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THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN CONSTRUCTING HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED FOOD SYSTEMS

Experiences and perspectives from Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Indonesia, Nepal, India, and Palestine (Gaza Strip)



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0. PREFACE

This exploratory research aims to foster and expand the conversation among civil society organisations, social movements, and local governments and their networks around local food systems transformation and related advocacy and organising. Such a dialogue facilitates a deeper understanding of what can and is being done by local governments in different contexts around the world to advance human rights-based food systems and the right to food.

The study is based on a compilation of experiences and reflections from members of the [Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition \(GNRtFN\)](#) and associated organisations, national sections of FIAN International, and the work of FIAN International. It offers their perspectives and analyses of the situation in the respective countries. It does not aim to provide a complete picture of each situation, but rather snapshots and insights into how local level governance can be relevant in the struggle towards human rights-based food systems and the right to food and nutrition.

Bearing in mind geographical boundaries (i.e., towns, cities, regions), political contexts, and lived realities of how food systems function, the understanding of local must remain fluid. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, the term “local” includes a wide range of definitions and different global realities. Herein, local refers to villages, towns, cities, and municipalities, for example, as well as states (in federal systems), regions, and provinces. This broader definition of local also aims to be more inclusive of rural realities, and to counterbalance the urban or city bias often inherent to discussions on local food systems in international settings.

THIS REPORT EXPLORES THE FOLLOWING KEY QUESTIONS:

- What kind of competencies do local authorities have in terms of promoting healthy, sustainable, and just food systems?
- What are some examples of instances and areas in which local authorities have taken measures to transform food systems? What barriers exist?
- What kind of institutional frameworks and spaces exist for the public to participate in public policy making and implementation at the local level? How can or do these organs challenge the dominant power structures and corporate influence?
- How can local authorities in different contexts be strengthened and engage in the struggle towards human rights-based food systems?

The report concludes with some key insights and recommendations on how local government action to transform food systems and implement the right to food and nutrition can be enhanced and supported.

To gather information for this research, two open online consultations¹ were held with interpretation services available in English, Spanish, and French. Individual, in-depth interviews were conducted with activists from Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Indonesia, Nepal, and India; and these were supplemented by secondary research from CSO and academic sources.²

We would like to thank all the interviewees for their participation in this study and for openly sharing their wealth of knowledge, perspectives, and proposals. Moreover, we would like to thank all those who took part in the online consultations, as their inputs were critical to further conceptualizing and developing this research. We would also like to thank our colleagues at FIAN International and Bread for the World who contributed to the creation and review of this document.

A full list of interviewees and other direct contributors can be found in Annex 1.

1 The online consultations were held on June 22 and 23, 2023. A total of 18 people participated, representing, or affiliated with members of the Global Network for the RtFN.

2 Interviews were held between August 22 and November 21, 2023.

1. INTRODUCTION

A food system encompasses the various processes and actors involved in the production, distribution, exchange, preparation, consumption, and disposal of food, as well as the social, environmental, and economic outcomes generated by these.³ The concept of a food system has gained significant traction in international policy discussions in recent years; at the same time, its framing can heavily impact the direction these discussions take.⁴ Thus because this term is often skewed, some civil society organisations have rejected the concept all together, and prefer to utilize “food processes” or other similar terms.

The way food systems are organised – from seed to plate – has a fundamental impact on the realization of human rights: on the right to food and nutrition in particular, but also on the rights to health, to a healthy environment, to land, to work, to housing, to water, as well as many other rights.

Many of today’s human rights violations are the result of a highly dysfunctional and destructive industrial or “corporate” food system.⁵ The term corporate food system refers to the dominant food system based on an agro-industrial model of production and increasingly globalized value chains, which serve the interests of a few large corporations, financial elites, and powerful countries. This system is based on extracting natural resources and exploiting people and other living creatures, all to create exponential profits for a few.⁶

The vast environmental and climate crisis our world faces today that endangers the very basis of life on our planet and incites hunger, displacement, and conflict, is just one of the devastating outcomes of the corporate food system. Heavily reliant on fossil fuel-based inputs, large-scale animal husbandry and global supply chains, this system accounts for up to 37% of greenhouse gas emissions, and plays a leading role in polluting water, air, and soil.⁷ It is also a major contributor to the loss of biodiversity and dietary diversity, as well as of related knowledge and culinary practices developed over generations by peasant and indigenous communities, and in particular by women. Of the over 6000 species of plants cultivated worldwide for food, at present just nine species constitute two-thirds of global crop production.⁸ Many local varieties are becoming increasingly rare or disappearing entirely. Meanwhile, overweight and obesity and associated chronic health conditions have become major public health concerns and are a leading cause of premature death. Obesity among adults has tripled since the 1970s, while at present nearly 1 in every 5 children and adolescents is affected by overweight or obesity.⁹ At the same time, hunger and malnutrition continue to rise, with around 2.3 billion people being food insecure.¹⁰

3 IPES Food (2015). [The new science of sustainable food systems – Overcoming barriers to food systems barriers.](#)

4 For a critical discussion of the concept of food systems and its use within the UN sphere, please see: Recine, Suárez and Gonsalves (2021) “The Emergence of the Food Systems Discourse and Corporate Solutions to Hunger and Malnutrition” in [Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2021.](#)

5 For more information on impacts of the industrial food system on the human rights, see the report by the Special Rapporteur on the environment, David R. Boyd [Healthy and sustainable food: reducing the environmental impacts of food systems on human rights.](#) 19 July 2021. Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, on [Food systems.](#) 27 July 2021. Various reports by IPES Food and ETC Group.

6 See FIAN International. 2021. [The corporate capture of our food systems.](#)

7 See David Boyd 2021. [Healthy and sustainable food: reducing the environmental impacts of food systems on human rights.](#) See also ETC Group 2017. [Who will feed us: The industrial food chain vs the peasant food web.](#)

8 These are sugar cane, maize, rice, wheat, potatoes, soybeans, oil-palm fruit, sugar beet and cassava. See FAO 2019. [The State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture.](#)

9 Figures from 2016. See WHO webpage “[Obesity and Overweight](#)” (last updated June 2021).

10 FAO 2022. [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022.](#)

Ironically, it is often the same people who feed us as they care for our planet¹¹ who suffer most acutely from hunger and malnutrition.¹² Peasant and fishing communities, women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and food-system workers are displaced from their land and territories, dispossessed of common goods and collective knowledge, and deprived of their dignity. They are treated as replaceable cogs in the machinery of the corporate food system.

These injustices have not gone unchallenged. Across the globe, people are attempting to reclaim control over their land and natural resources, over the food they and their children eat, and the processes for producing and exchanging food. People are building and preserving food systems rooted in local cultures, resources, and knowledge, and built on solidarity and respect for human beings, animals, and nature. They are calling for a fundamental overhaul of the corporate food system and its production model in favour of food systems grounded in human rights and food sovereignty.¹³ Within this context, agroecology has emerged as a powerful common vision, practice, science, and movement for change.¹⁴

A COLLECTIVE VISION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED FOOD SYSTEMS

Amidst the negotiations of International Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition within the [Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#), civil society organizations and social movements independently organized in the [Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism \(CSIPM\)](#) have developed their own collective vision for human rights-based food-system transformation to guide them in the policy convergence process and beyond. The [CSIPM Vision on Food Systems and Nutrition](#) is a living document built on the experiences and struggles of the CSIPM constituencies, which include small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, women, food-system workers, and consumers. It is founded on five interconnected pillars:



1) People-centred and human rights-based governance. People affected by hunger and malnutrition, and not corporations, must be at the centre of public decision-making. Public policies need to be clearly grounded in human rights and accountability frameworks must be in place.



2) Protection and regeneration of nature. A healthy planet is the basis of healthy food systems and people. States should promote the regenerative use of natural resources and corresponding production methods. They must ensure the rights of small-scale food producers and Indigenous Peoples, including to land.

¹¹ See ETC Group 2017. [Who will feed us: The industrial food chain vs the peasant food web.](#)

¹² See David Byod 2021.

¹³ For more information, see: Nyéléni, the [Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition](#), or the [CSIPM Vision on food systems and nutrition](#).

¹⁴ For more information, see Nyéléni 2015, [Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology](#). See also CIDSE [The Principles of Agroecology](#)



3) Health, nutrition, and well-being. States should ensure access and encourage healthy and diverse diets based on real food, while limiting consumption of ultra-processed food products. They should move away from medicalized solutions to malnutrition.



4) Modes of production, employment, and exchange. States must phase out harmful modes of production and exchange that bring about environmental and biodiversity destruction. They should promote territorial markets and ensure decent livelihoods for workers throughout the food system.



5) Culture, social relations, and knowledge. States should protect and foster traditional collective knowledge, innovation and practices of Indigenous Peoples, small-scale producers, and communities. They must tackle inequalities, discrimination, and violence, and recognise and redistribute care work.

