



ANCHORING FOOD SYSTEM POLICY IN ETHIOPIA

**Lessons from the preparation of the UN Food System Summit (UNFSS)
dialogues and the related processes
Final Report**

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The report is informed by data collected through document review, and interviews with stakeholders involved in the Ethiopia national dialogues for the preparation of UNFSS. The views and recommendations presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of those consulted in its preparation.

Preface

The global community has reaffirmed its commitment to addressing nutritional issues and achieving the SDGs. In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened a Food Systems Summit as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Various dialogues at different levels took place around the world in preparation for this 2021 Food Systems Summit (hereafter called "the Summit"). Member State Dialogue was one of the three main components of the Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSD), the other two being Global Dialogues and Independent Dialogues. The aim of the various dialogues was to facilitate widespread engagement of multiple actors from different parts of society, stakeholders, and sectors for the preparation for the summit.

The government of Ethiopia regarded the UNFSS 2021 process a chance for the world to define a good pathway towards food system change. The Ethiopian Food Systems (EFS) process was initiated in November 2020 by the Ethiopian government. Three dialogues were conducted with the objective to identify what is needed to transform the Ethiopian Food system. It was mainly to develop an EFS roadmap and a position paper based on the UNFSS five Action Tracks. This overall process required technical support and advocacy efforts from various stakeholders. The process of providing technical support and advocating for change for development calls for those engaged to navigate dynamic stakeholder interactions intended to support government processes. However, such dynamic interactions are not usually documented so that opportunities for learning lessons are invariably missed. The preparation processes for the UNFSS by the Ethiopia government offers an excellent opportunity to learn lessons to inform similar efforts and going forward. The lessons learned would be valuable not just for Ethiopia but for other countries as well to strengthen the modalities of engagement for technical assistance and advocacy. This document highlights the dialogue-related interactions both front and backstage that were key to facilitating the process and identifies key opportunities and challenges for the future when similar activities are to be conducted.

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Abbreviations

A4NH: Agriculture for Nutrition and Health

CGIAR: Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research

EFS: Ethiopian Food Systems

FSSD: Food Systems Summit Dialogues

IDI: In-depth Interview

IFPRI: International Food Policy Research Institute

KII: Key Informant Interview

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

UN: United Nation

UNFSS: United Nation Food System Summit

Background

Today, there are 690 million chronically undernourished people around the world. Nearly 3 billion people are unable to afford a healthy diet and poor-quality diets are linked to 11 million deaths per year^{1,2}. Despite increased interest in nutrition in recent years, progress to reduce malnutrition and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals targets is still too slow^{2,3}. Undernutrition remains concerningly high in the poorest regions of the world, and overweight and obesity are on the rise in almost all countries worldwide⁴. This high burden of multiple forms of malnutrition are attributed to various factors that are linked to different components of the food system⁵.

In addition, food systems are also major sources of greenhouse gas emissions (25%-30% of total) and at the same time, the impacts of climate change will affect the way food is produced and the quality of our diets. A shift towards more sustainable, healthy diets could, for example, reduce GHG emissions from food systems by 41 – 74%, while boosting health, productivity, growth and resilience to climate shocks reducing the number of climate induced diseases and deaths⁶.

Current food systems are no longer fit for purpose⁷. With one quarter of the world's population unable to access sufficient and nutrient rich food, and with a real risk of crossing multiple planetary boundaries due to agriculture and food systems, these food systems urgently need to undergo a process of transformation¹. Particularly in developing countries, profound changes in the current food systems and consumption patterns are needed in order to combat nutrition problems that afflict more than 2 billion people⁸. Decision makers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and their development partners, need to take urgent action to change the ways in which food systems are currently managed, governed, and used. This is essential to achieve the goal of sustainable, healthy diets for all⁹. These diets are vital for the health of countless millions of people and the health of the planet, and for progress in almost all of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While Ethiopia has made significant progress in reducing undernutrition, the prevalence of chronic malnutrition (stunting), underweight, and wasting remains unacceptable¹⁰. Additionally, anemia, zinc, vitamin A, folate, and vitamin B12 are among the most common micronutrient

