

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE

GIZ AND GAIN POLICY ADVISORS' EXCHANGE SERIES



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SUMMARY

This convening paper summarises the contents and outcomes of a meeting series jointly organised by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). The initiative aimed to foster exchange between policy advisors from both organisations who provide policy advice to governments on topics related to food systems transformation and governance.

Recognising the need for improved coordination and alignment between different donors and organisations, the series brought together actors from GIZ and GAIN to share experiences, discuss challenges, and learn from each other. Three online meetings were held between November 2023 and May 2024, serving as a starting point for further collaboration and exchange at both collective and bilateral levels.

The meetings highlighted the necessity for government-owned data platforms and dashboards for accountability and evidence-based policymaking. They also emphasised the importance of cross-sectoral coordination, strong leadership, transparency, and adequate resource allocation. By leveraging the collective expertise of policy advisors, the community of practice could be strengthened, leading to better support for governments in their efforts to transform national food systems. These exchanges laid the groundwork for ongoing bilateral and collective collaboration, potentially including joint global activities, such as co-organising events and sharing best practices.

KEY MESSAGES

- The Ecosystem of Support for food systems transformation and governance has faced challenges in achieving optimal functionality in many countries.
- Communities of practice can serve as a crucial entry point for enhancing support to countries, significantly improving the effectiveness of transformative efforts through better coordination and collaboration among various actors and organisations.
- We organised exchanges among policy advisors to create such a community of practice. Key areas of interest during the policy advisor exchanges were 'multisectoral information systems for nutrition' and 'cross-sectoral coordination of food and nutrition security and resilience'.
- The series of exchanges marked the beginning of ongoing bilateral and collective collaboration, with discussion underway about potential joint activities at a global level, such as co-organising events and sharing best practices.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Achieving healthy and sustainable diets for all is a pressing global priority, necessitating concerted efforts from various actors and organisations across multiple countries (1,2). These entities - including United Nations (UN) organisations, donor agencies, financial institutions, regional organisations, civil society groups, businesses, and coalitions - support governments in advancing their agendas related to the comprehensive transformation of food systems, including improved food security and nutrition as a priority outcome. Their support is essential for providing policy advice on critical topics to ensure effective and sustainable food systems.

In 2021, the UN Food Systems Summit (FSS) catalysed the development of strategic pathways aimed at transforming national food systems. In response, a diverse array of organisations (such as the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Food Action Alliance, AGRA and others), collectively known as the Ecosystem of Support (EoS), has been assisting governments in implementing these transformative pathways (3). However, despite their potential, the EoS has not always functioned optimally in many countries, and successful examples are scarce. The effectiveness of these transformative efforts could be significantly enhanced through improved coordination and collaboration among the various actors and organisations involved.

One promising approach to improving this coordination and enhancing the effectiveness of support is establishing communities of practice among different organisations. These communities foster learning, collaboration, and reflection, ensuring that the support provided to governments is aligned and harmonised. By working together more closely, these entities can better support governments in their efforts to transform food systems.

GIZ and GAIN have both been instrumental in supporting governments as they advance their national pathways for food systems transformation. GIZ supports governance for food and nutrition security, and more broadly food systems transformation, through several programmes. Similarly, GAIN, through its Nourishing Food Pathways (NFP) programme, has appointed policy advisors in ten countries to assist governments in the further development and implementation of these pathways.

Given the complex and interconnected nature of food systems transformation, it was decided that a series of joint meetings between policy advisors from both GIZ and GAIN would be the most effective way to identify approaches to addressing the challenges and opportunities at hand. These convenings aimed to enhance coordination, share best practices, and develop a cohesive strategy for supporting governments in their efforts to achieve sustainable and nutrition-supporting food systems. Through this collaborative approach, which was driven by the needs and challenges of the policy advisors, the series sought to foster a more integrated and effective support system, ultimately contributing to the global goal of healthy diets for all, delivered through more sustainable food systems.

PARTICIPATING PROGRAMMES

From GIZ, three programmes took part in the exchange series. The Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security and Enhanced Resilience, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), supports partners in 12 countries in advancing food systems governance as part of its multi-level approach for food and nutrition security. The governance component complements the work at micro- and meso-level, including different aspects such as agricultural diversification for year-round availability of nutritious foods, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) activities to improve

utilisation of consumed foods, social and behaviour change for good nutrition practices, and the empowerment of women as key actors for food and nutrition security. The Global Programme on Food Systems Transformation, also commissioned by BMZ, supports transformative initiatives working towards healthier and more sustainable food systems in several countries.

