

Strengthening Nutrition Governance: Insights and Lessons from the Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience

The District Nutrition Coordination Committee meets in Luapula Region, Zambia

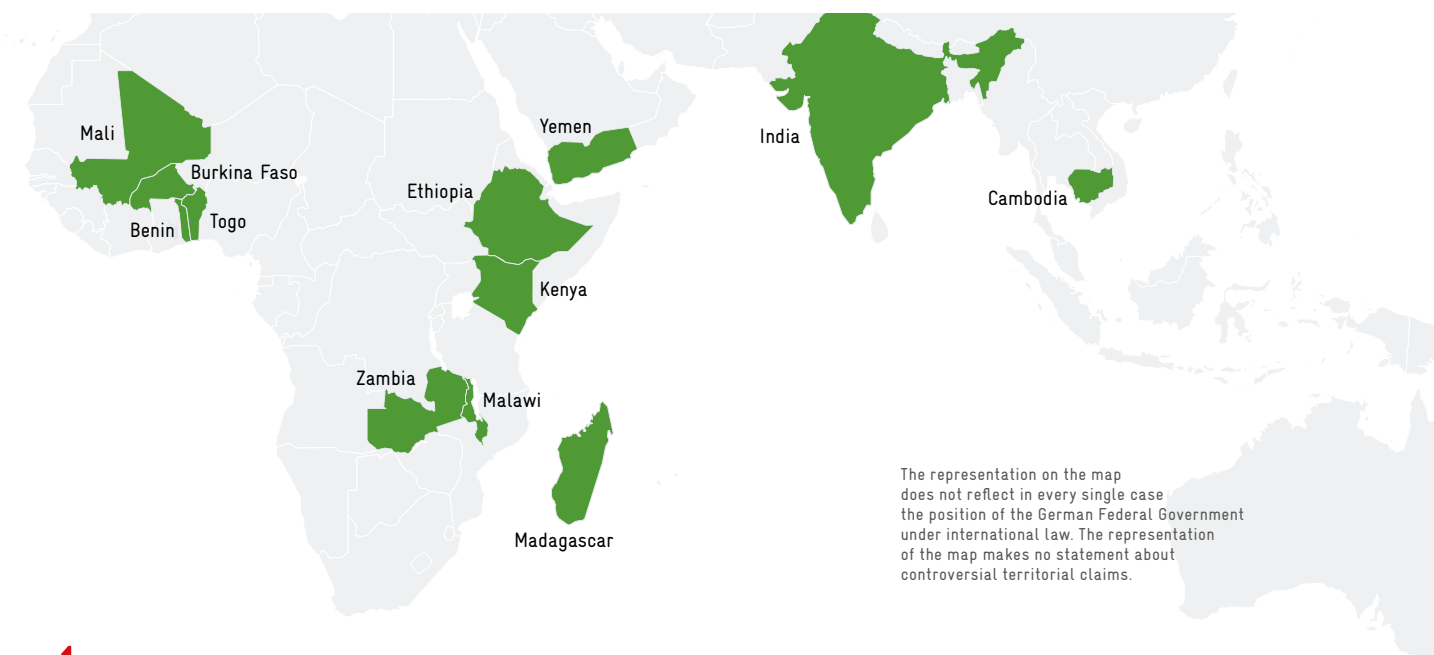
What is nutrition governance?

Nutrition governance refers to the policies, institutions and processes that ensure food and nutrition security across societies. It ensures that nutrition is integrated into national and local development priorities, facilitates collaboration across sectors, and secures accountability and adequate resources. Strong nutrition governance is essential for addressing malnutrition and building resilience, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Why does nutrition governance?

Nutrition is fundamental to health, economic development, and overall well-being. Ensuring adequate nutrition requires a multisectoral approach that brings together agriculture, health, education, and social protection to create sustainable solutions. Strong governance systems play a key role in aligning policies from these different sectors, mobilizing resources, and fostering collaboration between national and sub-national levels. By investing in well-coordinated strategies and sufficient resources, governments can enhance nutrition outcomes and build resilient, healthier societies.

Country Packages of the Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience



The representation on the map does not reflect in every single case the position of the German Federal Government under international law. The representation of the map makes no statement about controversial territorial claims.