deficiencies in Sub-Saharan Africa including Ethiopia¹¹. On top of high macronutrient and micronutrient deficiencies, the country is facing an increase in overweight, obesity, and diet-related non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease^{12,13}. In order to avert these problems and stay on track towards achieving the SDGs, the Ethiopian government in its numerous government strategies and policies has stated its commitment to combat malnutrition through changing the food systems. The country has a variegated policy environment and a number of studies that are relevant to the transformation of the food system¹⁴⁻¹⁶. However, five years after the world committed to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition (SDG2) and climate mitigation and adaptation (SDG13), most countries are still off-track to achieve the same objective on time². Ethiopia is no exception despite all the progress achieved. This calls for efforts to accelerate progress.

The call for renewed effort to tackle nutritional problems and achieve the SDGs was given a full pledge by the global community. In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened a Food Systems Summit as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Summit launched bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems¹.

Various dialogues at different levels took place around the world in preparation for the 2021 Food Systems Summit (also called "the Summit"). Member State Dialogues was one of three main components of the Food Systems Summit Dialogues (FSSD), the other two being Global Dialogues and Independent Dialogues. The aim of the various dialogues was to facilitate widespread engagement of multiple actors from different parts in society, stakeholders, and sectors for the preparation for the summit. The dialogue gave an opportunity for all countries and communities to discuss their food system, what is working and what is not, what is a priority to improve and what are priority actions to move forward².

¹ The UNFSS official website: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

² Report of the 1st Global Food Systems Summit Dialogue
https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/1st_global_fssd_report_final.pdf

In order for countries to develop a well-aligned plan to transform food systems, the process requires technical support and advocacy efforts from various stakeholders. The process of providing technical support and advocating for change calls for those engaged to navigate dynamic stakeholder interactions intended to support government processes. However, such dynamic interactions are usually not documented so that opportunities for learning lessons are invariably missed. The preparations processes for the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) by the Ethiopia government offers an opportunity for learning lessons to inform similar efforts. The lessons learned would be valuable not just for Ethiopia but for other countries as well to strengthen the modalities of engagement for technical assistance and advocacy.

Objective

The purpose of this assessment was to systematically document lessons learned from the UN Food System Summit (UNFSS) dialogues and the related processes, how the direction of the dialogues emerged, and map areas of opportunities or challenges to inform policy and strengthening scale-up efforts on realization of plans that have been made. Specifically, the aim of the assessment is to document lessons from the efforts of the CGIAR Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) led by IFPRI, in supporting and advocating for food systems transformation, food and nutrition policy development and their implementation in Ethiopia.

Specific objectives

- ✚ Document the dialogue related interactions both front and backstage that were key to facilitating the process of the UNFSS dialogues for lesson learning
- ✚ Identify main opportunities leveraged and how challenges were addressed
- ✚ Describe anticipated challenges going forward that would need to be addressed towards scaling up
- ✚ Determine and map areas of opportunities for scaling up of UNFSS dialogues if the process were to cover subnational settings.

Method

Context

This assessment started with a desk review of available literature (both published and grey) on the global and Ethiopian UNFSS process. Reports on the food system dialogues and other relevant literature were consulted. The purpose of the desk review was to have a clear background information about the global process and how the Ethiopian process evolved in relation to this global process. The desk review informed the structure of in-depth interviews (IDI) and key informant interviews (KII) to get an understanding of how opportunities were leveraged and challenges addressed.

Participant selection

A total of 23 respondents were selected from core team, technical team, and dialogue participants. The selection of respondents was done in consideration of their role in the dialogue process. The participants were from the dialogue organizers; action track leads; participants from government representatives, academia, civil society, NGOs, and private sectors to get a diverse perspective on the process.