GIZ's Knowledge for Nutrition (K4N) programme, with its Capacity for Nutrition (C4N) component, jointly commissioned by BMZ and the European Commission, has supported governments in several countries by establishing National Information Platforms for Nutrition (NIPN). Policy advisors have been appointed in 11 countries to work with sectoral or inter-sectoral government institutions at various levels (e.g., subnational or national). Their role includes supporting effective horizontal and vertical coordination and policy coherence for nutrition, alongside measures for capacity strengthening and data-driven decision-making processes.

From GAIN, policy advisors working on the NFP programme participated. NFP is an ambitious programme that seeks to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG2) by supporting inclusive and coherent food systems transformation in ten countries. This programme builds on work conducted during the UN FSS, aiming to support and strengthen the design and delivery of national food systems transformation pathways. GAIN works with over 100 partners across 11 countries to deliver this programme. Its aims are threefold: to increase access to safe, nutritious food in an environmentally sustainable way; to strengthen in-country support systems to continue to develop and deliver their national food systems transformation pathways; and to be used as inspiration and guidance for other countries and stakeholders as pathways are developed and implemented. Through intensive collaboration with national governments and diverse stakeholders, GAIN's NFP programme aims to address policy coherence, amplify the voices of marginalised groups, improve market access for low-income consumers, align private-sector finance, connect nutrition and environmental agendas, and utilise evidence to track progress and learn from the pathway implementation process.

OVERVIEW OF THE SERIES OF MEETINGS

Three moderated online meetings were held between November 2023 and May 2024 to facilitate thematic exchanges among GIZ and GAIN policy advisors, focusing on improved food security and nutrition as a priority outcome of food systems transformation in Africa and Asia (see agendas of the three meetings in the Annex). These meetings were designed to foster peer-to-peer learning, identify synergies, and explore the establishment of national and regional communities of practices. To each of the meetings policy advisors from countries such as Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, as well as colleagues working on policy aspects on global level, were invited.

FIRST MEETING: SCOPING MAIN STRATEGIES AND CONCERNS IN PROVIDING POLICY ADVICE

The first meeting was held on the 27 November 2023 and was moderated by an external facilitator. The meeting was conducted in English. The meeting had 34 participants from 16 different countries.

This first session served as an introduction to the series of meetings, focusing on acquainting participants with one another and the aims of the meetings and identifying policy advisors' key concerns through an online word cloud and discussion. Common themes included challenges in implementation, coordination, and capacity-building needs. Participants shared successful strategies and areas needing attention. The key aspects raised included:

- **Private-sector engagement:** Integration and incentives for private-sector roles in nutrition.
- **Policy implementation:** Bridging gaps between policy and practice, enhancing frontline capacities.
- **Policy coherence:** Strengthening policy alignment and practical strategies.
- **Governance:** Improving institutional structures at all levels.
- **Collaboration:** Joint advocacy, donor coordination, and stakeholder collaboration.
- **Information systems:** Developing multisectoral systems, enhancing coordination, and monitoring.

ONLINE SURVEY AND INTRODUCTION OF INDUCTION SLIDE DECKS

Based on the insights gained in the first meeting a short online survey was conducted with the policy advisors (shared via Microsoft Forms on 26 January 2024). The survey summarised the aspects raised during the first session into four main topic clusters (1. Multi-stakeholder collaboration, 2. Coherent policies and achievable action plans, 3. From paper to practice: Mobilize resources and build capacities for implementation, 4. Evidence-based decision-making: Multi-sectoral information and monitoring systems) and aimed to identify those topics and sub-topics of most interest for the upcoming sessions. Furthermore, policy advisors were asked for their willingness to present their experiences on certain topics, and for their time availabilities for the upcoming sessions.

A total of 22 responses were collected between 26 January and 13 February 2024. Responses were collected from policy advisors from African countries (n=13) and Asian countries (n=6), as well as a few colleagues working on global policy aspects and located in the UK and Belgium (n=3) (Figure 1).