Although the call for food-system transformation is growing louder and becoming more difficult for public policymakers to ignore, a critical barrier to meaningfully transforming the global corporate food system and adopting the necessary policy and legal measures persists. That is the strong influence of large food and agricultural corporations – along with digital technology and financial corporations and capital philanthropy – on national and international policy-making spaces and processes related to food, agriculture, and nutrition.¹⁵ The so-called corporate capture of public policy spaces has radically expanded over the past few decades. The direct participation of corporations and their associations and front groups as key ‘stakeholders’ in public policy discussions has become increasingly accepted, normalized, and institutionalized.¹⁶

The **UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS)**, held in New York in September 2021, cemented this trajectory and further institutionalised the multi-stakeholder model of governance in the area of food systems.¹⁷ This model ignores existing power imbalances and fails to distinguish between rights holders and corporations with private economic interests in food and nutrition.¹⁸ This set-up ultimately privileges corporate, market-based, and profit-driven solutions, and the expansion of the industrial food system, while exacerbating the exclusion of groups affected by hunger and malnutrition, and side-lining their experiences and solutions.¹⁹ As this dynamic proliferates, more participatory international policy spaces, such as the **Committee for World Food Security (CFS)**, the foremost inclusive intergovernmental and international platform on food security and nutrition, see their capacity to

¹⁵ On the strategies employed by the ultra-processed food and drinks industry see, for example, GHAI 2021. [Behind the Labels: Big Food's war on healthy food policies.](#)

¹⁶ Several resources on this are available on the websites of [Global Policy Forum](#) and [TNI](#). Specifically on nutrition, see also FIAN, IBFAN, SID 2020. [When the SUN casts a shadow](#), Chapter 3. Specifically on FAO, see Corporate Accountability & FIAN International: Corporate Capture of FAO.

¹⁷ See for example Canfield, Anderson, and McMichael 2021. “UN Food Systems Summit 2021: Dismantling Democracy and Resetting Corporate Control of Food Systems”. In *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 5:661552. See also, Liaison Group of the Autonomous People's Response to the UNFSS 2023. [Multistakeholderism and the corporate capture of global food governance. What is at risk in 2023?](#)

¹⁸ *Supra* note 16.

¹⁹ The UN Food Systems Summit has been heavily criticized by a wide alliance of social movements, civil society organizations, human rights experts, and academics for its profound capture by corporate interests and the solutions it proposed. See for example communications by the [CSIPM](#), the policy brief by [IPES Food](#), and a letter by [Michael Fakhri](#).

develop globally coordinated policy responses weakened,²⁰ while they also become increasingly closed off to meaningful engagement by civil society and social movements.²¹

A similar situation can be observed at the national level. In many countries, corporations enjoy privileged access to public policy and legal debates and those who make the policies and laws, while public-interest civil society and social movements that directly represent those most affected by hunger and malnutrition are excluded or consulted nominally as one of many voices. In countries where spaces for participation in food-system related public policies exist, these spaces are increasingly infiltrated by corporations and their front groups, or dominated by large international NGOs with a corporate-friendly agenda.²² What's more, a rise in authoritarian and repressive government regimes in many countries has curtailed basic democratic rights and further closed off spaces for political engagement and dialogue.²³ In such an atmosphere, advocating for meaningful change towards human rights-based food systems involves exorbitant amounts of time and resources, rendering it extremely challenging or even impossible.

It is in this increasingly restricted national and international context that the local arena is gaining importance as space for tangible advocacy and political change. Local governments are agents of the state structure, and therefore have the same obligations to protect, respect, and fulfil human rights as national governments. Given their proximity to people's realities, local governments are in a potentially decisive position to fill the vacuum that central governments often leave in their attempt to realise human rights.

Given the proximity of local policy makers to communities' lived realities and struggles, they have the ability to make meaningful, place-based interventions and great potential to construct human rights-based food systems. In many places, local governments are becoming increasingly aware of the need to adopt policies and regulatory measures to protect the environment and health of their populations. This evolving mindset represents a promising development.

Local governments are also increasingly organising at the international level and participating in international policy debates around food systems. With spaces for participation at the national level shrinking, it is critical to develop a well-informed perspective and understanding of the role and expectations of local government actors in upholding human rights obligations and other international commitments.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that the local realm does not exist in isolation, but is affected by national and international frameworks, while also being subject to its own unique power dynamics.

20 See CSIPM 2022. [A Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\) coordinated policy response to the global food crisis.](#)

21 See [CSIPM update](#) from the reconvened CFS 50 plenary session.

22 An example are the spaces established or imposed by international multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the [Scaling up Nutrition \(SUN\) initiative](#) or the [International Land Coalition \(ILC\)](#). For more information see FIAN International, SID, and IBFAN, 2019. "[When the SUN casts a shadow.](#)"

23 The Bolsonaro regime and the shutting down of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) alongside other bodies of public participation are prominent examples. Further examples can be found in the [Global Network for the RtFN State of the Right to Food and Nutrition Report 2022](#) and [2021](#).



2. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL POLICY MAKING

In recent years, local governments have stepped up their commitments to international agreements on food, agriculture, and climate. As the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine have made the weaknesses of the global industrial food system glaringly clear, local food systems and local authorities are increasingly brought into discussions regarding solutions. They have begun to take on more prominent roles in international policy spaces, including those related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the CFS, and were a desired target of the UNFSS organisers. Local and regional governments have organised their own international networks and spaces and have developed strong advocacy and action platforms at various levels. UN agencies such as the OHCHR, FAO, and UN-Habitat have also provided technical support.

2.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORKS

There are many global networks and organisations of local governments. In the following section we discuss three such entities that are active in policy discussions around food systems and which are somewhat open to human rights and equity discussions: The [World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments \(UCLG\)](#), the [Local Governments for Sustainability \(ICLEI\)](#), and the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#).

The World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

The UCLG network is organised as a decentralised structure composed of seven regional sections, one metropolitan section, and one section for regional governments. Its global secretariat is based in Barcelona. Members hail from both urban and rural areas; and this fact endows the organisation with a diversity of approaches. As a network, UCLG is committed to improving local democratic spaces and better leveraging the voices of local and regional governments.

UCLG has historically been strongly committed to promoting and upholding human rights, as evidenced in their establishment of a specific work stream on [social inclusion and human rights](#). UCLG and its large membership base have played an important role in bringing together human rights cities²⁴ and they have also actively participated in the ongoing work of the [Global Platform for the Right to the City](#).

UCLG, has been actively involved in UN processes including the SDGs and Habitat, among others, but has only recently started to engage more in food-system issues. The COVID pandemic and the ensuing increased pressure on local authorities to address and find solutions to food security and agricultural issues, as well as the UNFSS, have been significant factors in this shift.

The network actively collaborates in the UNFSS Coalition on Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Food Systems and has enhanced its involvement in CFS processes. In 2022, UCLG joined the UN Secretary General’s Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Finance and Energy, participating in its Food Network. During the 7th UCLG World Congress held in Daejeon, South Korea, October 10th to 14th 2022, UCLG significantly stepped up its commitment to food systems. Among its important commitments to upholding human rights standards, challenging the rise of authoritarianism, and acknowledging the need to address pervasive inequalities, the political declaration [Pact for the Future of Humanity](#), adopted during the congress, includes a clear and strong commitment to “[p]romote sustainable and inclusive food systems managed and improved by all spheres of government promoting access and quality of food, food security and sovereignty, and resilience.”

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)

ICLEI is a global network of local governments with a long history of working on climate and sustainability issues and food systems through its [CITYFOOD Network](#). The CITYFOOD Network has played a leading role in the follow-up of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. It adopted a “city-region food systems” approach focused on strengthening urban-centred food systems. In this context, it is actively engaged in organising peer learning amongst cities and generating technical advice to support resilient food systems. The network and ICLEI more broadly do not take a critical stance on the industrial food system, nor have they shown a strong commitment to human rights. However, they are open to equity-based discussions and solutions in their work.

Like UCLG, ICLEI is actively collaborating in the UNFSS Coalition on Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Food Systems and has recently become more engaged in CFS processes. It has maintained a long-standing relationship with the FAO and UN-Habitat and their respective work on city-region food systems and urban-rural connections.

Milan Pact Cities

When the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#) (MUFPP) was adopted in 2015, it set into motion a wave of local food policies around the world. As of 2022, the Pact had 250 signatories, including many European cities. The Milan Pact is an agreement, facilitated by the Municipality of Milan, in which cities commit “to developing sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimize waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change”.

²⁴ For more information, see UCLG [“Local governments and human rights”](#).

Although the document itself is not perfect, it has served as an essential framework that continues to facilitate exchange among local governments on key food-systems issues. It underscores the need for stronger local authority and local democratic processes and supports the development of local policies on food systems.

Overall, the Milan Pact continues to be a critical space for global discourse on local and urban food policy. Some of the cities' programs and practices were showcased by the annual [Milan Pact Awards](#) as remarkable examples of how cities can support positive change. However, the human-rights grounding of policies is not yet assessed or discussed within the pact, nor by external research and analysis. The Milan Pact predominately highlights the best practices of cities, often without contextualizing some of the larger structural problems and conditions in which cities are embedded and how these policies relate to these issues.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Local governments and their networks are engaging in international policy processes through various specialised mechanisms. In relation to food systems, an important mechanism is the [Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments](#), a coordination and consultation mechanism that brings together the major international networks of local governments to undertake joint advocacy dealing with global policy processes. This body was established in 2013 to incorporate the perspectives of local and regional governments into the SDGs, the climate change agenda, and the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III), and also inform the [Local Authorities Major Group](#) of the SDGs.

