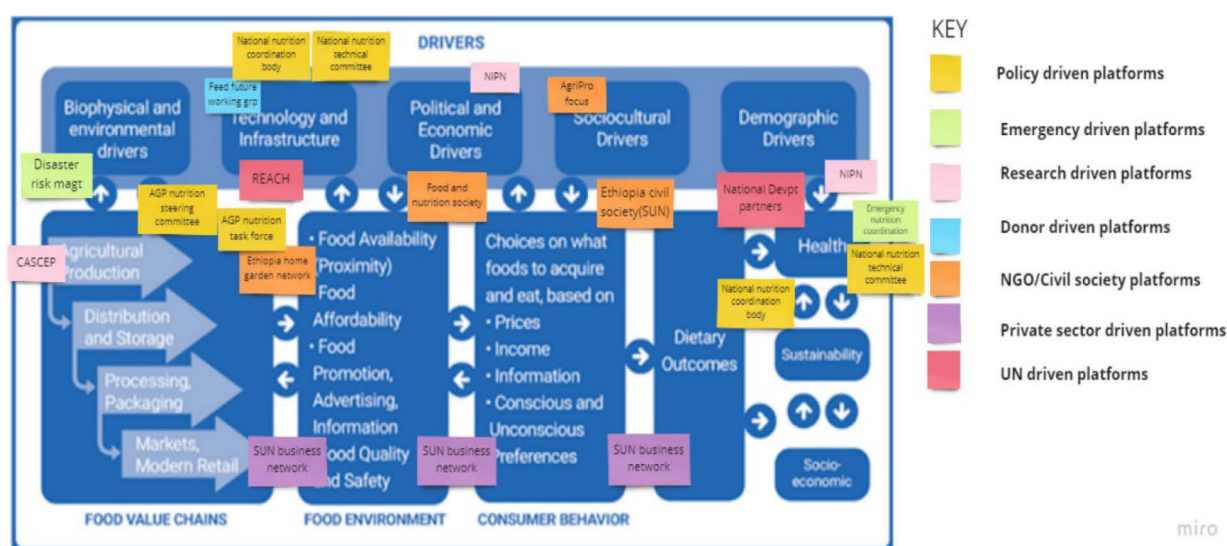
In terms of the **food environment** two MSPs are working explicitly on food availability: World Fish (research driven MSP), and SUN Civil Society Alliance (NGO/civil society driven MSP). These MSPs focus on ensuring food is accessible, focusing on harder to reach segments of society. The Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC, policy driven MSP), Bangladesh Food Safety Nutrition (UN driven MSP), and Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition (LANSA, research driven) are working on issues related to **promotion and advertising** of food. The Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB)-NGO/civil society driven MSP, and Bangladesh Food Safety Nutrition works on issues of food safety and consumer protection, focusing mainly on consumer education and awareness raising activities.

Three NGO/civil society driven MSPs are active around issues of **consumer choices and preferences**. These include the Asian Food Security Network (AFSN), Spring Nutrition and Consumer Association of Bangladesh. These MSPs focus their work on providing consumers with information to allow them to make more informed food choices or supporting mechanisms for consumer protection including complaint mechanisms.

The largest number of MSPs are active in supporting improved nutrition outcomes working on addressing the high levels of stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies that still affect a significant percentage of the population. Some platforms also work on activities that link human health and environment concerns. These include the Citizen Platforms for SDGs, YPARD and Sustainable Agriculture Value Chains.

### Food system based Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) mapping for Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, mapping of the identified MSPs in the food system framework can be seen in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** Food system based Multi-stakeholder platform mapping for Ethiopia

Source: Adapted from the food system framework (HLPE, 2017).

The National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN), a research driven MSP, supports the government to use data, including data about demographic factors, to develop more evidence-informed policies to address undernutrition challenges. The Emergency Nutrition Coordination Body, an emergency driven MSP focuses on biophysical driver of food systems outcomes, including developing responses to natural disaster which require provision of food aid relief.

Six MSPs work on **technological and infrastructure drivers**, including; REACH (UN driven); Feed the Future Working Group (FFWG) (donor driven) and policy driven MSPs such as National Nutritional Technical Committee (NNTC), AGP2 Nutrition Task Force, Agriculture Growth Program (AGP) Nutrition Steering Committee, and National Nutrition Coordination Body (NNCB). These six MSPs have overlapping activities to support development and uptake of innovations to increase the production of diverse foods. Two civil society driven MSPs, AgriPro focus and Ethiopia civil society coalition work on

socio-cultural drivers including supporting work to address underlying gender dynamics that affect nutrition outcomes.