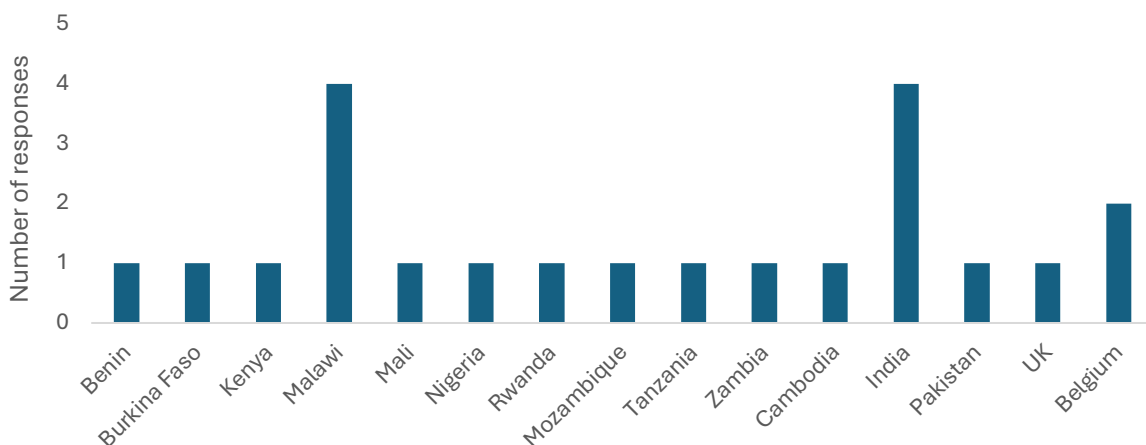


Figure 1. Countries in which survey respondents (total n=22) were based in and conducted their policy work. For UK and Belgium this relates to global policy work. Respondent survey, February 2024.

Most respondents indicated their interest in topics related to multi-stakeholder collaboration and multi-sectoral information and monitoring systems (Figure 2). A total of seven policy advisors also indicated their willingness to present on certain topics in any of

the upcoming two policy advisor exchanges. Based on the availability of policy advisors to present on the topics of interest, it was decided to focus on ‘Data platforms and dashboards’ for the second meeting and on ‘Cross-sectoral coordination’ for the third meeting.