Among the many criticisms of the UNFSS is its creation of parallel structures and initiatives that further fragment global food and nutrition governance, while also institutionalising multi-stakeholder structures.²⁵ Currently, [28 Coalitions of Action](#) are working together with the [Food Systems Hub](#) to “support food systems transformation”. The [Coalition on Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Food Systems](#), led by the FAO, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)²⁶, and ICLEI, is the dominant local-interfacing entity to emerge from the UNFSS. As the name suggests, its focuses primarily on cities and urban areas. Many city networks (UCLG, ICLEI, MUFPP, C40, Global Resilient Cities Network, Delice Network), as well as several UN Agencies, academic institutions, and other organisations participate in the Coalition.

The CFS has taken on topics of top interest for local governments, such as [urbanisation and rural transformation](#) with an emphasis on the urban-rural continuum, and is now embarking in a policy workstream on [strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems](#), starting with a report of the CFS High-Level Panel of Experts in 2024, to be followed by a negotiation process on policy recommendations that will be adopted by the CFS Plenary in 2025.

²⁵ For more information see Liaison Group of the Autonomous People's Response to the UNFSS 2023. [Multistakeholderism and the corporate capture of global food governance. What is at risk in 2023?](#)

²⁶ GAIN is a Swiss-based foundation with close ties to the food and chemical industry that advocates for food fortification and public-private partnerships in nutrition. For more information on GAIN, see: FIAN International, SID, and IBFAN, 2019. [When the Sun Casts a Shadow.](#)

2.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In August 2015, the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee released an important report entitled “[Role of Local Government in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights](#)” which stated that:

“Local government aims at bringing government to the grass roots and enabling citizens to participate effectively in the making of decisions affecting their daily lives. As the level closest to the citizens, local government is, in principle, in a much better position than central government to deal with matters that require local knowledge and regulation on the basis of local needs and priorities.” (Para. 8)

Although not the first or most recent report on local government and human rights, it was released at a time when the role of local government was becoming more prominent in international spaces, with preparations for the Habitat III summit underway and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) freshly minted. In 2015, the human rights discourse was also being increasingly challenged in those same international spaces, as well as in other arenas.

While the [OHCHR](#) has directed more technical and other types of support towards better understanding human rights and local government, significant gaps in application, knowledge, and implementation persist. The growing recognition of the important role of local governments in international fora is rarely tied to the duties they have in upholding human rights. At a time when states’ human-rights obligations are being replaced with voluntary agreements and new discourses, such as so-called sustainable development, it is critical that local human rights obligations be better comprehended and supported.

Chueca (2016)²⁷ offers a clear explanation of the history and complexities of the local human rights discourse (and commitments), which became more tangible relatively recently in the 1990s and in urban settings through concepts like: human rights in the city, human rights cities, and the right to the city. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, each of them has a different history; nevertheless, they have all emerged primarily from urban experiences.

Human Rights in the City stems from European local authorities advocating for the role of municipalities in human rights implementation and the [European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City](#). In contrast, **Human Rights Cities** is a more global initiative founded by the Peoples’ Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE) and the city of Rosario, Argentina. Lastly, the **Right to the City** grew out of social movements and civil society struggling against oppression and discrimination in urban spaces and governance processes, advocating for the social function of the city. It was originally summarised in the [World Charter on the Right to the City](#).²⁸

Each of these terms or concepts has had its own trajectory and carved out its own niche, which are distinct yet complimentary. The work on the [Right to the City](#) and the space created by the [Global Platform for the Right to the City](#) (GPR2C) have been particularly pivotal as they seek to move beyond the urban realm and expand to a broader understanding of territories, rural-urban connections, and the role of rural/non-city local authorities.

²⁷ See “Human Rights in the City and the Right to the City”, in *Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities*, pp. 103 – 120. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

²⁸ *Ibid.*



3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPETENCIES AND ACTION FOR TRANSFORMING FOOD SYSTEMS

This section provides a trans-regional perspective on what local governments can and have done to transform food systems to align with the right to food and nutrition. It examines the autonomy and sphere of action of local governments to adopt relevant public policies, regulations, and other measures; how this space is being used and what some of the challenges and enabling factors for progressive action are at the local level. Moreover, it assesses the extent to which spaces for participation in food-related discussions exist at the local level, how they function, and who participates in them.

Local policy councils and other arenas for public participation play a critical role in the development, implementation, and monitoring of human rights-based food-system policies and related measures. They are a basic component of democratic food-systems governance, so both a pre-condition for and a desired result of food-system transformation. These local, multi-actor structures have different modalities and modus operandi, with different scopes, rules, and composition. While such structures exist around the world their relationship with or connection to local authorities and local policy making varies. For example, the Americas is the region where such bodies are most frequently found as formalised structures under municipal governments. Even then, the extent to which these multi-actor spaces play genuinely meaningful roles differs depending on the locality in question.

3.1 COLOMBIA

Colombia has a decentralised unitary system of governance which endows local governments with considerable autonomy, including in the use of financial resources. The system is divided into three territorial levels: national (nation), intermediate (departments and districts) and local (municipalities and ethnic territories). Municipalities have a particularly important administrative-political function.

Nearly all municipalities, no matter how small, have their own food security plans. Local authorities – departmental and municipal – can also enact their own decrees and regulations, for example, to protect the environment or the health of the population. This includes regulatory measures designed to restrict the use of agrotoxics or discourage the consumption of ultra-processed food products. An additional critical competency is to make decisions regarding land use in their territory. Many conflicts between the local and central governments occur over this issue. For example, a municipal government may rule against intensive agricultural production or mining in a certain area, even though the central government has granted permission to do so.

Local governments can moreover determine technical and financial support services for agricultural production and make decisions regarding investments in infrastructure and local markets. Also, they have important leeway when it comes to public procurement. While Colombian national law (2020) requires 30% of public food procurement to be local and from small-scale producers, a municipal government may opt to buy a 100% from local small-scale farmers. Overall, local governments can

significantly influence local food production model and proactively foster a transition to human rights-based food systems.

The Department of Bolivar provides a noteworthy example of local food policies explicitly grounded in the right to food and human rights in general. The [Public Policy for the Progressive Guarantee of the Human Right to Adequate Food](#), which was adopted by the Departmental Assembly in 2021, was developed with ample participation from local communities. It addresses the various dimensions of the right to food and establishes actions across the entire food system. This includes programs to foment local production based on peasant, family, and community agriculture, as well as strategies for reducing the consumption of ultra-processed food products and building healthy food environments at schools and elsewhere. The policy also seeks to bolster regional capabilities to defend the right to food. Great efforts were made to generate an intersectoral dynamic, with clear sources of financial resources, as well as an elaborate monitoring system.

The policy was enacted following a 4-year process during which FIAN Colombia accompanied the awareness raising and strengthening of political, technical, and methodological capacities among communities and public officials.²⁹ From the beginning, it was emphasized that private companies should not be part in the drafting process, nor the related deliberation spaces. A major challenge will be implementing the policy. As is the case for many other Colombian departments, Bolivar depends on public-private partnerships to finance some of its programs.

Another example from **Colombia** is the District of Cartagena, which in 2019 became the first city in the country to have a [Municipal Agreement](#) mandating the implementation of healthy school food environments. Therefore, since 2022, following a broad participatory process, it has a public policy that guarantees healthy school food environments based on the right to food and nutrition for all students in the municipality, including actions that involve the entire educational community.³⁰ Strategies for promoting healthy diets through school meals and healthy school food environments are also found in the policy of the Department of Bolivar.



In Colombia all municipalities are required by law to create a space for public participation in food and nutrition related policies. Even in small municipalities that combine multiple bodies for public participation, there must always be a so-called Food and Nutrition Security Committee. There is no common rule as to who can participate and who cannot, and no distinction is made between participants. Committees can invite whomever they want. Civil society is invited as an expert, but does not have a permanent seat, and therefore does not have the right to vote.

²⁹ This process, led by the Departmental Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development, also involved the participation of FAO Colombia.

³⁰ For more information, see FIAN Colombia 2021. [Un país que se hunde en el hambre](#). Chapters 6 and 7.

Many Food and Nutrition Security Committees are very weak, and food corporations participate in some of them through their foundations (i.e., their corporate social responsibility departments). In Manizales, for example, the Nutrir Foundation participates.³¹ Nutrir partners with the Luker and the Éxito Foundations – foundations of corporations that produce chocolates and ultra-processed food products. As in the case of Brazil, which is described in the following section, food corporations present themselves as part of civil society working with marginalised groups and therefore allegedly relevant actors in the fight against hunger.

3.2 BRAZIL

In Brazil, state and municipal governments can and have acted in key areas such as the national school meals program, regulating marketing in school environments and other public spaces, and regulations and bans on the use of pesticides and aerial spraying.

Brazil is a strong example of a universal school meal program and public procurement. The Brazilian federal law establishes fundamental orientation on the nutritional and cultural adequacy of the food provided and its contribution to sustainable development. An important feature is that at least 30% of food procured must come from family farmers, and Indigenous and Quilombola producers are given priority. While these minimum standards are established at the national level, it is the local government that manages the program and has significant leeway as to how it implements such regulations.