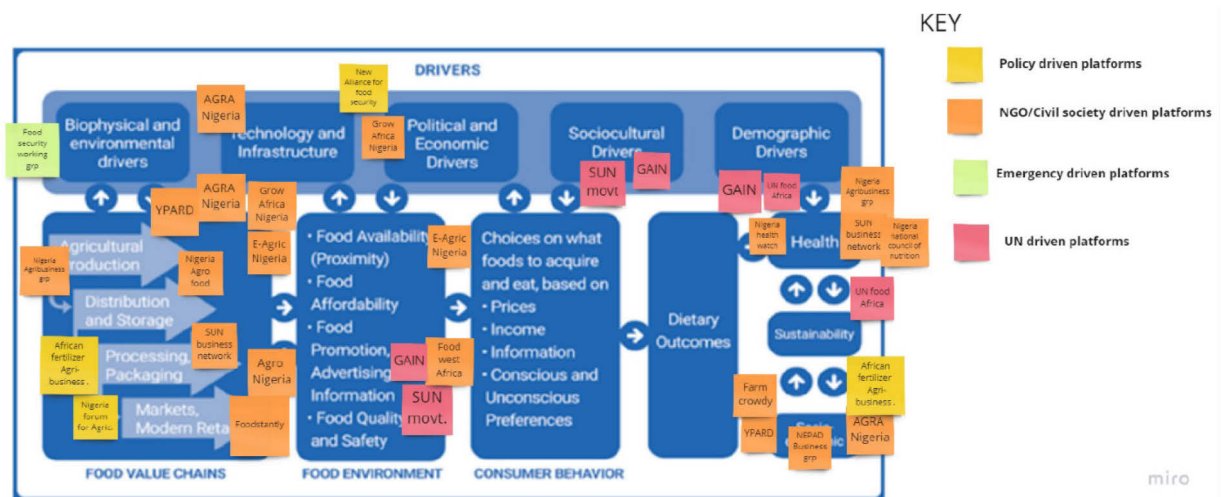
CASCADE, a research driven MSP, supports **development of the food value chain**, focusing on increased food production the adoption of new technologies including more productive seeds and labour saving technologies, with a focus on staple crops and cereals. The AGP National Steering committee, and AGP2 nutrition task force, policy driven MSPs also support food value chain activities, specifically seeking to increase the nutrition sensitivity of the country's agricultural programmes. The Disaster Risk Agriculture Task force an emergency driven MSPs also focuses on the agriculture production but specifically seeks to reduce the impact of climate change on agriculture. The Ethiopian home garden network, a civil society driven MSP, focuses on scaling up household level production of nutrient dense crops. The SUN business network is a private sector driven MSP which works on activities related to the development of modern food marketing and retail including carrying out market research on consumer food preferences and supporting companies to improve access to nutritious foods, for example through support with advertising or food promotion activities.

Some of the MSPs working on value chains also work on issues related to the **food environment**. The SUN business network, a private sector MSP, also works on promotion, advertising around issues of food quality and food safety. The Ethiopia Home Garden Network, in addition to increasing availability of nutritious foods also work on issue of food affordability. The Food and nutrition society works on, among other issues, improving food related legislation and policies.

Five MSPs focus primarily on health outcomes through the reduction of undernutrition by promoting of healthy diets and increased consumption of healthy foods. These include the National Development Partners, a UN driven MSP, Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit, an emergency driven MSP, the National Nutrition Coordination Body and National Nutrition Technical Committee (policy driven MSPs) and NIPN a research driven MSP.

### Nigeria Food system based Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) mapping for Nigeria

The mapping of the identified MSPs In Nigeria on the food system framework is shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5** Nigeria food system based Multi-stakeholder platform mapping

Source: Adapted from the food system framework (HLPE, 2017).

In **Nigeria**, MSPs are distributed across most of the food system, although there are hardly any MSPs working explicitly on issues of promoting improved consumer behavior. The Food Security Working Group focuses on the **Biophysical and environmental** drivers by supporting seasonal distribution of emergency food relief. The New Alliance for Food Security Nutrition Community Practice, a private sector driven MSP, focuses on increased agricultural outputs by supporting improved linkages with the



private sector. Through increased linkages with the private sector, they also seek to address underlying economic issues by supporting increased agricultural investments.

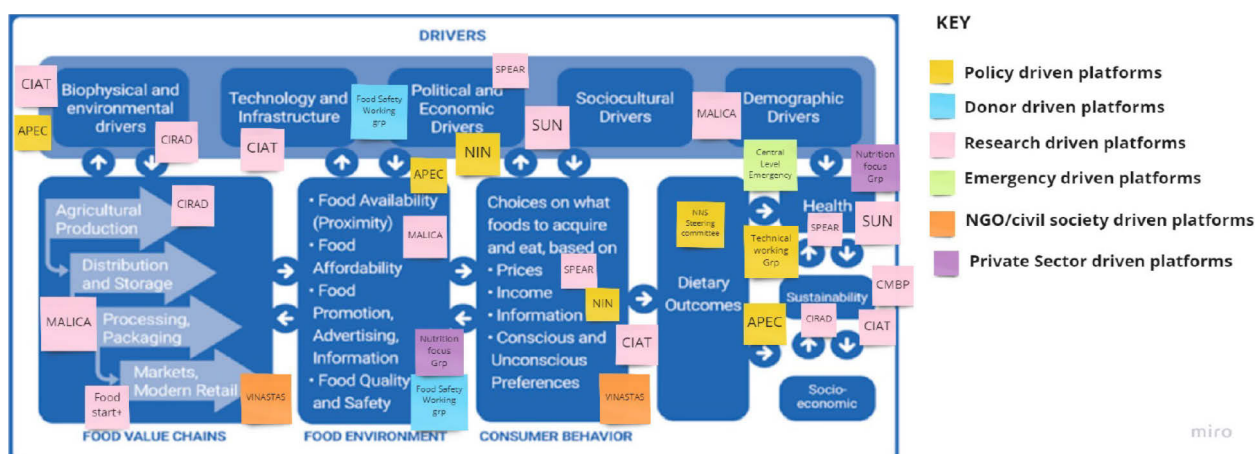
Both Grow Africa Nigeria (NGO/civil society driven MSP) and the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition Community Practice (policy driven MSP) are involved in pushing for evidence-based policy making for scaling up nutrition interventions in the food system. The GAIN Alliance and SUN movement work on activities target socio-cultural dynamics in society that have an impact on the population's nutrition including issues such as gender and traditional dietary practices.

In the **food value chain** section, the NGO/ civil society driven MSPs include the Young Professionals for Agriculture Development (YPARD) Nigeria, and Alliance for a Green Revolution (AGRA) Nigeria work on supporting increased food supply through improved agricultural practices. The Nigeria Agribusiness group and Nigeria Agro food MSPs support improved distribution and storage. the SUN business network and the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership MSPs work on processing and packaging,. the SUN business network (private sector driven), and two policy driven MSPs-AGRA Nigeria, and Nigeria Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services work on issues relating to markets and retail. Two NGO/civil society driven MSPs, E-Agriculture Nigeria and Food West Africa, work on the **food environment** by seeking to improve food availability and food affordability. The UN driven MSP- UN Food Africa also works on issues related to the food environment including issues such as food promotion, advertising, and food quality and safety sections of the food environment. Their activities are aimed at ensuring food is both safe and accessible.