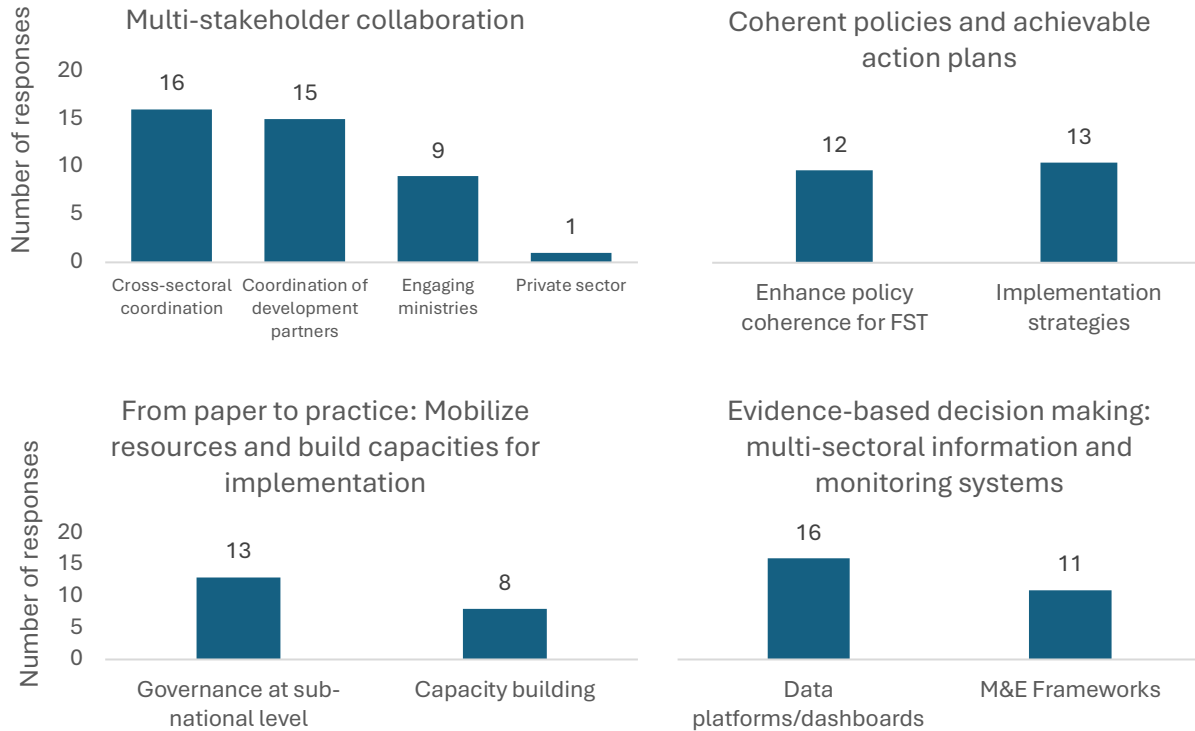


Figure 2. Topics of interest for policy advisors (total n=22), by themes. Respondent survey, February 2024.

In addition to working on thematically structuring the exchange sessions, an introductory slide deck with profiles of all participating policy advisors was developed. The idea was to give participants a foundation for further collaboration beyond the exchange sessions by presenting an overview of each participant’s fields of work, focus, and specific experience as well as pointing to shared challenges that might be worth discussing on a bi- or trilateral basis. All participants were asked on a voluntary basis to contribute information on their location, position, main area of expertise, main challenges faced in policy work, contact information, and picture.

They had time throughout the exchange series to send in information and were reminded of the benefits of doing so at every session. The slide deck was shared at the end of the three exchange sessions with all participants, giving them the possibility to reach out to each other and continue collaboration between GAIN and GIZ on an individual basis.

SECOND MEETING: MULTISECTORAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR NUTRITION FOR STRONG EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY

The second meeting was held on 29 February 2024 and moderated by GAIN. The meeting was conducted in English, but direct translation into French was available. The meeting had 32 participants from 18 countries.

Based on the online survey and the topics of most interest identified, the second session focused on ‘Multisectoral information systems for nutrition – for strong evidence-based

policy' and included a short presentation of experiences and particularly challenges from Mali (GIZ), including insights on the establishment of an integrated monitoring and evaluation system for food and nutrition security as a decision-making tool for the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security and Social Protection (CNSANPS) (Figure 3). Further within the session reflections were given on the Food System Dashboard (FSD) in Pakistan (GAIN), and experiences on NIPN and how to assist countries in strengthening analytical capacity for nutrition to inform policy and support evidence-based decision-making in Niger and Senegal (GIZ). Figure 4 depicts the capacity building plan for Niger including all stakeholders involved with the NIPN platform. The presentations were followed by a discussion and sharing of experiences from all country teams.

Policy Framework for Food and Nutrition Security and Social Protection (PoINSAN)

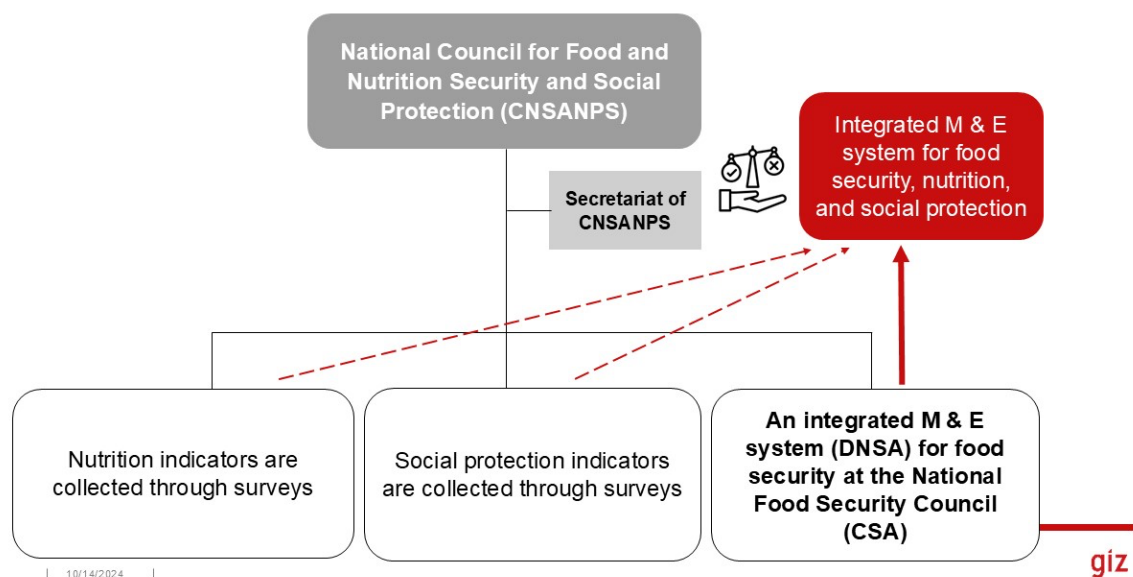


Figure 3. Political context for an integrated monitoring and evaluation mechanism for food and nutrition security and social protection in Mali (GIZ). Extract from a presentation. Translated into English from the original French version.