Although not all states and municipalities comply with the national requirements, there are several remarkable examples of local governments that have gone above and beyond by setting higher standards in their jurisdiction. The cities of Sao Paulo and Brasilia, for example, have decided to buy from family farmers who grow organically. In the state of Amazonas, civil society has built a network with the Federal Public Ministry (at the state level) called [Catrapoa](#) (Commission on traditional foods of the Peoples of the Amazonas).³² Through the Federal Public Ministry they have successfully pressured the local governments – state and municipal administrations – to procure food for school meals from indigenous communities. This eventually impelled the state government to adopt public procurement guidelines that promote procurement from indigenous groups and agroecological production.³³

The enactment and implementation of national legislation to effectively regulate the marketing of ultra-processed food products poses a major challenge in Brazil, as in most other countries. This issue threatens the core of the corporate food system and is hence an area of massive political and legal interference by the food and beverage industry.³⁴ Bahía is the only state in Brazil to have successfully passed a law regulating ultra-processed food products. There are also several municipalities that have approved similar laws. One example is the city of Niterói (Rio de Janeiro) which in early 2022 enacted a [law](#) to promote healthy diets among children and adolescents. A key component of the law is the prohibition of the advertisement, sale, and distribution of ultra-processed food products in city schools.

Local governments, in for example Porto Alegre and Florianopolis, have also made significant progress in banning agrotoxics and aerial spraying in their jurisdictions. While this type of action has mostly occurred at the municipal level, there are also some state governments, such as Bahía and

³¹ For more information on the Nutrir Foundation, see [Public Policy on Food and Nutrition Security for Manizales 2016-2023](#).

³² For more information, see Ministério Público Federal “[A catrapovas](#)”.

³³ More examples can be found in the mapping by the National Agroecology Articulation (ANA) 2021. [Municípios agroecológicos e políticas de futuro](#).

³⁴ See for example Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA) 2021. [Behind the labels: Big Food’s War on Healthy Food Policies](#).

Ceará, that have taken bold measures in this regard. These initiatives gain even greater significance when we recall the powerful agribusiness lobby present in the country and severe setbacks that have taken place at the national level in recent years.³⁵ In Brazil, as in the case of Argentina (described in the next section), advances in this area have been met with intense resistance and legal threats.

The key role of the municipal level in affecting transformative changes, especially in times of national political closure, was illustrated by the 2020 municipal elections in Brazil. The National Agroecology Articulation (ANA) had rolled out a **campaign** to foster public debate on agroecology in the elections, in which it presented a **mapping** of 720 initiatives of public policies, programs and legislations of municipalities across Brazil in support of agroecology and family farming. The campaign was designed to give visibility to the solutions already in practice in municipalities and show future leaders what is possible. Candidates were encouraged to sign letters of commitment to agroecology.

The powerful agribusiness lobby and local rural elites pose a massive challenge for agroecology in many rural municipalities, even when there are active social movements in existence. An example is the case of Nova Santa Rita, Vale das Cancelas. While the municipality has many agrarian reform settlements and the landless movement and agroecological production are strong, there are also highly influential large producers of soya and rice. Several proposals have been made to convert the municipality into an agrottoxics-free zone, but so far these efforts have not been successful.

In many rural, land-locked locations, a single public official is responsible for the environment of a vast area. And thus, this individual is under immense pressure. A lack of human resources and limited technical capacities can also push municipalities to accept services offered by companies that may interfere with progressive action (e.g., pharmaceutical companies and branches of the food industry offer training services to professionals on formula products).

The Brazilian Constitution establishes councils on different topics at the national and sub-national (state and municipality) levels. These include the well-known food and nutrition security councils (CONSEAs) that every state and many municipalities have, and which dialogue with each other. Moreover, there are agricultural, environmental, health, education, and school food councils – all of which (can) play a role in food-system transformation. Their power varies widely across municipalities and councils, with some tending to wield more influence (e.g., health and environmental) than others (e.g., education and school food). For example, every municipality that receives funding for the national school meals program is required to establish a school food council. However, their functioning differs significantly from one municipality to another, and their role is often reduced to administrative monitoring rather than political discussion.



³⁵ See Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition 2020. *State of the Right to Food and Nutrition Report 2020*, p. 37. See also: Terra de Direitos e Campanha Nacional Permanente contra os Agrotóxicos e pela Vida 2021. *As 10 principais alterações propostas pelo Pacote do Veneno e os seus riscos à saúde e à biodiversidade*.

A major challenge in the highly evolved Brazilian system is that the different thematic councils are often disconnected from one another and operate in a fragmented manner. This makes joining forces for systemic food-system transformation difficult. Moreover, and especially in the case of small municipalities with minimal public administration, a more nuanced conversation across topics could bring about a more informed participation by government personnel, and civil society as well.

Another core problem is that while there are clear guidelines regarding the composition of and participation in the national CONSEA, such guidance is not sufficiently clear for some of the local councils. This lack of clarity leaves the door open to corporate capture and risks power imbalances and the exclusion of voices that should be represented. While the local councils have historically played an important role for local policies promoting healthy food, some of them have been jeopardised by corporate capture. As soon as industry realizes that these councils are influential spaces, they move in to occupy them – ideally taking over their presidency. Although a rule exists mandating that the presidency be occupied by a civil society organisation, given that the category of civil society is not specifically defined as public-interest civil society, private enterprises have been able to secure their appointment (example Sao Paolo).

3.3 ARGENTINA

Argentina has three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. Both provincial and municipal governments have significant competences and autonomy around food systems. The precise reach and limits of these competences and the division of power are constantly under dispute.

Similar to Brazil, in Argentina there are several cases pending in the Supreme Court where provincial governments and/or corporations have directly challenged progressive actions taken by municipalities that compromise their interests. A common argument has been that provincial powers override those of municipalities. While the Argentinian constitution provides for concurrent competencies at the three levels of government, how to proceed in cases of conflict is not clearly stipulated and leaves room for interpretation. To achieve more clarity regarding the regulations, human rights advocates are pushing for the Argentinian Supreme Court to recognise that, in the case of conflicting laws, the law most favourable to human rights and the environment should supersede the others. Until now, unfortunately, there has been no consistency in the Argentinian Supreme Court jurisprudence on this issue.

Budgetary measures are also used by the national and provincial governments to retaliate against the respectively lower levels of government who contradict them or do not align themselves with policies handed down from the national or provincial levels. While municipal governments do have their own resources, these are often quite limited, and thus they also depend on resources distributed by the provincial government. Thus, the manner in which tax funds are distributed among the different levels of government is of critical importance and a common subject of debate.

Despite legal threats and potential financial implications, several local governments have taken steps to ban agrotoxics and aerial spraying in their jurisdictions, a prominent example being the municipality of Gualeguaychú in Entre Rios.

Through its *Concejo Deliberante* (municipal council) the municipality made use of its right as a local government to prohibit the use of glyphosate in its jurisdiction through a municipal ordinance. Glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in Argentina's agroindustrial production system. It has

been approved at the national level and heavily promoted by the Entre Rios provincial government. The municipal government's decision led the affected parties to file a constitutional writ. The case is currently before the Argentinian Supreme Court of Justice.

Gualeguaychú has a strong history of socio-environmental militancy; in fact, its current mayor is a member of this movement. It is one of 97 municipalities in Argentina to have joined the Agroecology in Municipalities Network (REDAM)³⁶, a national network of municipalities articulated by the [National Agroecology Directorate](#). The municipality has established a comprehensive program for transitioning to agroecology called [Plan de Alimentación Sana, Segura y Soberana \(PASSS\)](#). In the framework of this program, the municipality has advanced different public policies regulating pesticides, fomenting local production and public procurement from local agroecological producers, fostering local markets, etc., all of which are designed to transform the local food system.

The fact that there are no national regulations on the use of pesticides in Argentina has given way to a range of distinct provincial and municipal laws, depending on local power constellations. For example, while one city may allow spraying within 25 meters of residential areas, a neighbouring municipality may stipulate a minimal distance of 500 meters.

In 2021, the National Directorate for Agroecology was created as an area within the [Argentinian Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries](#).³⁷ Its mission is to accompany municipalities that have expressed interest in transitioning towards agroecology, transforming their local production models, and creating visibility for, fostering, and protecting existing agroecological productions. A central methodology of the Directorate is to facilitate regular exchanges among municipalities that have joined the REDAM. In these horizontal exchanges, the municipalities share their experiences on specific topics: what has gone well, what has not, which local factors have facilitated their local transition, and which factors have hindered it.

In addition, the National Directorate provides bilateral technical support (including legal) for the municipalities' transition to agroecology. It has elaborated a [guide for municipalities](#) on agroecology including sixteen recommendations. These recommendations also serve to evaluate the municipalities' progress collaboratively. Moreover, the Directorate connects the municipalities to different central government departments that can assist in different aspects of the transition (e.g., ministry of public works) or support them with relevant information (e.g., data on the quantity of recommended food to meet local needs).

A more recent project promoted by the Directorate and co-organized with the [Argentinian Society of Agroecology](#) and the [National Network of Municipalities and Communities that promote Agroecology \(RENAMA\)](#) are the so-called "[Territorial Agroecological Nodes](#)". These are intended to facilitate intersectoral articulation and exchange at the territorial level between the various actors engaged in agroecology, including the different government bodies, producers, social movements, academics, and CSOs.

³⁶ There is also a second civil society–government network called [Network of Municipalities and Communities that promote Agroecology \(RENAMA\)](#). Close ties exist between the two networks.

³⁷ Previously the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.



3.4 NEPAL

In Nepal, both municipal and provincial governments have the right to formulate their own laws, policies, and programs in relation to food and nutrition. This competency has been further strengthened through the [Right to Food and Food Sovereignty Act](#), adopted in September 2018, in line with the respective constitutional guarantees.