Farm Crowd, YPARD Nigeria, New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) business group, and AGRA Nigeria work on socio-economic outcomes of the food system, for example facilitating market access for farmers on one side while also supporting initiatives to increase consumer demand for fresh and safe produce on the other. By working on both supply and demand side factors simultaneously, they hope to increase opportunities for agribusinesses to scale up. UN Food Africa focuses on sustainability, ensuring the food system activities do not pose a threat to humans and the environment. Lastly, the SUN movement and GAIN Aim Alliance Nigeria UN driven MSPs are focusing on the delivery of nutrition interventions in the **health outcome** section of food system.

### Food system based Multi-stakeholder platform (MSP) mapping for Vietnam.

In Vietnam, mapping of the identified MSPs in the food system framework is illustrated in Figure 6.



**Figure 6** Food system based Multi-stakeholder mapping in Vietnam

Source: Adapted from them food system framework (HLPE, 2017).

Two MSPs are working on technological and infrastructure drivers: the Food Safety Working Group and the APEC MSP, both of whom work on reducing post-harvest losses and improved food safety through improved access to technology and infrastructure to reduce postharvest food losses.

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Multiple MSPs work across the **food system value chain** (see Figure 3). At the side of agriculture production, the policy driven MSP APEC policy partnership is concerned with enhancing food security and promoting sustainable agriculture practices including those which support climate change adaptation and mitigation. CIRAD agricultural research for development MSP, focuses on improving food production in line with the local food demand. Vietnam Standards and Consumers Association (VINASTAS) an NGO/civil society driven MSP, and Foodstart+, a research driven MSP, are involved in provision of information on markets, to support farmers in getting better prices, and retail activities (consumer protection) within the food system value chain. The Market for Agriculture for Cities (MALICA) a research driven MSP, conducts market research on food storage, processing and distribution to improve regional integration of food systems and increase access to safe food in urban areas.

Several MSPs work on issues related to the broader food environment, with a focus on food safety issues and consumer awareness around food safety. The Food Safety Working Group (FSWG) (donor driven) promotes consumer's access to quality food that meets established safety standards. The APEC policy partnership also works on food safety standards and seeks to support increased access to safe and nutritious foods. MALICA and Vietnam Standards and Consumer Association (VINASTAS) (NGO/Civil society driven) also focuses on food safety measures in addition supporting activities around consumer behaviour change. VINASTAS is the only NGO/civil society driven MSP involved in the food system activities that target both consumer behaviour and the food environment.

Multiple MSPs work on **dietary outcomes**: the Technical Working group on nutrition (TWG), Nutritional Focus Group (NFG), SPEAR, Central Level Emergency Nutrition Group, and SUN. APEC, CIRAD and International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) MSPs focus on sustainability related outcomes including issues such as climate change mitigation, soil conservation and biodiversity loss. Supporting Policies Programs and Enabling Action (SPEAR) is a research driven MSP concerned with issues of research to inform better policies which reduce both under and over nutrition.

### **Overall observation for multi-stakeholder platform mapping in the food system**

From the four-country MSPs mapping exercise, some overall observation can be made. In all countries, the largest number of MSPs can be found working on health/ nutrition (often malnutrition) related outcomes of the food system. In countries where there are more MSPs working on agriculture (e.g. Nigeria) sustainability related outcomes are also a focus of many MSPs. In the majority of countries, few MSPs are working specifically on the economic outcomes of the food system and food systems as a tool for to drive economic development or to create jobs.

Looking at the placement of all the MSPs in the food system, there are a large number of MSPs active around food production (agriculture platforms, research for agricultural development, farmer and youth networks) as well around issues of consumer choice. There are fewer working on the "missing middle" of the food system focusing primarily on transportation and distribution.

Some of the MSPs are part of international movements, such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) network. SUN business network was found in all four A4NH countries. Links to an international movement may be both positive and negative. Positively, international movements may be able to shift country narrative and link national and international discussions, including learning from best practices seen in other countries who are also part of the movement. Conversely, links to international movements may also negatively affect in country platforms, bringing in international priorities which may or may not be the priority in each focal country or may affect perception of legitimacy of the platform, especially for those which are largely funded by international donors.

The majority of MSPs focus their activities on one or a few specific areas in the food system, rather than working from a more systems based framing. In many ways this is logical, perhaps even necessary, as MSPs often find their added value in bringing together people around a shared, urgent issue (high levels of malnutrition, environmental degradation as a result of unsustainable farming practices), however there may be a tension between the urgency driven nature of many MSPs and a food systems based framing. There may also be a tension in advocating for a shift from focusing on



the urgency of high rates of malnutrition to a broader narrative around healthy and sustainable diets as the loss of urgency many impact people's desire to work with the platform.