The key takeaway messages, based on input provided by colleagues from GIZ and GAIN and the key aspects raised during the session, included:

- The need to have data platforms and dashboards owned by the government to ensure accountability and responsibility to keep them up to date and avoid 'dead' platforms/databases (i.e., those put in place in the context of a project and later not maintained).
- The importance of capacity building to enable the above-mentioned ownership and responsibility across diverse subjects, such as technical knowledge on nutrition-related topics and technical competencies for IT-maintenance.
- Challenges integrating different sectors into one information system, since there is often a variety of processes and/or databases in place but managed in silos by different sectors relevant to food systems transformation without the necessary integration.
- Partnering with champions is crucial.
- Discussion of potential and limitations for alignment between NIPN and the FSD. The FSD is broader, but NIPN is bound to the specific plans of the respective

government for its platform and therefore not free in including new dimensions that are not foreseen in the original strategy.

- Also, it was recognised that working with the government on establishing monitoring systems or strengthening the use of data platforms is hard work that can take time and requires capacity and financial resource.



Other support: example of capacity building to strengthen the NIPN cycle

NIPN Niger is in charge of the capacity-building plan for NIPN stakeholders (INS -HC3N and sectoral ministries):

- Occasional training for direct actors (LiST training, data analysis, anonymization, editorial practices, etc.);
- Occasional training for users of nutritional information - civil society, media, etc. (Nutrition Toolkit, etc.);
- Long-term training: NutralPro for sectoral staff (training for sectoral staff, etc.) : one-year diploma course at the University in evening classes to provide sectors with basic knowledge of nutrition;
- Long-term training: Master in Nutrition for a NIPN statistician (2 years in Ghana) and Master in Data science for the database manager (2 years in Côte -d'Ivoire) to enable more advanced and effective analyses.



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Figure 4. Capacity building plan for NIPN stakeholders. Extract from NIPN presentation on Niger (GIZ).

THIRD MEETING: CROSS-SECTORAL COORDINATION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

The third meeting was held on the 22 May 2024, moderated by GIZ. The meeting was conducted in English, but direct translation into French was available. The meeting had 24 participants from various countries.

The third session focused on 'cross-sectoral coordination of food and nutrition security and resilience' and included two presentations by policy advisors from Zambia (GIZ) and Kenya (GAIN). The presentation from Kenya focused on the UN FSS governance and coordination in the country and shed light on how the process to operationalise Kenya's Food System Transformation Pathway is set up (Figure 5).