Implementing this act involves the various levels of government – federal, provincial, and local (municipalities and rural municipalities). It establishes institutional mechanisms responsible for ensuring the right to food, food security, and food sovereignty at each of these levels, as well as the coordinated development of a national food plan.

The Province Food Councils are responsible for formulating the necessary policies, strategies, rules, and action plans to ensure the overall food and nutrition security of the province and recommend them to the provincial government for approval. They are also responsible for implementing related plans and programs. Local Food Coordination Committees are tasked with operating food and nutrition security programs and advancing the right to food at the municipal level.

[Province Food Councils](#) and Local Food Coordination Committees are currently being set up across the country. Many provincial and some local governments have also adopted policies to implement the act. The direction and transformative character of these policies varies.

Gandaki Province has formed a Province Food Council, while Bagmati Province³⁸ and Karnali Province have formulated a Provincial Right to Food Act and Regulation in order to activate the formation of such councils. Nepalese civil society has been closely accompanying these processes, creating social pressure to push for the establishment of Province Food Councils, while at the same time offering technical support. A core goal of civil society advocacy is to ensure space for civil society participation in these mechanisms and hence in the implementation of the act. The majority of provincial governments have been adopting participatory processes and have expressed interest and intention to bring civil society into the processes. For example, the Gandaki Province Government invited FIAN Nepal on behalf of CSOs to draft the Bagmati Province Food Council Formation & Operation Procedure.

Some local governments, such as Dhunibeshi Municipality and Gajuri Rural Municipality, have also developed Local Food and Nutrition Security Strategic Plans to implement the right to food and

38 Chapter 6 of Province Agriculture Development Ordinance, 2022.

food sovereignty in their municipalities. These plans have been contributing to the promotion of local food systems. Their key objectives include identifying food insecure and vulnerable families and developing targeted plans and programs to ensure their right to food. Until now, no Local Food Coordination Committees have been established. However, some municipal governments have initiated conversations with civil society about a model for these local mechanisms, and what the role of CSOs and other actors should be within them.

Another important initiative at the municipal level is the Farmers Pension Schemes that some governments, such as Narainapur Rural Municipality and Budhinanada Municipality, have initiated. According to these schemes, local governments provide a monthly monetary payment to farmers who are actively working in the agricultural sector. It is meant to serve as an incentive and to promote agriculture as respected and dignified occupation.

The administration of the national mid-day meal program for school children at the municipal level is an additional competence that illustrates the potential for food-systems transformation at the local level. Some municipal governments, such as Gajuri Rural Municipality and Dhunibeshi Municipality, have decided that the program should include only locally produced food. In the past few years, the central government has issued guidelines restricting the use of junk food and urging schools to procure local food for the mid-day meals program.³⁹

3.5 INDIA

In India, states are endowed with major competences in the area of food systems. Agriculture is a particularly important state competence, while some specific issues, such as seeds, fall under the central government's authority. Each state has the right to draft their own agricultural laws, policies, and schemes. When the central government adopts a new policy, state governments adopt their own policies to implement it. Another important competence of state governments relates to land use management. The majority of permits for mining or other projects are granted by state governments. Given that agriculture is a significant part of the Indian economy, the central government also plays a prominent role in administering state programs in this area and overseeing coordinated policy making. Moreover, it can make decisions on resource allocation for food and agriculture programs administered at the state level. This is the case for the Public Distribution System (PDS), the country's national food security program focused on distributing food to low-income households.

Bans on pesticides and other toxics can be enacted both at the central and state government level. State governments also have certain decision-making powers concerning genetically-modified organisms (GMOs). For example, they can decide whether to conduct field trials or create commercial plantations. Despite these competences, initiatives at the state level to move towards sustainable agricultural practices remain scarce. Some progressive examples include Sikkim which declared its farming sector 100% organic in 2016, and Lakshadweep which followed suit in 2020.⁴⁰ Certain states have also decided to go GMO-free or ban certain pesticides. For example, in Kerala, in the past cashews were sprayed, primarily aerially, with glyphosate. This caused serious health problems which led the state government to ban glyphosate.

³⁹ For more information see The Kathmandu Post, August 2019 "Government prepares diet plan for community school midday meal programme" and Nepal Press, February 2021 "Junk food prohibited at schools nationwide".

⁴⁰ This and other examples of local governments taking the initiative to phase out pesticides can be found in: FIAN International 2021. [Transitioning towards pesticide-free food systems: People's struggles and imagination.](#)

In India the role of municipalities is much more limited. They are primarily responsible for roads, electricity and water supply, and there is a widespread perception that everything related to food (systems) is beyond their control (and therefore dealt with by the state). This view overlooks an important function that municipalities do have: the provision of market space and facilitation of direct marketing by small-scale producers.

The Public Distribution System (PDS), legally backed by the National Food Security Act (2013), is India's main food security scheme and is foundational in ensuring the right to food in India. The administration and operation of the system lie mainly in the hands of state governments. Procurement of food grains is handled by both central and state government agencies.

The Decentralized Procurement System (DCP) was introduced with the goal of enhancing the efficiency of public procurement and encouraging local procurement to the maximum extent, thereby extending the benefits of the Minimum Support Price to local farmers as well as cutting down on transit costs. Under this scheme, the state government directly purchases grains and distributes these under PDS and other welfare programs. The central government reimburses the expenditure as per approved costs. However, if the state government procures a grain other than rice or wheat (for example, millet or maize), it must bear the entire cost for that crop itself. Moreover, the whole stock must be consumed within that state (the central government cannot redistribute surplus to other states). So, while state governments have flexibility to procure more nutritious or culturally appropriate food from local small-scale producers, they must bear the costs themselves.

The PDS program has been criticised for various reasons. One significant flaw is found in the type and diversity of food distributed and its nutritional content.⁴¹ Since the Green Revolution, food distributed through the PDS has been largely reduced to rice and wheat. Moreover, most of that rice is hybrid and fortified. Despite India's rich and diverse food culture, the government response to growing rates of anaemia has been to promote fortification rather than the diversification of diets. There are no common procurement criteria based on health or sustainability concerns, the sole criterion is price.

Nevertheless, a handful of examples do exist wherein state governments have used the PDS to promote healthy diets and local producers. The state of Tamil Nadu, for example, has begun providing more nutritious cereals such as millet. Several millet varieties exist, especially in South India. Ragi millet, for example, is procured from local farmers. The Orissa government also procures ragi and other types of millet and distributes them through the PDS.

Another important programme in India is the Mid-Day Meal scheme.⁴² This programme provides a cooked meal once a day mainly to primary school children. Usually, the meal consists of rice or dal and no cultural adaptations are made. Again, the foremost criterion is price. However, some states have attempted to provide healthier food and include eggs, for example, in the menu. Other states have made objections to including animal-sourced food, depending on the party in power. The state government of Tamil Nadu has also decided to offer breakfast to school children in classes 1 to 5; meanwhile, the central government is still debating implementing such a plan on a national scale. There have also been several attempts by food corporations and their associations, namely the Indian Biscuit Manufacturers' Association (IBMA) and PepsiCo, supported by members of Parliament,

⁴¹ Other criticism is related to the corruption/diversion of food stocks and unequal distribution, which are sometimes impacted by political perspectives.

⁴² The scheme has been renamed to PM-POSHAN (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman) Scheme since September 2021.

to substitute cooked meals with biscuits and other ultra-processed food products.⁴³ To date, these initiatives have failed thanks to public outcry. There were no cases found of state governments utilising the school meal programmes to promote organic, local, and culturally adapted food. Nor did our research come across indications of any state opposing the mandatory fortification policy.

Another important function of state governments is the provision of extension services to farmers. However, the public department in charge of providing such services is almost completely defunct. This fact is considered a key contributing factor in the continual rise in farmers' suicide rates in India.⁴⁴ Farmers are basically left to their own devices. The only option they have is seek help from the shops where they buy their seeds, pesticides, and fertilisers. Their situation has been further aggravated by the digitalisation of agriculture - something which is largely promoted by the central government, while state governments implement a variety of schemes and programmes.⁴⁵ More than 2000 agricultural startups exist in India that offer their own apps to farmers.⁴⁶ These initiatives aim to convince farmers to become members and use their apps, which are increasingly replacing the public extension department. Thus, farmers are forced to seek help from these initiatives, even though they do not have information as to who is behind them. Most apps are run by big corporations (BASF, Syngenta, etc.) and serve to promote the corporations' own products.

In India, the possibilities for democratic engagement continue to steadily decline across the country.⁴⁷ There are no avenues or spaces wherein the public is consulted on food and agriculture-related policies and programmes. In 2020, three farm laws were passed without consulting farmers themselves, which triggered widespread protests.⁴⁸

3.6 INDONESIA

In Indonesia the “[Law on the Capacities of Local Government](#)” (2014, amended 2015) outlines the government areas that fall under the competencies of local governments. Food is an area of shared competency between local governments (provincial and district/city regions) and the central government. Government responsibilities concerning food are divided into four categories: food administration based on sovereignty and independence, implementation of food security, handling food insecurity, and food safety. While the food security competency is mainly related to emergency measures, the food sovereignty competency offers potential for local government action to protect and promote local food systems and traditional crop varieties.

The Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 (Perppu) on Job Creation, enacted at the end of 2022, presents one of the most significant challenges for the right to food in the country, and may curtail important local government competencies in this area. This regulation introduces critical changes to existing progressive food laws that impact local governments. For example, to pave the way for more food imports, it repeals article 30 of the Protection and Empowerment of Farmers

⁴³ See for example Down to Earth 2014 “[Will PepsiCo food replace hot, cooked mid-day meals in schools?](#)” or Business Standard 2013 “[Biscuits may be served under mid-day meal](#)”.

⁴⁴ Other important causes include debt, crop failure, and unremunerative prices for their produce, as well non-farm related factors. For more information, see Manjunatha and Ramappa 2017. [Farmer Suicides: An all India Study](#).

⁴⁵ See for example: Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Press Releases [Digitalization of Agricultural Sector](#) (2021) and [Digital Technology in Agriculture](#) (2022). See also recent [MoU between the Government of India and Microsoft](#) that sparked protests from civil society and especially farmers organisations.

⁴⁶ See Tracxn “[AgriTech startups in India](#)”.

⁴⁷ For further information, please see V-Dem Institute 2020 [Autocratization Surges – Resistance Grows](#) or BBC News March 2021 “[‘Electoral autocracy’: The downgrading of India’s democracy](#)”.

⁴⁸ For further information on the farm laws and farmers’ protests, see: Rupe India 2020 “[Peasant Agitation against Three Acts: Not Their Fight Alone](#)” or Firstpost January 2021 “[Protesting farmers not against reforms, but western idea of top-down centralisation: Activist Kavitha Kuruganti](#)”.

Law (2019), a law which prohibits food imports when local food production can fulfil national food reserves. It also revises article 88 of the Horticulture Law (2010) and articles 14, 15, 36, and 39 of the Food Law (2012), a law which stipulates requirements for food imports and the state obligation to use local food production first for national food consumption.

Another important risk or limitation regarding the ability of local governments to develop food policies in the interest of their communities stems from the national strategic food estate programme. This programme was adopted in 2020 by the central government in response to the food insecurity and malnutrition caused by drought and the COVID pandemic. It aims to plant hundreds of thousands of hectares of new rice fields across the country. Not only does the programme entail significant risks for the environment and the people in the selected locations; its ability to tackle food and nutrition insecurity is intensely disputed by Indonesian civil society.⁴⁹ Moreover, there is little transparency around the programme, and there has yet to be any consultation with local governments or with the communities that will be affected.⁵⁰

While local policies on food are largely focused on food security (which translates into emergency measures), some local governments have adopted food sovereignty-oriented policies designed to protect and promote local diverse food systems and traditional crop varieties. For example, the District of Ende recently adopted a regulation on food management (2022) which fosters the production of local food crops and endows the district head with the authority to determine what can be considered local based on what grows in the area, is familiar to and has historically been consumed by the local community, and does not come from outside of Ende. The government will reserve part of its budget from local funds to implement this regulation. Measures under consideration include community education on protecting the land and local food, educating local school children, and possibly school meals. The specifics of its implementation have yet to be assessed as the regulation was published recently (December 2022).

Another example is the Regulation on Diversification of Local Food Consumption (2017) in East Flores Regency, a district on the same island as Ende. This policy aims to increase consumption of local foods, by reducing consumption of largely imported rice, and wheat flour and serving local food in school canteens.

3.7 KENYA

In 2010, the Kenyan constitution was **reformed** to include specific articles related to the right to adequate food. Moreover, some government functions, including those related to agriculture, were decentralised to the level of counties. County governors can make their own laws and policies, which are then adopted through the county assembly. Decentralised structures allow policies and programmes to be created that reflect the diversity of food systems in the country and respond to the unique contexts and needs of the different regions.

While there is no national policy or law on the right to food, several counties are in the process of establishing regional right to food policies, with the support of the Kenyan Parliamentary Human Rights Association (KEPHRA). These policies are taking a broad approach to the right to food that includes cross-cutting issues such as water, sanitation, and road quality, to ensure collaboration between the ministry of agriculture and other government bodies.

⁴⁹ See for example the study by Rainforest Rescue et al 2021. [Swallowing Indonesia's forests.](#)

⁵⁰ For more information, see Pantau Gambut [“The Food Estate Programme, What’s the Rush?”](#)

Murang'a is one of the counties that in 2021 adopted a right to food policy through its county assembly. The policy is based on inputs received from local communities, including farmers, and was drafted with the support of local government leaders. It addresses a wide variety of issues ranging from improved access to markets and related infrastructure, enhancing rural-urban ties, support for communities affected by climate change, and broader structural policies to bolster employment and access to food in urban areas.

Kenya is a signatory to the [Maputo declaration](#) in which African states commit to spending a minimum of 10% of their national budget on agriculture. This commitment has yet to be put into practice. The national budget is distributed to counties, who then decide how to allocate the funds among county ministries. Civil society organisations have submitted petitions to county governments requesting increases in budgetary allocations for certain sectors, such as agriculture. So far, this approach has been successful in Nakuru county, where funds were allocated to extension officers that did not exist before. However, while these budgetary shifts are significant, a legal framework is clearly necessary to ensure adequate distribution and accountability at the county level.

The Kenyan government recently lifted a ban on GMOs (October 2022), thereby opening the door to more industrial production and corporate actors in the country. How exactly this change will impact agricultural practices and policies at the county level has yet to be seen.

3.8 UGANDA

In Uganda, local governments largely implement central government policies and initiatives, including direct orders handed down by the president. Space for independent decision and policy making is very limited. The Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) play a powerful role; this institution was put in place when the National Resistance Movement took power in 1985. The RDCs are appointed directly by the president and tend to follow orders from above with religious conviction. It is very difficult for them to refuse or act directly against central government directives, not least because they can be replaced at any given moment.

Nevertheless, the local level does have some opportunities to promote positive changes, which should not be overlooked. Local governments have some leeway regarding how they translate directives from the central government into action on the ground. This flexibility could be better employed to safeguard the right to food and nutrition. District councils in Uganda also have, at least in theory, the authority to make their own rules and regulations (ordinances and bylaws) and create their own initiatives, e.g., on the use of natural resources, regulations for investors. Such standards and projects cannot entirely contradict national laws but could be taken advantage of to promote the rights of people. Likewise, districts have their own budgets which they could wield to support human rights.



Specific food policies by local governments were not found. There have been some efforts in the past, supported by the FAO, to integrate food security and nutrition into local development plans in selected districts in Northern Uganda.⁵¹ However, no information on the current status of these could be found.

In Uganda, there are no specific policy spaces for discussing food issues at the local level. However, a general space for public engagement does exist: the District NGO Forum. There is a branch in each district where government and civil society can come together to discuss issues concerning the specific district. These fora could be better utilised to address food issues.

The [Ugandan Nutrition Action Plan 2011-2016](#), a plan heavily influenced by the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Initiative⁵² and international donors, established Nutrition Coordination Committees at the district and sub-district levels. These committees are meant to provide technical guidance, build consensus, and monitor nutrition actions at the local level in a multi-sectoral and “multi-stakeholder” setting. The [Uganda Nutrition Action Plan 2018-2025](#) (adopted in 2020) foresees further reinforcing decentralised coordination structures. The District Nutrition Coordination Committees are open not only to civil society but also to the private sector and have no rules differentiating their roles or protecting against conflicts of interest. How the committees function, who participates, and with what degree of influence is unclear and needs further exploration.

Uganda is also currently discussing significant institutional and policy changes based on the outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit.⁵³ Any such developments should be closely observed, in terms of the type of food system they would promote, and which actors are afforded space and a voice in these new structures.

3.9 ZAMBIA

The government system in place in Zambia resembles that of Uganda in that the ability of local governments to make autonomous decisions is quite limited. In 2019, the national parliament of Zambia adopted a new [Local Government Act](#), which seeks to

“give effect to the decentralisation of functions, responsibilities and services at all levels of local government; ensure democratic participation in, and control of, decision making by the people at the local level; [...] provide for the role of traditional leadership in democratic governance.”⁵⁴

Decentralisation under this act allows local governments – at least in theory – to identify their own priorities, including in the area of food systems. Where previously the central government would decide, for example, about agricultural support services and seeds to be distributed, these can now be determined by the local government and adapted to local circumstances and needs.

While this law is a welcome change, so far little has come of it in terms of meaningful decentralisation. A major hurdle is that revenues are still collected and held by the central government, making it difficult for local authorities to operate in an autonomous manner.

⁵¹ These efforts were conducted between 2010 and 2013 in the framework of a pilot-project between the government of Uganda and FAO on [mainstreaming the right to food into sub-national plans](#).

⁵² For a critical assessment of the SUN Initiative and the Ugandan Nutrition Action Plan, see *supra* note 24.

⁵³ See FAO 2022 “[Induction of Uganda’s Food Systems Coordination Committee marks first step in implementing food systems transformation action plan](#)”

⁵⁴ The Local Government Act, 2019

In Zambia there are no formal meaningful participatory mechanisms to engage in food systems policies at the local level. There are however traditional structures, which have their own systems of consultation. In some rural areas, which are not well-covered by the decentralised governance structure, there are area and village development committees. Many of these committees are organised through traditional structures, and include sub-structures such as cooperatives, women's clubs, and youth clubs. These groups act as intermediaries in facilitating the distribution of seeds and farming inputs, food relief in cases of disasters, advocacy, and capacity building. The committees are also used by the government to channel development projects and identify priorities and needs.