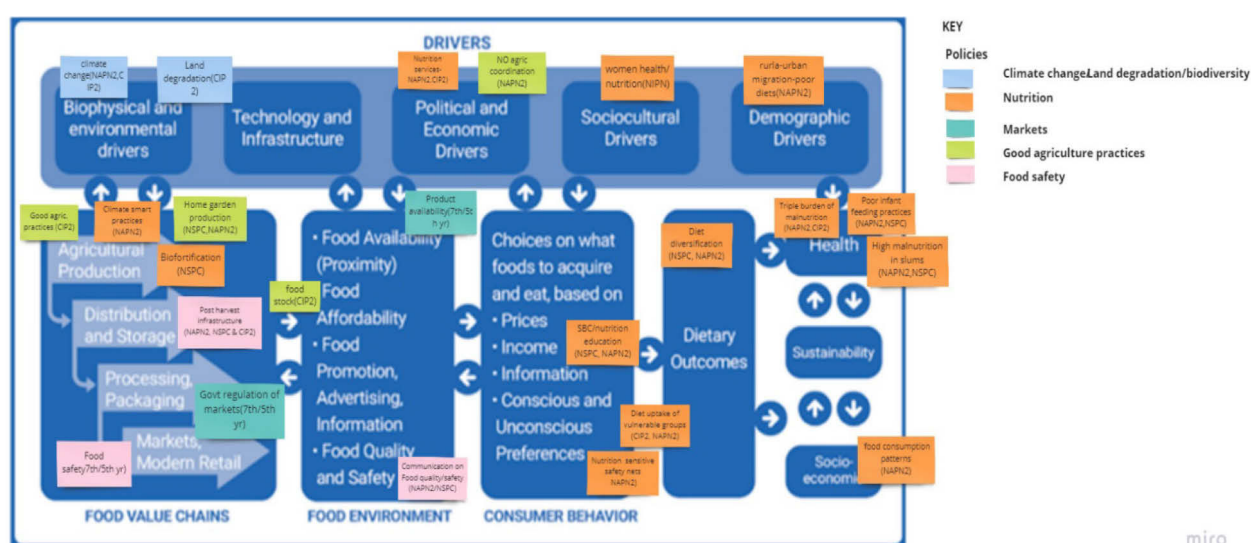
### 3.3 The in-country policy mapping on the food system framework

In the process of identifying the MSPs active in the food system in the four A4NH focal countries, a second question was raised around how the MSPs positioned their work relative to the formal policy process. Did they see their role as supporting the formal policy process? Or were the MSPs working on issues not covered by formal policies, thus perhaps trying to set the policy agenda by framing new issues?

This next section maps food system related policies in the four A4NH focal countries. The policies were classified into five categories namely: climate change, nutrition, food safety, markets, and good agriculture practices. Like in the above section, these policies were then linked to the food systems framework to develop a visual illustration of where countries may focus their priorities as well as what gaps might exist that limit countries in working holistically on food system issues. The mapping of policies relates only to the presence of policies, and does not consider the implementation of those policies.

#### Bangladesh food system-based policy mapping

This section explores key national policies related to the food system in Bangladesh.



**Figure 7** Food system-based policy mapping in Bangladesh

Source: Adapted from the food system framework (HLPE,2017).

A number of the national policies in Bangladesh are linked to food systems **drivers**. The National Nutrition Action Plan II (NAPN2) and Country Investment Plan (CIP2) address biophysical and environmental drivers through a focus on climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss as well associated emergency food aid policies linked to climate disasters. Both NAPN2 and CIP2 policies also focus on political drivers of the food system including improving government coordination around both agriculture production as well as nutrition related activities. The NAPN2 also focuses on demographic drivers and rural-urban migration as a determinant of poor dietary intake in informal urban settings.

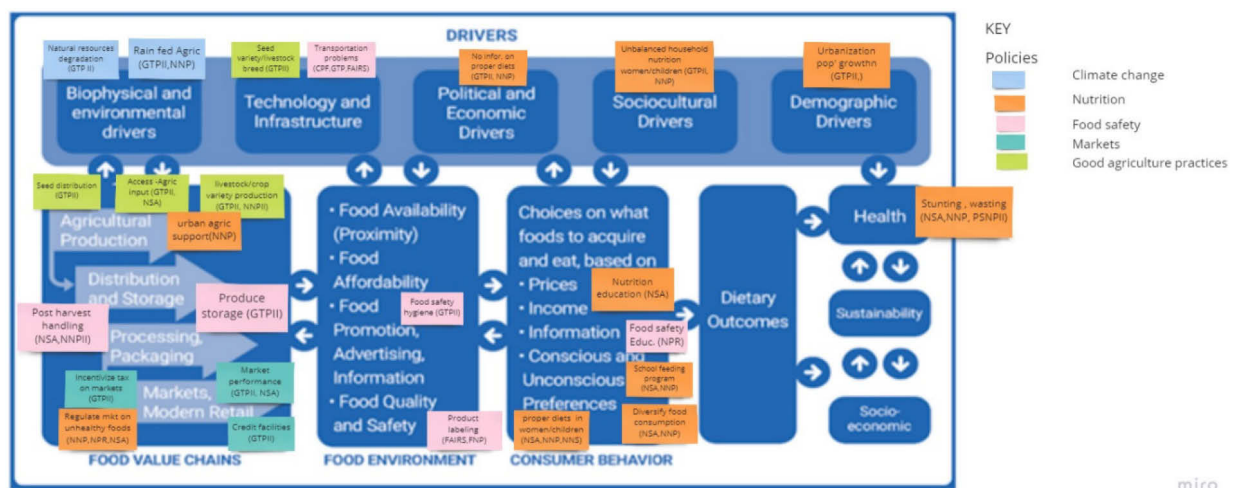
Several policies support the **food value chain** to become more nutrition sensitive. National Strategy on Prevention and Control of Micronutrient Deficiencies (NSPC), NAPN2, and CIP2 all mention the

adoption of agricultural practices such as biofortification, climate smart agriculture and home garden practices that enhance production of diversified crops to increase availability of nutritious food within the food system. The NAPN2, NSPC and CIP2 also contain policies linked to reducing post-harvest losses including investing in infrastructure for food fortification, and improvements to post-harvest facilities. The seventh five year strategic plan, suggests government involvement to regulate market prices, and facilitate efficient market systems with proper food safety management practices.