KIIs were conducted with members of the technical committee supporting the UNFSS dialogues in Ethiopia and in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders who participated in the dialogues.

Data collection tool and procedure

The topic guides were developed after a thorough desk review. During their development they passed through a rigorous process as per the objective of the study. We used a reflective qualitative inquiry process. The topic guides were developed in English and interviews were conducted in English and Amharic.

Analysis and reporting

Synthesis of evidence from desk review

Evidence from desk review is synthesized to form the first major section (contextual information) of the report. In addition to setting the context of the assessment, the desk review allowed for

the identification of emerging themes that were further used in structuring and/or interpreting the KIIs and IDIs.

Qualitative data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were checked for errors and supplemented with the corresponding interviewer notes to gain a better sense of the respondents' experience. These data were coded, sorted, and analyzed using open code version 4.0. The transcripts were first coded deductively, drawing from the desk review. This codebook was supplemented by inductive nodes, made out of common themes emerging from the analysis. In addition to structuring the reports of the findings, relevant quotes were selected and presented in the report to illustrate the main findings.

Findings

This report is mainly based on document review and analysis of 16 interviews (nine KIIs and seven IDIs). Two participants from private sector, two from academia, one from civil society, five from NGOs and six participants from government body were interviewed.

The UN food system summit

In September 23, 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened a Food Systems Summit (FSS) as part of the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Summit aimed to provide a platform for ambitious new actions, innovative solutions, and plans to transform food systems and leverage these shifts to deliver progress across all of the SDGs. It is designed to support member states to drive food systems transformation and, in doing so, accelerate global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The summit was carried out with the following objectives

- Raise awareness of food systems' centrality to the entire sustainable development agenda, and the urgency of transforming food systems, particularly in the wake of a global pandemic;
- Align stakeholders around a common understanding and narrative of a food system framework as a foundation for concerted action, making food and food systems a more widespread issue for advocacy and action to achieve the 2030 Agenda;
- Recognize the need for inclusivity and innovation in food systems governance and action;
- Motivate and empower stakeholders who support food systems transformation through the development of improved tools, measurement, and analysis; and
- Catalyze, accelerate, and enlarge bold action for the transformation of food systems by all communities, including countries, cities, companies, civil society, citizens, and food producers.

The FSS is organized around five 'Action-Tracks' or key outcomes: (i) ensure safe and nutritious food for all; (ii) shift to sustainable consumption patterns (iii); boost nature positive production; (iv) advance equitable livelihoods; and (v) build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses.

The UNFSS calls UN member states to apply a food systems approach as a means of achieving the SDGs. The UN Committee on World Food Security’s High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HPLN: 2017)³ defines a food systems approach as one that *“gathers all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, including waste management, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes.”* Food Systems transformation is intrinsically about people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships.

Ethiopia’s preparations for the UNFSS 2021

The government of Ethiopia has a policy landscape that encompasses numerous sectors of the food system, and it regards the UNFSS 2021 process as a chance for the world to define a good pathway towards food system change. Ethiopia is fully dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and attended the UN Food Systems Summit with zeal. The Ethiopian Food Systems (EFS) process was initiated in November 2020 by the Ethiopian government. As part of the efforts, the country developed a national food systems position paper and a roadmap to describe the Ethiopia government vision for food systems transformation. The position paper and roadmap were developed to inform the actions needed to achieve the envisioned transformation process through multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder actions that are structured to leverage available evidence in the country. His Excellency Mr. Oumer Hussein, Minister of Agriculture, and Her Excellency Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health, convened the events, which included a high-level roundtable discussion and background paper, two national dialogues, and the official launch of the EFS.