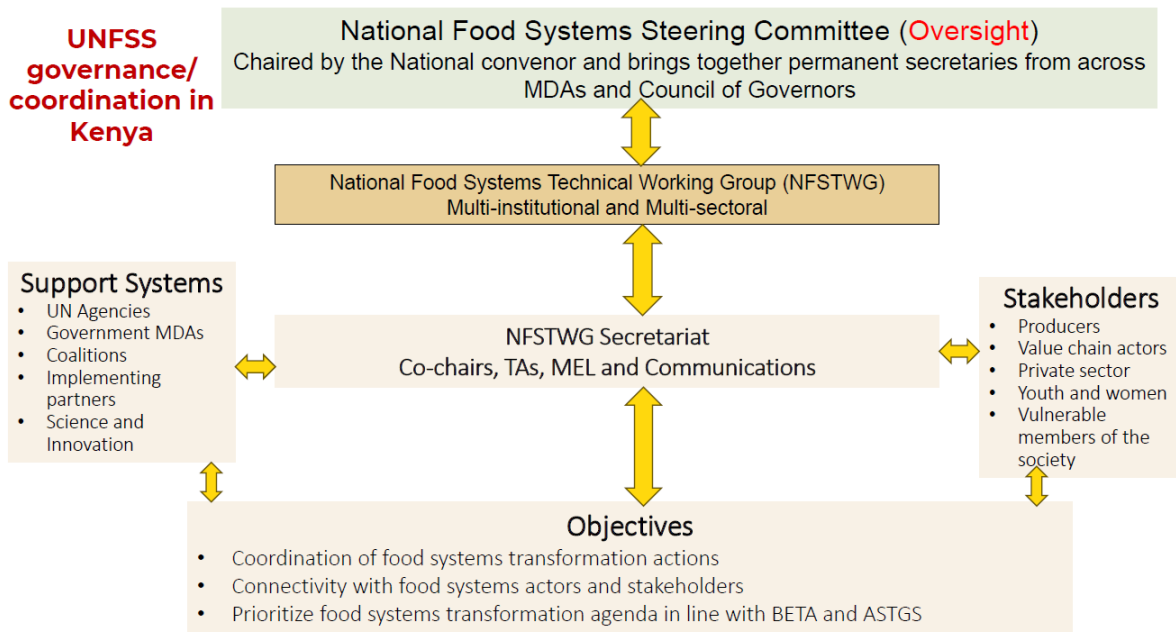


Figure 5. UNFSS governance and coordination in Kenya (GAIN). Extract from a presentation.

The Zambian presentation presented the landscape of cross-sectoral coordination of efforts to fight malnutrition in the country on all levels from national (e.g., role of the National Food and Nutrition Coordinating Committee, NFNC) to subnational level (e.g., Ward Nutrition Coordinating Committees) (Figure 6).

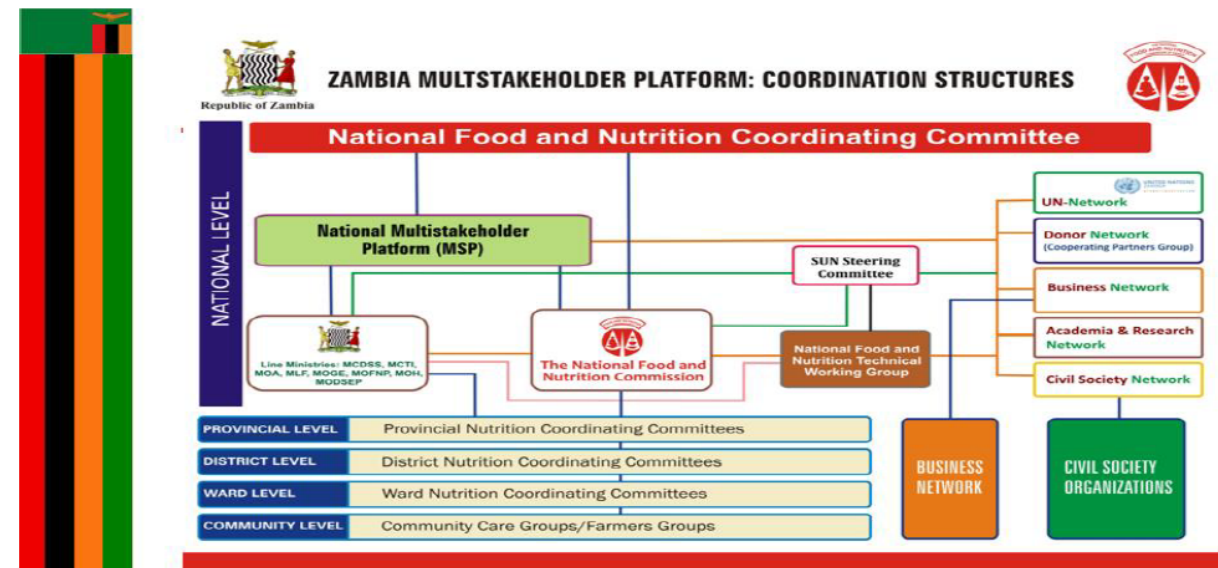


Figure 6. Zambia's Coordination Mechanism (GIZ). Extract from a presentation.

Both presentations also elaborated on challenges with coordination and potential solutions that have been tried to address them. After the presentations a discussion and sharing of experiences from all country teams was held. The key aspects discussed included:

- **Alignment and leadership:** Secure agreement on objectives and actions, underpinned by strong, committed leadership (achieving this is a benefit of having high-level political engagement, which also helps to ensure convening power).
- **Clarity and accountability:** Define clear roles and responsibilities, with mechanisms to ensure accountability.
- **Transparency and resources:** Maintain strategy transparency across levels and ensure effective resource allocation.