Four policies address the **food and environment**, the CIP2 focuses on the maintenance of food stocks, the Seventh Five Year Plan contains policies around regulating markets and product availability. NAPN2 and NSPC contain policies on communicating and disseminating information on food quality and safety to consumers. The NAPN2 and NSPC also contain policies related to **consumer behavior** including promoting social behaviour change communication and nutrition education to support consumers to make healthier food choices, with a specific focus on improving infant and young child feeding and policies which support economically disadvantaged groups. The NAPN2 and CIP2 also support developing nutrition sensitive safety nets programs that addresses dietary needs for vulnerable groups. Both the NAPN2, and CIP2 policies ultimately serve to ultimately support improved **dietary outcomes** including mitigating the triple burden of malnutrition. The NAPN2 also takes into account how food consumption patterns are influenced by low incomes.

### Ethiopia food system-based policy mapping

This section explores key national policies related to the food system in Ethiopia. The same food systems framework is used to map these policies, and key findings are briefly discussed.



**Figure 8** Food system-based policy mapping in Ethiopia

Source: Adapted from the food system framework (HLPE,2017).

The Growth Transformation Plan II (GTPII) and National Nutritional Plan II (NNPII) contain policies to address **biophysical and environmental** drivers of the food system including issues such as the degradation of natural resources and over reliance on rain fed agriculture. The GTPII and Country Program Framework (CPF) contain policies related to **Technology and infrastructure** including improving climate resilient practices, increasing access to improved seeds and livestock breeds, on the production side, to investing in technologies to support improved post-harvest handling, to addressing transportation challenges. GTPII and NNP also address **socio-cultural drivers** including issues of unbalanced household food distribution among vulnerable groups such as women and children. GTPII policy also considers demographic drivers such as the effects of rapid urbanization and population growth on the population's access to nutritious foods.

The GTPII and NNPII contain policies related to the **food value chain**. In particular the Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) and NNPII policies support a range of activities across the value chain aimed at increasing access to nutrient dense crops including fish, animal source food and vegetables.

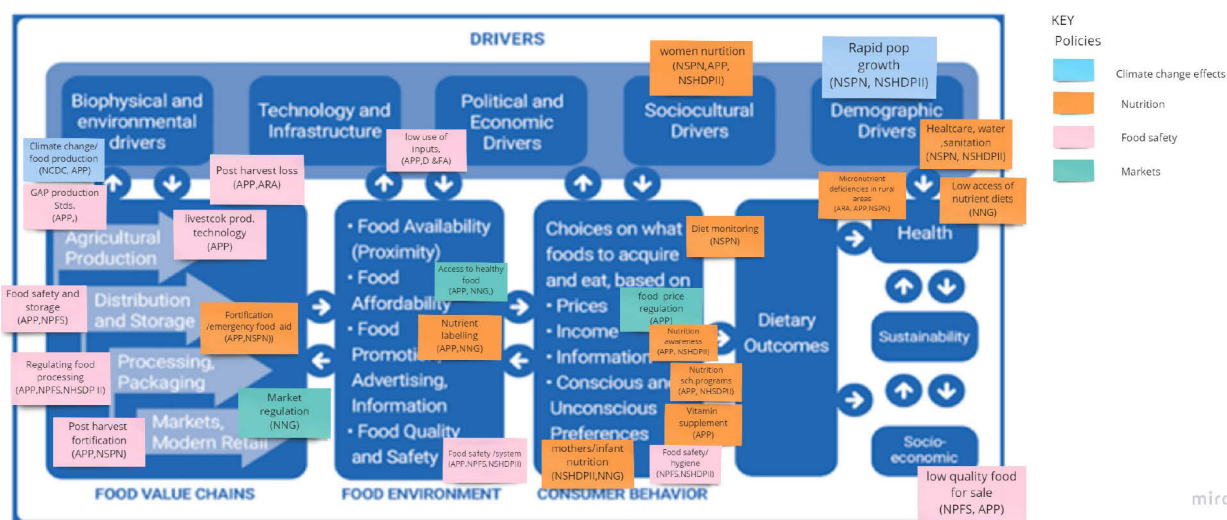
The policies cover the whole value chain, looking at production, post-harvest management and increased public awareness around nutrition issues and policies to regulate marketing of unhealthy foods and or provide support, through credit facilities for marketing farm produce. The GTPII, Food and Agriculture Import Regulations Standards (FAIRS), and Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP) all have policies aiming to actively shape the food environment through policies addressing the promotion and advertisement of food, policies relating to food safety measures and those relating to product labelling.

Two policies focus on issues of consumer behaviour, FAIRS and NNP. The policies are focused on advocating for nutrition education awareness in accessing safe diets, improving nutritional practices among vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and young infants, and disseminating information on food pricing and consumption of safe diverse diets.

In Ethiopia, the majority of policies are focused on dietary outcomes, especially on reducing the still high levels of undernutrition. The National Nutrition Strategy, Production Safety Net Program II (PSNPII), NNP, and NSA policies all prioritize addressing malnutrition challenges; stunting and wasting/ overweight in children and underweight in women, including those living in informal urban settlements.

### Nigeria food system-based policy mapping

This section explores key national policies related to the food system in Nigeria. The same food systems framework is used to map these policies, and key findings are briefly discussed.



**Figure 9** Food system-based policy mapping in Nigeria  
Source: Adapted from the food system framework (HLPE,2017).

The Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), National Nutritional Guideline on Non-communicable Disease Prevention, Control and Management (NNGNCD) policies focus on addressing **biophysical and environmental food systems drivers** including effects of climate change on production. The APP and D& FA policies are focusing on promoting efficient utilization of land, inputs and mechanization in farming activities.

Three policies address socio-cultural food systems drivers considering issues such as women's involvement in agriculture and the demographic transitions causes by rapid population growth: The Second National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSDHPII), National Strategic Plan for Nutrition (NSPN) and APP policies.

There are multiple policies to support the development of agricultural value chains. The APP and National Program on Food Security (NPFS) have comprehensive policies which cover the whole value chain, from the use of good agriculture practices and production standards (APP) to support for

improved technology for intensifying livestock production (NPFS and APP) through improvements in food storage and distribution. The APP and NSPN policies also support regulations around processing and packaging, including policies linked to food fortification, processing and packaging. The NNGNCD policy focuses on market regulation and policies to create healthier food environments.