The objective of the national dialogue was to identify what is needed to transform the Ethiopian food system. It was mainly intended to develop an EFS roadmap and position paper based on the UN FS five Action Tracks. Before the dialogues started a core team was established and a

³ HPLN 2020. Food Security and Nutrition: Building a global narrative towards 2030. A Report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.

background paper and a concept note were developed. The background paper synthesized the available evidence to inform the required food system transformation in Ethiopia. The document was intended 1) to inform a high-level roundtable discussion between the government of Ethiopia and the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition; 2) to facilitate the development of an Ethiopia Food System Position Paper, 3) raise issues that should be included in the Ethiopian Food System Summit-2021 (EFSS-2021), the United Nations Food System Summit-2021 (UNFSS-2021) dialogues for which game changing actions will be suggested, and 4) contribute to informing a food system development roadmap for Ethiopia.

To design and launch the EFS Plan, the EFS process brought together over 120 stakeholders and leveraged the experience of government departments, private sector corporations, universities and research institutes, civil society organizations, and multilateral and bilateral institutions across the three dialogues.

First National Food System Summit Dialogue

Under the theme “*Current and Future Prospects of the Ethiopian Food System*”, the first National Food System Summit Dialogue (FSSD-1) was held on March 31 and April 1, 2021, jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the United Nations Body in Ethiopia and multi-sectoral participants from development partners, academia/research, private sector, civil society and regional authority’s representatives. Around 85 participants attended the dialogue in person and online. Among these, 37 (44%) were from federal and regional level government bodies, 19 (22%) from development partners, 18 (21%) from private sectors, 8 (9%) from academia and 3 (4%) from civil society.

The first dialogue was about identifying challenges and opportunities within the Ethiopian food system. The objectives of the FSSD-1 were: (i) setting the scene on the status of the Ethiopian Food System and defining challenges the country faces; (ii) defining and identifying ‘game changers’ (iii) initiating the theory of Change (ToC) based on actions identified for different

components of the HLPE conceptual framework in relation to the Ethiopian Food system. FSSD-1 had 3 Sessions that included breakout sessions per Action Track and related Food Systems Domains. The discussion was organized as per the UN-CFS HLPE, 2020 framework. The HLPE Domains were clustered in line with the Action Tracks so that the same groups of participants could work together in each of the 3 sessions.

In order to facilitate the dialogue process, a background paper was prepared to synthesize the available evidence and inform about the required food system transformations in Ethiopia. The first national dialogue had five presentations on: (i) FS framework & action tracks; (ii) the background paper; (iii) policies and strategies; (iv) processing & marketing; and (v) handling & storage. In addition, there were three breakout sessions to identify critical issues that need attention, defining context specific game changers, the EFS profile and indicators, and elements of the future food systems.

HE. Mr Oumar Hussien, Minister of Agriculture (the chair) and HE. Dr Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health (co-chair) were National Convenors and Dr Mandefro Nigussie, CEO of Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) and Dr. Dereje Duguma – State Minister of Health were the Curators. In consideration of the COVID-10 pandemic and the Ethiopia Ministry of Health guidelines, a hybrid format was used for the dialogue within in-person (48 people) and 60 online participants. The speakers and panelists were from the government, the UN, the private sector, academia, and development and research partners.

Second National Food System Summit Dialogue

With the theme “*Towards transforming Ethiopia’s food systems*”, the second dialogue was aimed at evaluating and selecting ‘game changing solutions’ that will address the challenges identified in EFS Dialogue 1 and craft a pathway to transforming Ethiopia’s food systems and achieve the SDGs. It mainly focused on identifying game changing solutions that can transform Ethiopia food system.

Selection of game changing solution

The selection of game changing solutions went through multiple steps. First, a team was organized in each of the five action tracks to facilitate the process. The selection process was designed to be a public process and a public dialogue rather than a government dominated activity. To do that, an open portal where anyone could submit a game changing solution was set up in the Ministry of Agriculture's website. Then the link was widely shared with stakeholders/institutions that were likely to be interested. The portal was open for several weeks and collected many game changing solutions. This allowed the organizers to get ideas from a wide range of individuals and institutions.