Nutrition governance in the Global Programme

Since 2015, the **GIZ Global Programme on Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience**, has partnered with governments, civil society, and private sector actors to build sustainable governance structures across twelve countries, ensuring that nutrition objectives are visible and embedded within national and regional frameworks.

To analyze factors influencing nutrition governance, the programme conducted two multi-country studies. The present document summarizes the findings of these studies. The **2018** study laid the foundation for understanding governance mechanisms in the partner countries.

This study also highlighted country-level contextual influences such as political commitment, accountability, and the linkages between national and sub-national levels. In **2020**, the **second study** expanded the framework to address global shocks and emphasized sub-national implementation and community mobilization as key drivers of governance. The studies' findings now underpin the programme's **four-mechanism framework** for strengthening governance at both national and sub-national levels, as illustrated in the graphic below and explored in detail in the following sections.

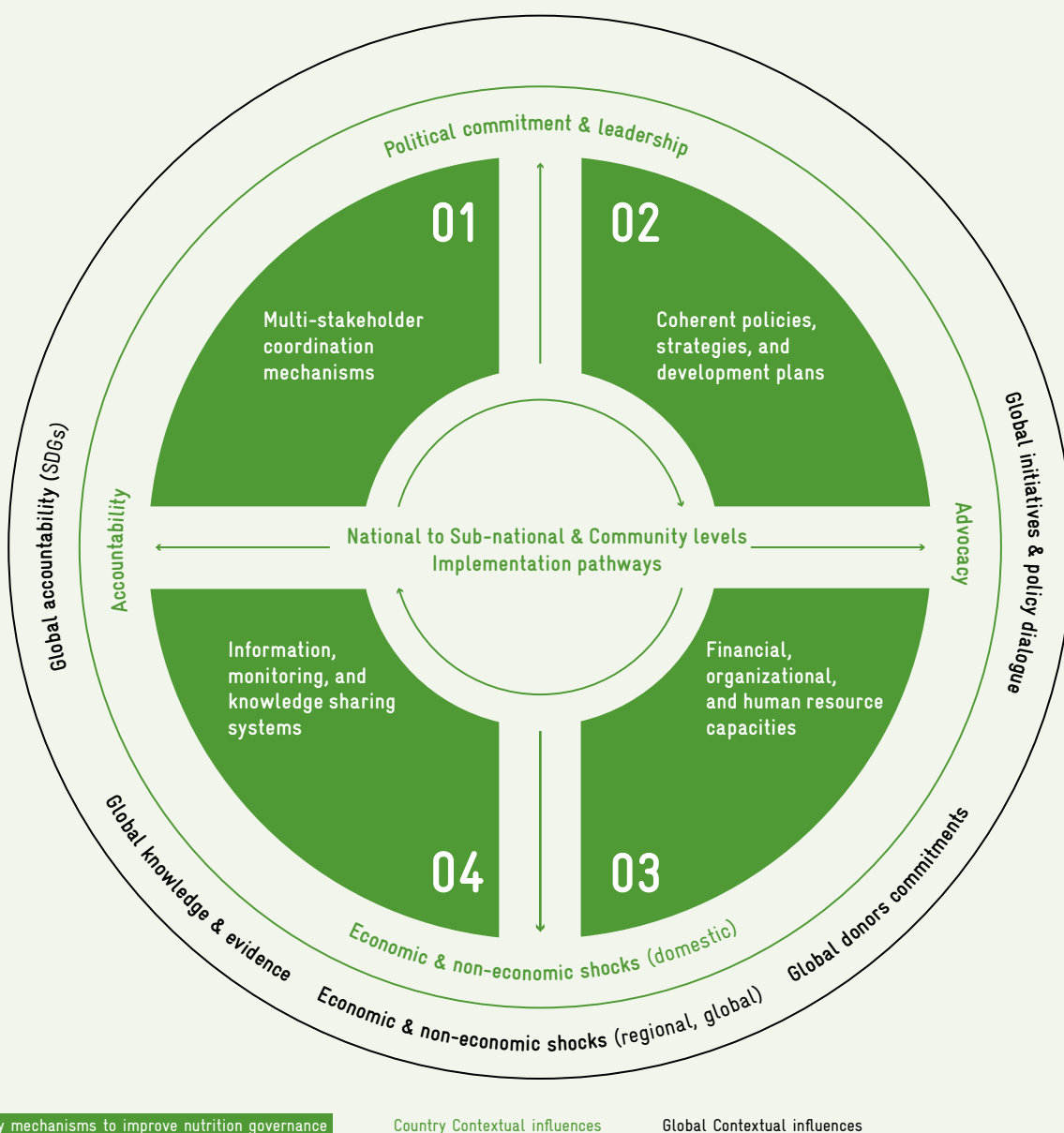


Figure 1. 2020 Global Programme Four-Mechanism Analytical Framework for Nutrition Governance

1. Multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms

Creating multi-sectoral coordination platforms at the national and local levels is essential for tackling malnutrition. Successful coordination involves integrating multiple actors – government agencies, NGOs, private sector stakeholders, and research institutions – each with clear roles. Effective platforms are typically located within suprasectoral agencies (e.g., Prime Minister’s office) to ensure broad authority and impact.

In **Cambodia**, the programme supported multi-stakeholder platforms in Kampong Thom and Kampot provinces, bringing together representatives from agriculture, health, education, social protection, and planning to better align their actions. This model has proven successful and is now being scaled up nationwide with government support. It has also been officially adopted by the Cambodian government as a framework for implementing multisectoral coordination at district and communal level.

In **Benin**, the programme facilitated the institutionalization of a coordination framework through a government decree, enabling collaboration between the government and partners to strengthen cross-sectoral nutrition actions. This framework helps align health and agricultural efforts to achieve nutrition goals.

In **Madagascar**, the programme reinforced regional governance structures by supporting the establishment of a strategic Steering Committee (CoPil) under the leadership of the Regional Office of Nutrition (ORN) in the project region. Membership of the CoPil comprises the ORN Regional Coordinator and several focal points of regional departments working on food and nutrition security. The committee ensures better coordination and synergy among stakeholders, aligning interventions across sectors and aims to strengthen systemic nutrition governance. It supports the ORN’s mission by promoting the harmonization of interventions and quality standards set by the National Nutrition Council.



Nutrition-sensitive farming in Burkina Faso: putting multisectoral policies into practice

2. Coherent policies, strategies, and development plans

To embed nutrition in development agendas, policies must be harmonized across sectors. However, policy coherence can be difficult, as sectors may lack incentives or mandates to prioritize nutrition. The programme integrates nutrition-sensitive approaches into both national and decentralized policies, ensuring that nutrition goals are prioritized in health, agriculture, and social protection strategies.

In **Malawi**, the programme has embarked on a process to integrate nutrition into the national social protection policy. After several years of supporting the Government in assessing its existing policy framework – Including through the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tool on Food Security and Nutrition – and by providing convening spaces for stakeholders and advocating with key decision-makers, a major milestone has been reached. The revised Social Protection Policy, launched in November 2024, now includes nutrition as a dedicated policy priority area.

In **Burkina Faso** the programme has supported the implementation of the national multisectoral nutrition policy through the national nutrition council (CNaN). The better positioning of the topic of nutrition was promoted by enabling the participation of the Secrétaire Technique pour la Multisectorialité de la Nutrition (SUN Focal Point) at the Partners for Change event in Nairobi in June 2024.

In **Zambia**, the programme contributed to the institutionalization of multi-sectoral nutrition coordination structures through collaboration with the National Food and Nutrition Commission under the 1st 1000 Most Critical Days Programme (MCDP). This work culminated in the enactment of the Food and Nutrition Act No. 3 of 2020, which formally embedded these coordination structures in the national policy framework, strengthening the governance basis for nutrition action across sectors.



Members of the Ward Nutrition Coordinating Committee are planning for a Learning Event

3. Financial, organizational, and human resource capacities

The sustainability of nutrition programmes depends on consistent financial investment, well-trained professionals and strong institutional capacity-building. Public investment in these areas is often inadequate, with heavy reliance on donor funding that can fragment efforts. The programme strengthens government capacity and integrates nutrition into training and budgeting processes.

In **Malawi**, the programme effectively supported advocacy efforts for the creation of a protected budget line for nutrition at the district level and the establishment of positions for nutrition frontline workers. The nutrition budget line has been in place since the 2023/2024 financial year, while the process of setting up frontline worker positions is ongoing and making good progress.