At the national level, a House of Chiefs is established through which the interests of people living in chiefdoms are addressed and channelled accordingly to other decision-making bodies, such as the legislature and executive branches. The House of Chiefs is composed of appointed members who are sitting traditional leaders (chiefs) in their various localities and lacks a constitutional mandate to make or implement laws.

3.10 GAZA STRIP PALESTINE

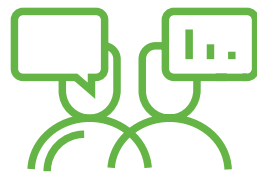
The case of the Gaza Strip, Palestine, illustrates the positive role civil society can play by working with local governments to improve food security in times of conflict that endanger food and farming systems and in protracted crises as well. The food system in the Gaza Strip in Palestine faces enormous challenges due to multiple closures that impact water, energy, and food production infrastructure, land and agricultural holdings, the environment, etc., as well as blockades on the entry and export of goods and services. In addition, occupying forces still enforce “access-restricted areas” near border fences, which accounts for over one third of Gaza's farming area, and limits access to land holdings and agricultural lands.⁵⁵

With such restrictions and obstacles for agricultural and other food production, urban and peri-urban production is an essential component for the household and community food security of many people in Gaza. As advocates continue to call for the return of restricted agricultural land to Gazans, rooftop gardens and other agricultural practices in built-up (urban) areas are common and continue to be expanded by CSOs. Gazan municipalities are still adopting traditional policies and regulations related to basic traditional services at the city level (water, cleaning, renting or partially managing local public markets, etc.) and have yet to engage in the development of (urban) food-system policies.

Civil society groups in Gaza are working with city authorities in the territory to create space for advocacy and inclusive policy formulation on urban agroecology and its inclusion in city planning related to land and resource allocation. The [Gaza Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Platform](#) (GUPAP) constitutes a space for exchange among at least 10 (out of 25) municipalities in the Gaza Strip. One concrete initiative is to facilitate the establishment of a City Food System Actors Network (CFSAN), with the goal of taking on a meaningful role in reviewing and influencing relevant food policies and contributing to the adoption of urban agroecological policies. The coordination committee of the Urban Women Agripreneurs Forum (UWAF)⁵⁶ is a key member of the Network.

⁵⁵ See The Conversation October 2022 “[Gaza's food system has been stretched to breaking point by Israel](#)”.

⁵⁶ For more information see GUPAP and UWAF (2021) [Fact sheet on urban women agripreneurship in the Gaza Strip, challenges and facts](#).



4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

COMPETENCES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND LIMITATIONS

The different country experiences demonstrate that local governments autonomy and space to promote healthy, sustainable, and just food systems vary widely across regions and countries. While in some highly decentralised government systems, such as Brazil or Colombia, even small municipalities have specific food and nutrition policies and corresponding spaces of public participation. Local governments in other countries, such as Uganda and Zambia, are generally mere implementors of instructions passed down by the central government.

In several countries significant transitions towards greater decentralisation around food and nutrition are underway. In the cases of Kenya and Nepal, decentralisation efforts are clearly founded in the implementation of constitutional and/or legal provisions on the right to food and nutrition. These processes offer key opportunities to establish democratic spaces of participation, as well as locally embedded, human rights-based food-system strategies.

The food-system competences of local governments include the development and implementation of designated food policies and strategies, the management of land use, regulation of GMOs and agrotoxics, marketing restrictions of ultra-processed food products, administration of public food distribution and school meal programmes, and the provision of agricultural extension services and infrastructure (including market space). Hence, opportunities for local governments to stimulate food-systems transformation – at least in the more decentralised systems – abound.

At the same time, several barriers to effective decentralisation and full use of competences exist. A major obstacle, highlighted by the examples of Brazil and Argentina, is the threat of legal action against progressive local government initiatives deemed to compromise the dominant national or provincial policy direction and underlying corporate interests. The division of competences between different levels of government is rarely clear-cut and often there is no orientation regarding cases of

conflict. This can have a discouraging effect, especially for smaller, poorer municipalities, dissuading them from taking democratic action in favour of their residents.

The way public revenue is collected and distributed is another critical factor in the *de facto* space local governments have, and their ability to take a different course. For example, in Argentina, budgetary cuts are frequently used to retaliate against provincial or municipal governments that do not fall into step with national or provincial policies. Meanwhile in Zambia, the centralised collection of revenues has hampered meaningful implementation of the Local Government Act. In the case of India, the fact that only certain grains procured by state governments for the PDS program are reimbursed (and further distributed in case of excess) by the central government effectively impedes local diversification and cultural adaptation of procured food.

Another important obstacle is the misconceptions about food-related competencies and under which level of government they fall, such as the case of municipalities in India. These misconceptions do not only concern local authorities, but also civil society, and can significantly limit the expectations and demands placed on local governments. Therefore, efforts by civil society, such as in the case of Gaza, to establish spaces for conversation with local authorities in order to expand their traditional role are critical.

The often quite modest financial and human resources of local governments and the related technical limitations represent other commonplace challenges, especially for small and poor municipalities. On top of this, local governments may come up against national legislations that interfere with their established competences, such as in the case of Indonesia.

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE ACTION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The practices of local governments are highly diverse, and it is important to bear in mind that merely having far-reaching competencies in food and nutrition does not automatically translate into progressive food systems policies and actions. Local policy making is determined by an interplay of multiple factors, including the political party/ideology in power, personal history and commitment of political leaders, and local power dynamics (e.g., strength of social movements vs local landlords and economic elites).

At the same time, in many places, awareness has grown among local authorities regarding the need to establish public policies that strengthen local food systems. There has been a realization that this promotes local economies, bolsters producers' territorial roots, and reduces transportation costs. The adverse environmental and health impacts of the industrial food system, which are most visible at the territorial level, have further galvanized local action to protect the population and environment. The experience of the pandemic and the fragility of global supply chains that it exposed have also been important motivating factors.

Across the countries reviewed, there are many inspiring and at times courageous examples of local governments that have used their power to enact progressive policies and regulations.

Right to food-based policies and strategies

One area in which local governments – at various administrative levels – are taking action is in the development of right to food-based policies and strategies. In the case of Kenya and Nepal, such efforts have been set into motion by including the right to food in national constitutions (and legal frameworks) and legal provisions for their decentralised implementation. In both instances, civil society is playing a critical role creating social pressure and providing concrete support to local governments to develop right to food policies and the corresponding spaces.

As for Colombia, where departments and municipalities have far-reaching competencies in food and nutrition, the cases of Bolivar and Cartagena are exemplary for their highly participatory processes which have brought about comprehensive policies guaranteeing the right to food across the food system and in the context of school food environments.

Regulatory measures to phase out agrottoxics (and transition towards agroecology)

In Brazil and Argentina – countries heavily dominated by agribusiness interests – a significant number of municipal and some state governments are daring to take a different path towards agroecology and phasing out pesticides. They are doing this despite the strong resistance and legal threats and actions of the agribusiness industry and the supportive provincial and national governments. At the same time, these local initiatives are driven by and receive broad support from a well-organised civil society and agroecology and environmental movement. In the case of Argentina, a novel development has been the establishment of a governmental department at the national level to support municipalities, including in legal matters, in the transition towards agroecology. Although there are only a few examples, some Indian states have also decided to move towards organic farming practices and ban certain pesticides and aerial spraying.

School meals and public distribution schemes (public procurement)

Public school meal programmes and food distribution schemes are another area wherein local governments have important competencies and are using them to shape local food systems in favour of small-scale food producers, sustainable production practices, and healthy and culturally adequate diets. Prominent examples in this regard are the cases of Brazil and India, both of which have country-wide systems for free school meals and food distribution schemes with a massive population scope and food-system impact.

In the case of the Brazilian school meal programme, important guidelines for public procurement exist at the national level. These not only relate to the nutritional and cultural adequacy of the food, but also require a certain percentage of food to be procured from family farmers, assigning preference to marginalised groups, such as Indigenous Peoples. Implementation of the programme falls under the responsibility of municipalities and states. While overall compliance with the national guidelines and requirements varies, there are several local governments that have proactively utilised their public procurement competences to positively contribute not only to the health of their pupils, but also to the welfare of local farmers and the environment.

Administration of the Indian PDS programme occurs primarily at the state level. In contrast to the Brazilian system, health, social, and environmental concerns do not feature in the national public

procurement criteria, which are solely based on price. Governments that wish to consider other criteria must take on the financial burden and risks. Nevertheless, a number of states have made efforts to diversify and locally source the food provided through the public distribution system and enhance the nutritional quality of the midday meals.

Regulation of ultra-processed food products and healthy school environments

Regulatory measures to discourage the consumption of unhealthy food products is another area critical to achieving food-system transformation and protecting people's right to food and nutrition, and health. Despite the massive corporate influence and interference in this realm, several local governments – mainly in Brazil and Colombia – have taken the initiative and managed to pass regulatory measures. These have primarily been measures protecting healthy school environments and are relatively recent; thus their implementation has yet to be seen.

Programmes to support small-scale producers and traditional crops

Policies and programmes that enable and support small-scale and peasant food production play a crucial role in transforming food systems and ensuring the right to food and nutrition. Several of the initiatives described above have a direct impact on small-scale food producers. Additional initiatives include targeted pension schemes for farmers in some municipalities of Nepal and the provisioning of market space (especially in urban areas) where small-scale producers can directly sell their products. Extension services are an additional critical competence of local governments, especially in rural settings. The case of India illustrates the devastating consequences of local governments failure to effectively put such services in place.