The importance of connecting multi-sectoral, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder components was also emphasised. In addition, two challenges were raised:

- **Competing interests and operational gaps:** Manage competing interests and improve the connection between technical teams and policymakers.
- **Capacity and data:** Address limitations in strategic capacity and data availability to effectively monitor and evaluate success.

DECISIONS, FUTURE PLANS, AND ACTION ITEMS

A second online survey was conducted shortly after the third session (via Microsoft Forms on 23 May 2024), available in English and French, and shared with all policy advisors analysing the overall satisfaction with the series of meetings, aspects of relevance and ideas to follow up in the future. Overall, the respondents (n=12) rated the usefulness of the exchanges on a scale between 1: being not useful at all and 5: being extremely useful with an average of 4.0 (Figure 7).

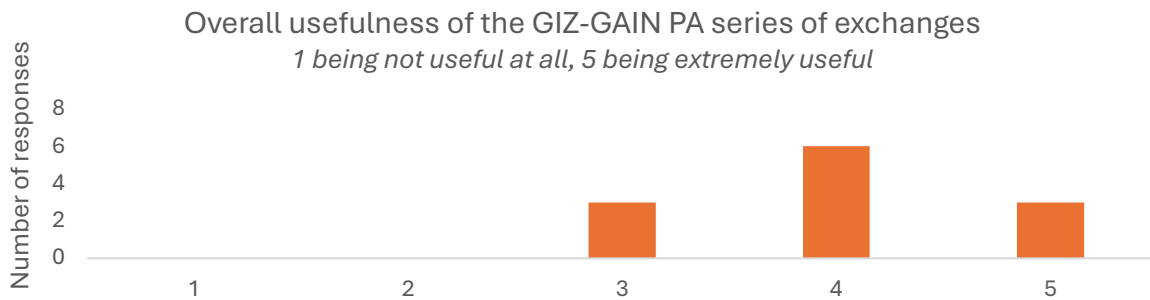


Figure 7. Rating of policy advisors on the overall usefulness of the GIZ-GAIN PA series of exchanges. Online survey, May 2024.

In addition to the sessions held, respondents indicated further interest to discuss topics related to:

- Advocacy and policy processes for food systems
- Strengthening food systems
- Policy formulation and implementation
- Collaboration and synergy
- Networking and engagement
- Practical insights and experiences

When asked about the respondents' ideas for how to further strengthen the EoS, the most important aspects they indicated to have learned or would like to follow up on included:

- **Leveraging established networks:** Utilising and expanding the existing network can improve communication and collaboration.

- **Promoting multi-sectoral collaboration:** Investigating and fostering collaboration across various sectors, such as health, agriculture, education, and social protection, can address nutrition challenges more holistically.
- **Examining policy and governance frameworks:** Analysing the policies and governance structures that support nutrition integration into national food systems is crucial for understanding and improving these processes.
- **Stronger collaboration between GAIN and GIZ at the country level:** Enhanced cooperation between these organisations can lead to more effective support systems.
- **In-person meetings:** Facilitating in-person interactions among people working in the same country can significantly strengthen exchange and collaboration.
- **Identifying and documenting best practices:** It is essential to identify, document, and share successful models of integrating nutrition issues into national food systems policy.
- **Sharing progress across different levels:** Hearing from participants at various stages of progress—from beginners to those who have nearly completed the process of developing food system transformation plans in country—can provide valuable insights and learning opportunities.
- **Maintaining exchange tools:** Continuously using and maintaining tools for sharing and exchange, such as those used in the sessions, will support ongoing collaboration and learning.

While aspects like stronger in-country collaboration and in-person meetings depend on the individual country context and the availability of staff in the same countries, the results generally underscored the importance of continued collaboration and sharing of lessons learned to effectively advance food systems transformation. However, they also highlighted that there are aspects that can and should be followed up by policy advisors individually (i.e. putting learning into practice.)

The insights gained will inform future efforts and support mechanisms, contributing to the global goal of achieving healthy, sustainable diets for all.