In Madhya Pradesh, **India**, a Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) State Strategy was developed with the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) and is implemented through state-wide trainings of social frontline workers on SBC communication. In Maharashtra, a digital solution was adopted by DWCD to track the supply chain of Take-Home-Rations (THR), nutrient-dense supplementary nutrition packages for women and children, to the distribution points. In a state-wide roll-out all frontline workers are currently trained to use the app to allow monitoring of quality of THR on state-level.

4. Information, monitoring, and knowledge sharing systems

Data-driven decision-making is essential for effective governance. Supporting robust nutrition information systems allows governments to track trends, evaluate interventions, and design well-informed policies. These systems must also enable better use of data for accountability and planning.

In **Mali**, the programme supported the establishment of a multisectoral monitoring platform in 2024, integrating indicators from social protection, food security, and nutrition. It conducted targeted advocacy with the relevant institutions and accompanied both the organizational and technical setup processes. The platform is intended to provide comprehensive data to inform decision-making by the unified multisectoral council which is currently in the process of being established, as foreseen in the national Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PolNSAN).

In **Burkina Faso** one major step is the participatory development of a method for evaluating nutrition governance under the leadership of the SUN Focal Point. The programme supported both the development of the method and the evaluation itself. This revealed weaknesses, particularly in the areas of leadership and financing.

Recommendations for development agencies and policymakers based on enabling and hindering factors

Several factors influence the success of nutrition governance, with both enabling and hindering elements at play.

ENABLING FACTORS

- › Political commitment and leadership often influenced by global initiatives like the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and World Bank engagements can drive nutrition governance reforms
- › Decentralization reforms that empower local governments to implement nutrition-sensitive programmes
- › Countries that have formalized nutrition coordination mechanisms through legal mandates tend to have stronger governance structures
- › Prominent figures in politics and society who drive change and raise awareness ('nutrition champions') advocating for nutrition help maintain momentum for governance reforms

HINDERING FACTORS

- › Dependency on donors can fragment efforts, misaligning them with national priorities and leading to uncertainty when external support is withdrawn
- › A narrow focus on food security or caloric intake can overlook vital health and dietary concerns, leading to fragmented agricultural interventions
- › Limited technical skills and high staff turnover, especially at sub-national levels reduce the effectiveness of governance mechanisms
- › Weak data systems and monitoring limit evidence-based decision-making and accountability

To strengthen nutrition governance, development agencies and policymakers should focus on leveraging enabling factors while addressing hindering factors. The following actions are key:



Establish multi-sectoral platforms:

Support coordination mechanisms at all governance levels to align efforts and encourage cross-sectoral collaboration.



Prioritize capacity building: Invest in long-term capacity building for government and community-level actors.



Strengthen the policy environment and legal frameworks:

Provide legal backing for nutrition governance through laws or policies to institutionalize mandates, secure sustainable funding, and enhance accountability.



Ensure sustainable financing for nutrition governance: Reduce dependence on external funding by integrating nutrition into domestic budgets and exploring innovative financing mechanisms.



Integrate nutrition into development plans:

Embed nutrition goals into national and sub-national plans, linking these to actionable mandates for all sectors.



Leverage data for accountability:

Strengthen data systems to enhance accountability and inform decision-making processes.



National institutions in Malawi validate a multisectoral M&E tool to improve nutrition coordination

Conclusion

The GIZ Global Programme's governance framework demonstrates how multi-stakeholder coordination, policy alignment, capacity-building, and data systems create a foundation for resilient nutrition systems. With a decade of experience, the programme demonstrated how these governance

mechanisms can be supported and adapted to different contexts, ensuring long-term impact and sustainability. By applying these lessons, governments and development partners can strengthen governance structures that ensure lasting improvements in food and nutrition security.

Further information

GIZ – Global Programme, **Food and nutrition security, enhanced resilience to food crises**, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/131583.html>
 Governance Study (2020) Synthesis Report, [giz2021-en-nutrition-resilience-governance-study-synthesis-report.pdf](https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2021-en-nutrition-resilience-governance-study-synthesis-report.pdf), <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2021-en-nutrition-resilience-governance-study-synthesis-report.pdf>

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