Finally, there are promising initiatives, such as those of local governments in Indonesia, centred on fostering diversified production of traditional crop varieties and their consumption, including in schools, in a country that is heavily reliant on imported rice.

PARTICIPATORY SPACES FOR ENGAGING IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

Local policy councils and other spaces of public participation play a critical role in the development, implementation and monitoring of food-system policies and related measures. They are a basic component of democratic food systems governance, and thus both a pre-condition for and a desired result of food-system transformation.

The individual country cases illustrate the wide variety of mechanisms for participation that exist – or are under construction – across the globe. These range from institutionalised structures in Brazil or Colombia (partially mandated by national law) to more informal structures in Zambia or Gaza. Furthermore, while some countries have spaces dedicated to food and nutrition, others have more general spaces for interacting with local policy making (e.g., NGO Forum in Uganda). The relative power of food policy councils and similar participation spaces to meaningfully impact public policies depends not only on the country's institutional arrangement, but also varies within countries – with vast differences not only between municipalities, but also among different thematic councils. The role of civil society in the councils and spaces also varies, ranging from permanent members with the right to vote, to guest members with no vote, to no distinctions being made among participants at all.

A particularity of the Brazilian CONSEA system is its multi-level structure, which allows for dialogue between municipal, state, and national level CONSEAs. Its clear right-to-food-and-nutrition orientation and the rule that the presidency must be occupied by civil society are other unique features of the Brazilian CONSEAs.

A major challenge for many of the local councils and spaces is the lack of clear rules regarding participation and distinction among the different categories of participants: namely, rights holders and public-interest civil society, and private-interest entities, such as corporations and their foundations. While in some instances no guidance is provided at all as to the body's composition, in other instances such guidance exists but it is imprecise. Generally, there are no conflict-of-interest safeguards in place to avoid undue corporate influence. This has allowed food corporations to insert themselves into these spaces, including their presidency, especially once they become more influential. Corporations often make this move through their foundations, which claim to be part of civil society.

Another challenge found in some cases is the multitude of thematic policy councils in place and the limited communication among them. This hinders greater inter-disciplinary/sectoral discussions which are essential for truly transformative action across the food system. It also puts a heavy burden on public officials and civil society who are thus impelled to spread their engagement thinly across the various councils.



5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In most of the countries reviewed, local governments, and in particular municipal governments, are considered more accessible and receptive to the social demands of communities. They are in closer contact with their people and territorial realities, and hence more sensitive to pressure from below. In contexts where authoritarian regimes have completely shut their doors to social participation, in situations of protracted crises, or where national governments have fully aligned themselves with corporate interests, local governments can be beacons of hope for alternative, people-driven agendas.

Awareness is also growing among local governments regarding the need to adopt measures to protect the environment and the health of their people. They directly witness the devastating impacts of the biodiversity, climate, food, and health crises caused by the industrial food system and a production model based on extraction and exploitation. Local governments increasingly recognise the decisive role that local food systems can play in promoting local economies, livelihoods, and health, and their resilience in times of crisis.

Local governments are discussing and adopting a wide range of measures to transform our food systems and advance the right to food and nutrition: from public procurement and fomenting local markets to direct support for small-scale producers and the preservation of agricultural lands, from bans on agrotoxics and the marketing of ultra-processed food products, to comprehensive policies promoting agroecology, food sovereignty, and the right to food. Clearly a lot can be - and is being - done at the municipal and state or provincial levels. As local governments increasingly organise themselves into regional and international networks, their engagement in public policy debates around food (systems) opens important windows of opportunity to bring their experiences to the international stage and address some of the obstacles they are facing.

While the local realm has great potential to construct bottom-up policies that foster food sovereignty and the right to food, it is also important not to idealise it, nor overlook the real challenges and constraints that exist, and consider how these can be tackled. The leeway available to local authorities varies widely across countries and regions, as do their human and financial resources. Moreover,

the local context does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is affected by national and international frameworks and power dynamics, including those relating to corporations, while also having its own unique power dynamics (e.g., local elites).

This study has illustrated different steps that can address at least some of these complex issues. One important struggle is to legally safeguard the competences of local governments to regulate in the interests of their people and to protect human rights. The recognition that human rights obligations do not correspond solely to national governments, but to all levels of governments, and that in cases of conflicts between measures adopted at different levels of government, those most favourable of human rights must prevail.

Moreover, regardless of the context, sensitising and incorporating the right to food into the agenda of local governments is essential, as is strengthening their capacity to take action. Many local authorities may not be aware of their human rights obligations, or the role they can play in food-system matters and their potential to effect change. Or they may lack the human resources and technical skills to push for such changes, even when they realise the need for them. Here is where civil society organisations can play a critical role mobilising and pushing for change at the local level, but also accompanying and offering tangible support to local governments, enabling them to fulfil a role for which they are often not explicitly mandated, nor technically and financially equipped.

All this requires a paradigm shift. Civil society must recognize local authorities as relevant actors in food-systems transformation and that they are competent to make changes, even within the restricted space afforded to them. As more claims and practical support are directed towards local governments, more governments will take action, and others will follow suit. The local level will become more relevant and space for action will expand. Networks of civil society and social movements, as well as networks of local governments, both national and international, can be key players in this effort by spreading the word about what is happening in one place to another, creating horizontal spaces for exchange, and providing practical support.

The differing levels of autonomy and competences to craft authoritative policies or regulations require distinct methods capable of effecting change according to the specific context. One also needs to be strategic and select the level of government that is most receptive at that time. For example, if there is a progressive national or provincial administration in power, it may make sense to invest in effecting change at this level, rather than struggling against a regressive municipal government, or one that lies firmly in the hands of local elites.

Last but not least, how we operationalise the realisation of human rights at the local level is directly related to the accountability of the state to its people. To promote real changes at any level of government, creating spaces for meaningful civil-society engagement in the development, implementation and monitoring of public policies related to food and nutrition is fundamental, as is regulating the participation of private-sector entities in such spaces. While spaces for participation may be more accessible at the local level, they may also be less regulated as to who can participate in them. While at first glance this seemingly non-discriminatory and inclusive approach may seem like a positive attribute, it can in fact reinforce rather than dismantle existing power imbalances and exclusion. In this sense, it is critical to establish clear rules for participation designed to balance power relations by supporting the participation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, and prioritising their voices, while establishing clear restrictions on the participation of groups that may have conflicts of interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local governments and their networks:

- Reaffirm the human rights duties of local governments and use these to defend progressive measures. Draw on the expertise of public-interest civil society in the development and implementation of such measures.
- Create spaces at the national and international levels for horizontal exchange and learning about transformative, human rights-based local food-system policies. Move beyond a focus on best practices to include discussions of barriers and how to overcome them.
- Establish spaces for meaningful civil-society engagement in the development, implementation, and monitoring of public policies. Such spaces need to have clear rules of participation that distinguish between different types and roles of participants (especially rights holders vs private-interest actors). Clear priority and support need to be provided to facilitate the participation of those groups most affected by hunger and malnutrition, while also limiting the participation of groups that may have conflicts of interest.

National governments:

- Provide normative clarity as to the competencies of each level of government in the area of food systems. Establish human rights and the environment as the foundation for decisions in cases of conflicts, in line with international law principles.
- Establish spaces for articulating and supporting local government efforts towards sustainable, healthy, and just food systems. Work with local governments to identify and address barriers.
- Learn from other countries' experiences, such as the National Directorate in Argentina, or the CONSEA structure in Brazil.

UN and bilateral cooperation:

- Provide financial, technical, and political support for local government efforts to transform food systems to align them with human rights. Ensure that cooperation programmes do not interfere with the human rights efforts of local governments.
- Provide space in international policy processes to learn from local government experiences. This should go beyond the classic best practices approach and focus on the role of local governments in implementing human rights obligations.
- Recognise and support the vital role of local governments in ensuring the RtFN in food and farming systems affected by conflict and protracted crises.

Civil society:

- Recognise the important role of local governments as human rights duty bearers and direct clear demands to them.
- Provide technical support and tools that can help local governments develop human rights-based food-systems policies and related measures.
- Work with judges and support relevant court cases to create a favourable legal environment for human rights-based local government action.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to general sensitisation on human rights and food-systems transformation, government authorities need tangible tools to support them in taking action. Several such examples can be found in Latin America. One is a [booklet](#) developed by FIAN Colombia on actions that can be taken by local authorities to ensure the right to food and nutrition in the context of territorial development plans, as well a [toolkit](#) to orient territorial actions to advance the right to food and nutrition. Another example is the [Guide for Municipalities on Healthy Food in Schools](#) developed by the Brazilian Institute for the Defense of the Consumer (IDEC) that aims to guide policy makers at the municipal level in the implementation of policies and actions that promote healthy and sustainable diets. The [National Agroecology Directorate](#) in Argentina has also published a [Guide for Municipalities on Agroecology](#) that contains 16 recommendations for concrete steps towards a local transition to agroecology.

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⁵⁷ In the case of Ahmed Sourani and Frances Davies, no in-depth interviews were conducted. However, comprehensive information provided by them during the consultations, as well as in follow-up emails was used to elaborate the sections on Palestine and Zambia respectively, hence they are mentioned in the list of direct contributors.



FIAN
INTERNATIONAL