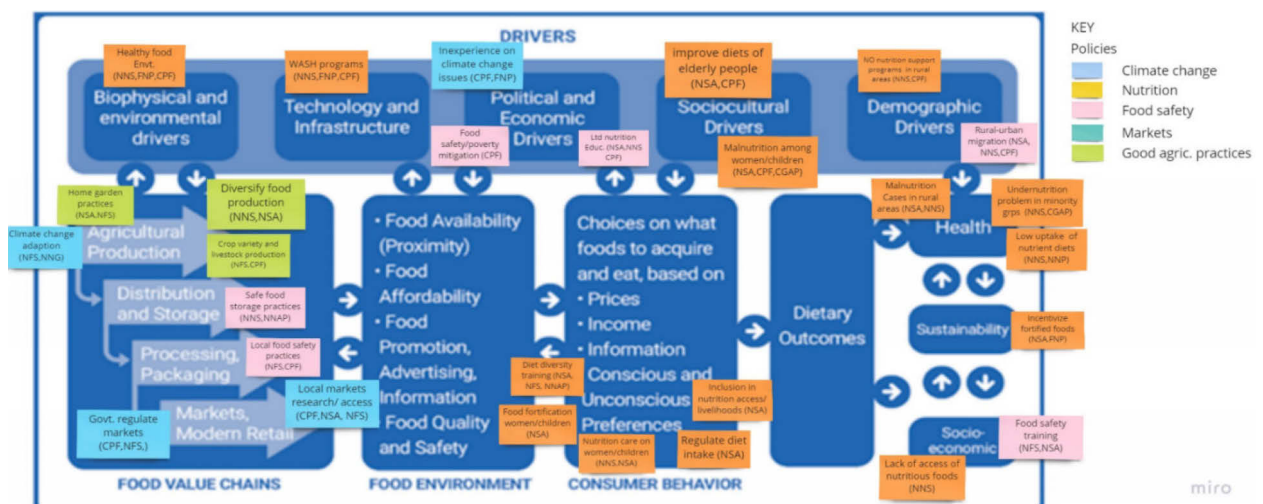
In the category of **food environment** section of the food system framework, four policies are placed in this section including; APP, NNGNCD, NPFS and NSDHPII, they are addressing issues of accessing healthy foods, proper labelling of nutrient contents on food products, and strengthening and updating the food safety standards.

Three policies work on issues of **consumer behavior** the APP, NPFS, and NSPN. These policies address nutrition awareness, food safety and hygiene standards, and support access to healthier choices for consumers. The NSPN, NSDHPII and APP also contain nutrition specific interventions, including policies for maternal and infant nutrition as well as policies related to nutritious school meals.

**Dietary outcomes**, which is linked to consumer behaviors, are addressed by three policies: a, the NSPN, ARA, and APP. Specific dietary outcomes of interest include micronutrient deficiencies in rural areas (all), undernutrition (NSPN), and food and waterborne diseases (APP, NPFS and NSDHPII). The APP and NPFS also address socio-economic issues including, improvement of food quality standards in the market. No policies were identified which have a specific focus on sustainability issues.

### Vietnam food system-based policy mapping

This section explores key national policies related to the food system in Vietnam. The same food systems framework is used to map these policies, and key findings are briefly discussed.



**Figure 10** Food system-based policy mapping in Vietnam  
Source: Adapted from the food system framework (HLPE,2017).

Three policies the National Nutritional Strategy (NNS), Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP) and Country Program Framework (CPF) work on **biophysical and environmental** drivers. The policies address the production of safe and healthy food. The NSA, CPF and FNP all support policies related to **technology and infrastructure** including policies which support linkages to health, water and sanitation programs. These policies also focus on **political and economic** drivers through a focus on poverty alleviation. The NSA and CPF contain policies linked **socio-cultural drivers**, focused on improving diets of elderly people. The Comprehensive Gender Action Plan (CGAP), NNS and NSA policies also consider socio-and cultural drivers and specifically consider malnutrition among women and children, while the NNS and CPF policies also support the improvement of nutrition sensitive programs in rural areas. The NSA, NNS and CPF policies also contain policies which consider the impacts of rural-urban migration changing dietary practices.

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In terms of food value chains, Four policies NFS, NSA, NNS and CPF guide agriculture production. These policies are focused on training farmers on better agriculture practice such as home gardening, adoption of climate resilient practices and improving animal breeding and crop production varieties. The National Nutrition Action Plan (NNAP) and NNS policies focus on the improvement of food safety and food storage. In the processing and packaging section of the food system, NFS and CPF policies are addressing issues concerned with improving the local food processing practices as well as regulation of market access for farm inputs and produce.

The NSA and NFS support a healthy food system by addressing food quality and safety challenges. The NSA policy is also focused on food fortification and training to improve people's diets.

The National Nutrition Action Plan (NNAP) and NSA are focused on **consumer behavior** specifically by encouraging diet diversification. The NFS and NSA policies stress proper nutritional care of women and infants, promotion of dietary trainings and encouraging consumers to choose healthier diets. The Country Gender Assessment Plan (CGAP) brings a focus on social inclusion in accessing nourishing diets and livelihoods.

Two policies, the NSA and NNS focus on health related outcomes of the food system, specifically high levels of malnutrition as a result of low intake of nutrient dense foods. The CGAP policy is focused on nutrition challenges among minority groups in Vietnam.

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## 4 Discussion

Having reviewed both the mapping of the existing multi-stakeholder platforms active in the food system, and the relevant policies supporting the food system in each of the four counties, this study sought to understand where MSPs see their roles in the food system. Do they see their role as supporting the implementation of national policies? Or are they trying to shift the overall policy narrative in country (for example, to a more system based framing)? Or do they fulfil another purpose? Finally, gaps in terms of where MSPs are currently working, and potential opportunities for shifting to a more food system-based framing are considered, specifically focusing on opportunities to shift to narratives around healthier diets.