CONCLUSION

The series of meetings between policy advisors from GIZ and GAIN highlighted the need for enhanced coordination and collaboration among various actors and organisations to better support national governments in their attempts to sustainably transform food systems towards achieving healthier and more sustainable diets for all. The series underscored the pivotal role of communities of practice in fostering learning, collaboration, and reflection, ultimately improving the alignment and harmonisation of support provided to governments. Participants showed strong interest, participated consistently and actively, and expressed appreciation for the added value of such exchanges. It was found that even across different contexts, several challenges were similar, but advisors from the different organisations had tried different approaches to facing them. They thus found the exchange with like-minded peers working on related topics to be beneficial.

The focus on multisectoral information systems emphasised the necessity of government-owned data platforms and dashboards. These systems are crucial for accountability, alignment, and evidence-based policymaking, with potential for integrating various data systems to better inform policy decisions and track progress. The third meeting highlighted

the importance of cross-sectoral coordination for achieving progress towards food and nutrition security and resilience. Key elements for success included clear roles, strong leadership, transparency, and adequate resource allocation. The discussions also addressed significant challenges such as operational gaps, competing interests, and the need to enhance strategic capacity and data availability. Overall, the participant feedback survey highlighted that enhanced collaboration between GIZ and GAIN at the country level, the facilitation of in-person meetings, and the leveraging of established networks as key areas for further development. Additionally, it emphasized the need to document best practices, promote multi-sectoral collaboration, examine policy and governance frameworks, and create dedicated communication channels. These steps are essential to advancing food systems transformation and ensuring sustained progress.

The convening series also underscored the importance of continued learning and adaptation. The policy advisors' willingness to share experiences and collaborate on practical solutions has laid a strong foundation for ongoing progress. Maintaining exchange tools and platforms, such as through a Microsoft Teams channel, could support continuous dialogue and knowledge sharing, further enhancing the effectiveness of the EoS.

In conclusion, the convening series helped fostering a more integrated and effective support system for food systems transformation by bringing together representatives of two members of the EoS. By leveraging the collective expertise and experiences of policy advisors, the EoS can more effectively contribute to the global goal of achieving healthier and more sustainable diets for all. The insights gained from these meetings will inform future efforts, ensuring that the path towards sustainable food systems is both collaborative and evidence based.

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ANNEX

GIZ and GAIN

**Support to Nutrition Governance:
Policy advice on food and nutrition security and food systems
transformation in Africa and Asia through policy advisors at
national and sub-national levels**

1st virtual exchange among policy advisors of the two
organisations

27th November 2023

Agenda

Time (CET)	Topic / Activity
11:30	Welcome
	Brief Intro from GIZ
	Brief Intro from GAIN
	Purpose of today's exchange and agenda
11:45	Brief introduction of the group and each policy adviser
12:15	Each country or each policy advisor brings one main question/topic they would like to discuss in future meetings
	Consolidation of topics
12:50	Next steps
	Good-bye
13:00	End of the exchange meeting

GIZ and GAIN**2nd Policy Advisor Exchange****‘Multisectoral information systems for nutrition – for a strong evidence-based policy’**

Virtual exchange among policy advisors of the two organisations

29th February 2024

Agenda

Time (CET)	Topic / Activity
11:00	Welcome and brief intro to the 2 nd PA exchange
	Purpose of today's exchange and agenda
11:10	Experiences from Mali
11:30	Experiences on the Food System Dashboard in Pakistan
11:50	Experiences on NIPN from Niger and Senegal
12:10	Discussion and sharing of experiences from all country teams
12:40	Summary of discussion and topics for upcoming session
12:50	End of the exchange meeting

GIZ and GAIN

Support to Nutrition Governance: Policy advice on food and nutrition security and food systems transformation in Africa and Asia through policy advisors at national and sub-national levels

3rd virtual exchange among policy advisors of the two
organisations

Cross-sectoral coordination of food and nutrition security and resilience

22nd May 2024 | 11 am – 1 pm CET

Agenda

Time (CET)	Topic / Activity
11:00	Welcome and brief introduction to the 3 rd Policy Advisor Exchange
11:05	Purpose of today's exchange and agenda
11:10	Experience from Kenya
11:30	Experience from Zambia
11:50	Discussion and sharing of experiences from all country teams
12:20	Summary of discussion and future outlook Announcement of final survey
12:30	Closing remarks to the meeting and the meeting series
13:00	End of meeting



ABOUT GAIN

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the UN in 2002 to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition. Working with governments, businesses and civil society, we aim to transform food systems so that they deliver more nutritious food for all people, especially the most vulnerable.

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