### 4.1 Multi-stakeholder platforms in food systems; linkages for transitions and transformations

Mapping of the MSPs in the four countries as seen in section 3.2 of this paper provides an understanding of which MSPs are active in the different parts food system, and how their key focus areas are interconnected in the different sections of the food system. This provides insights into where MSPs might support food systems transitions and transformations. This section will present synthesis of key observation about the MSPs active in the four countries.

In **Bangladesh and Vietnam**, MSPs are distributed across the food system, where as in **Ethiopia** and **Nigeria** MSPs are not active in all areas of the food system. In Ethiopia, there is limited MSP focus on demographic drivers and consumer behaviour and in Nigeria, fewer MSPs are working on consumer behaviour. This may to some extent reflect the degree of development of the food system in each country, with a transition from a more traditional food system, where there is limited need to have policies around processing or marketing to supporting consumer choice to more modern and complex food systems with longer value chains as well as increasing levels of overweight and obesity leading to an increased focus on consumer behaviour.

MSPs focusing on emergency relief activities are active in three countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. In Vietnam there are no emergency focused MSPs which is likely due to the fact that there are fewer climatic or conflict related emergencies requiring humanitarian aid. All four countries have MSPs active in **technology and infrastructure** working on issues including provision of better farm inputs such as encouraging the use of improved seed varieties, and livestock breeds.

All four countries have MSPs that are focused on pushing for policies to scale up evidence-based nutrition interventions especially among vulnerable populations such as infants, elderly and women. This interest in nutrition as an issue is perhaps not surprising given that country level interest was one of the key factors for selecting the A4NH focal countries. Additionally, many MSPs identified were created with the specific aim of sharing research findings so this focus on evidence based interventions might be expected.

All four countries have MSPs actively working on **socio-cultural** drivers, often focusing on issues which affect a specific segment of the population. For example, in Vietnam MSPs tailor their nutrition interventions to address the needs of the ethnic minority groups whereas MSPs in Nigeria and Ethiopia focus on **demographic drivers**, taking into account issues like population growth and the effect on the food system.

Moving from the food systems driver to the **food value chain**, many of the MSPs identified in all the four countries are working on the promotion of good agriculture practices which facilitates diversified crop production. Many MSPs are also advocating for the use of appropriate food storage and handling



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facilities to reduce post-harvest losses. Food safety is a major concern of MSPs in all the four countries and there are MSPs in all four countries specifically advocating for improve food safety and consumer protection.

Reducing malnutrition was by far the priority outcome area of the MSPs in all four countries. Health related outcomes, especially reducing malnutrition for vulnerable groups as well as micronutrient deficiencies, were the most common outcome priority areas. Few of the MSPs currently work on diet quality, considering both under and over nutrition, although the issue of over nutrition is also starting to enter the narrative of some MSPs, especially those with a nutrition research focus. MSPs working on sustainability related outcomes were also less common, and usually linked to specifically to agricultural practices. In Vietnam, one MSPs is focused on addressing issues of improving conservation of agriculture (soil biodiversity) however this was not seen in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Nigeria.

One overall observation is that in countries with more modern food systems, there are MSPs active in more areas of the food system. For example, in Ethiopia, which has a more traditional food system, fewer MSPs are working on issues such as food advertising and promotion, where as in Vietnam, which has a more modern food system, there are many more MSPs working on issues related to marketing and advertising and consumer choice. There are also subtle differences in terms of the outcome areas that are prioritized in the MSPs in the four countries. While in all counties the majority of nutrition focused MSPs support vulnerable groups with access to improved nutrient intakes, usually with the goal of reducing stunting, wasting or both, how vulnerable groups are defined varies. In Ethiopia the majority of women and children are considered vulnerable to undernutrition, where as in Vietnam this group is more specific, largely focused on ethnic minority groups or people living with chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS. This may also be an expected finding, as the food system advances in a particular country, those who are most vulnerable shifts, however reaching the most vulnerable may also become harder or these individuals may become increasingly disadvantaged and more spread out in the population.

## 4.2 Alignment of the Multi-stakeholder platform activities and policy focus areas in the food system

This section the links between the focal areas of the MSPs and national policies guiding the food system are explored.

Overall, the national level policies, more than the MSPs, cover most aspects of the food system, although to varying degrees. Policies in all countries tend to be strong in terms of both food production (including the production of diversified foods) as well as efforts to promote healthier choices on the part of consumers. However, there are relatively fewer policies which focus on the middle of the value chain, considering issues of processing, transportation and retail, what is often considered the missing middle. In general the policies reviewed, while not perhaps taking an explicit food systems approach, cover almost all areas of the food system, whereas MSPs tend to take on specific issues and thus focus their work in one section of the food system. In general MSPs seem to either focus on production, and associated efforts to ensure enough (quantity) of food is produced (often in an more environmentally friendly manner) or they focus on the consumptions side, raising awareness of the problems cause by poor nutrition and advocating healthier diets. While national policies in all countries cover most, if not all aspects of the food system, the presence of MSPs working on specific issues may highlight ongoing challenges and problems related to policy implementation. While beyond the scope of this study, it maybe that the presence of MSPs may, in some contexts reflect challenges in policy implementation rather than lack of relevant polices.

### **Bangladesh**

The focus of the Bangladeshi policies are well reflected in the activities of the MSPs, with the majority of the MSPs focused on the consumption part of the food system, with a heavy focus on reducing under nutrition. The overlap between the policies and the MSPs would suggest that the MPSs are largely led by the formal policy process, rather than driving new policy formation or setting the



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agenda. While there are MSPs active in many areas of the food system, few seem to take a system approach. Some MSPs work on issues which require a system approach to effectively tackle their area of concern, for example the Bangladesh Food Safety Society. Food safety can only be effectively addressed by working on multiple areas of the food system, however their efforts seem to be limited to specific focal areas of the food system which may limit their overall effectiveness.

### **Ethiopia**

On the production side, the main policies support increased production (of cereals) while nutrition sensitive agriculture policies provide a framework for producing greater quantities of nutrient dense foods. Many MSPs also found supporting agricultural production, with the aim of increasing both quantity and quality of food often in a way which promotes improved environmental sustainability. In Ethiopia while some policies are starting to consider developing improved post-harvest infrastructure there is a noticeable lack of MSPs who have started to work on post-farm gate issues, including processing and distribution. In terms of the food environment, there are policies to support consumers, for example policies promoting improved labelling, however this is not a key area of focus for Ethiopian policies, nor did we find any MSPs active in this space. Undernutrition, including stunting, wasting and micronutrient deficiencies are key concerns for MSPs, and are also well addressed in a number of Ethiopia policies which seek to support improved knowledge, changed behaviors to improve the nutritional status of, in particular, vulnerable groups.

### **Nigeria**

In Nigeria there is a strong focus of both policies and MSPs on agricultural production, including looking at underlying drivers impacting agricultural production such as climate change. Unlike in the other countries included in this study, some MSPs in Nigeria were found to be working on issues related to processing, distribution and markets which were in line with the policy priorities. While Nigeria has a number of policies relating to the food environment, this does not seem to be a priority area for the MSPs identified. Like in the other countries, nutrition and health outcomes are a key priority of the MSPs, although again the specific issues are contextualized and include issues of inequalities between rural and urban populations, and improved access to safety nets to support nutrition and food security.

### **Vietnam**

In Vietnam there are fewer MSPs working on increasing agricultural production, especially compared to the other countries. The majority of MSPs working on agriculture are research driven. Agricultural policies focus on increasing diversity, but mechanisation is promoted as a key agricultural priority. Policies also mention a specific role for the state in controlling and setting the price of key commodities, something which is not seen in other countries. Issues of food safety and consumer protection are key priorities of Vietnamese MSPs, and while there are also policies linked to food safety, the high numbers of these MSPs may again indicate a disconnect between policy and implementation in terms of food safety issues. Like in the other countries, there are policies and MSPs focused on addressing nutrition outcomes, although in Vietnam marginalized groups most at risk for undernutrition are more specifically defined than in other countries. Vietnam policies around the food environment are also starting to make reference to the double burden of malnutrition, including policies such as regulation of sales of junk food around schools.

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## 5 Conclusion

Over the last four years, the A4NH Platforms for Healthier Diets research programme sought to understand where existing multi-stakeholder platforms are active in the food system, how these platforms link to the formal food systems policies, and how existing multi-stakeholder platforms might be able to support countries to shift to a more systems based framing to anchor and scale healthy diet narratives in the four A4NH focal countries.

While there are a range of MSPs active in the food system in each of the focal countries, spanning a variety of food systems issues, this study did not identify any MSPs that are currently using a food systems framing in their work. The majority of MSPs focus on a few key areas of the food system, or key outcomes especially around nutrition. This focus provides something concrete for members to work towards, and a clarity of vision around what the MSP is trying to accomplish. There is perhaps a tension between the idea of MSPs supporting a food systems based framing, where they must take into account multiple issues, and the strong focus provided by prioritizing a specific issue. However, there are also limitations to single issue framing. For example, food safety requires that actions are taken by all value chain actors to ensure food remains safe for human consumption. MSPs working on food safety inherently need to take on a food systems framing to ensure they are engaging with all relevant actors. Other MSPs which focus on more specific issues, for example increased use of improved varieties, may also benefit from adopting a more systems based approach, for example considering support to both producers as well as consumers about various benefits of a new variety. However, the question of how to best support MSPs, where appropriate, to take on a food systems based, requires additional research.

While food systems related policies do not take an explicit food systems approach in the four focal countries, national policies supporting food system activities tend to take a more comprehensive approach than the MSPs, as perhaps would be expected. The policies in the focal country tended to be well aligned with the key drivers and health related outcomes in the country's own context, whether those were linked climate change (Vietnam), soil erosion and degradation (Ethiopia), rural-urban migration (Vietnam) or increasing rates of obesity (Nigeria).

Based on the findings from this study, a few observations can be made around the link between the food systems related policies in each of the A4NH focal countries and the MSPs active in those countries. One is that MSPs seem to, in general, support the formal policy process, and there are often strong links between active MSPs and formal policy actors, with various ministries (usually agriculture or health) playing key connecting roles between the various MSPs. This study did not find many MSPs active in a watch-dog or outside role, pushing for changes in food system policies in the four focal countries. Another key finding from the validation workshops is that MSPs often struggled to articulate their exact role. Many MSPs exist as key places to share information or research findings, but perhaps do not necessarily view their roles as steering food systems activities as such, but rather that supplying those actors in decision making roles, for example from government, with key information and research findings for better policies. While policies cover most food system related issues, and MSPs tend to be less comprehensive, it may be that places where MSPs are active in the food system may represent areas where there are gaps in policy implementation (e.g. food safety).

Finally, this study found that health and nutrition status remain the key outcomes prioritized by the majority of MSPs and policies guiding the food system, with very few MSPs working sustainability or socio-economic outcomes. Additionally, many MSPs and policies narrowed their focus even more, prioritizing health and nutritional status of marginalized groups. Moving toward a food systems based framing may allow MSPs to have greater impact, and also support achieving their health related goals by considering broader issues which changes in the food system might be able to find solutions. However, care will also need to be placed to ensure that moving to a food systems based framing does not come at the expense of the focus and clarity provided by a clear and narrow focus.

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