Once the collection of game changing solutions were finalized, it was reviewed by the core team and duplicates were removed. After screening, 86 game changing ideas were identified. Then the selected game changing ideas went through a preliminary assessment using predefined criteria. Then the organizer opened the portal a second time to give people another chance to submit ideas and then the selected suggestions went through a similar process. Finally, 22 game changing ideas were emerged.

The four criteria used for the selection of game changing solutions were potential impact, being actionable, being scalable, and being sustainable. The following matrix was used as a guide to select game changing ideas.

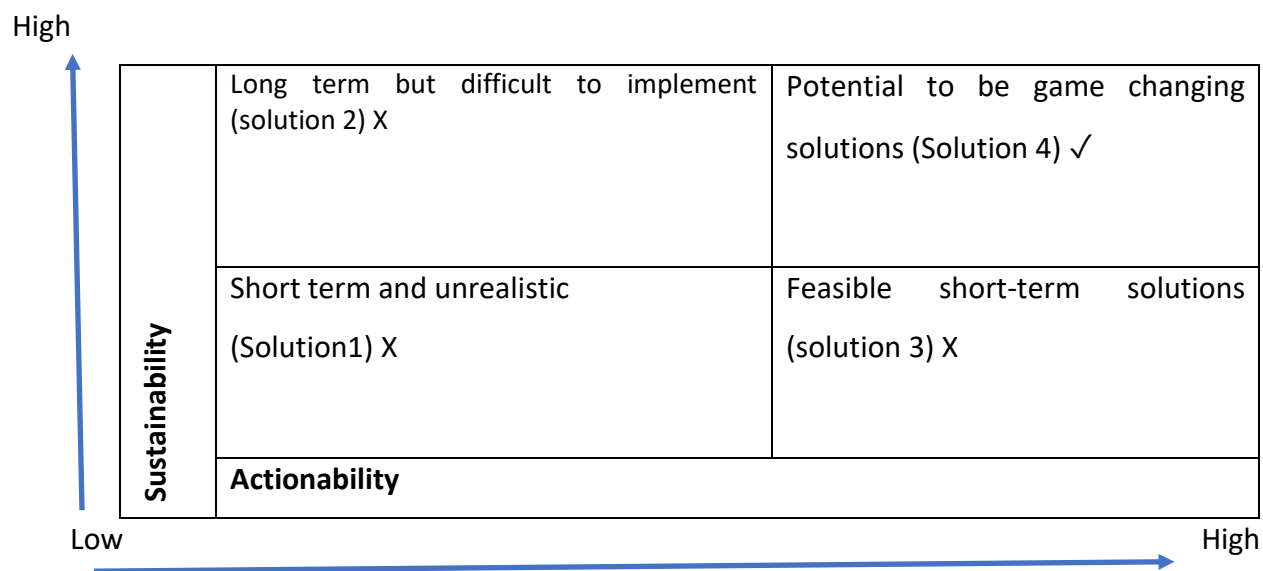


Figure 1. Matrix for selection of game changing solutions

Third National Food System Summit Dialogue

The third and the final dialogue was Ethiopian Food System launching event which was held on July 15, 2021. The main agenda of the event was to publicly affirm the Government of Ethiopia's commitment to the EFS Plan and call key stakeholders, development partners and the country as a whole to action. Various stakeholder took part in this event.

Stakeholders involved food system policy anchoring and EFS dialogues

Multi-stakeholder engagement is becoming more widely acknowledged as a crucial vehicle for fostering long-term discourse among stakeholders with the goal of improving policy design and implementation. By the virtue of this, various stakeholders are involved in food system discussions and policy development related to nutrition and food systems. Particular due to the EFSD, the Ethiopia national dialogues for the preparation of UNFSS involved various stakeholders from a wide range of sectors such as government bodies (ministries, research institutes, regional representative), UN bodies, NGOs, academia, private sectors, and civil societies (youth, and farmers associations). **Figure 2.** summarizes the organizations that took part in the EFSD.

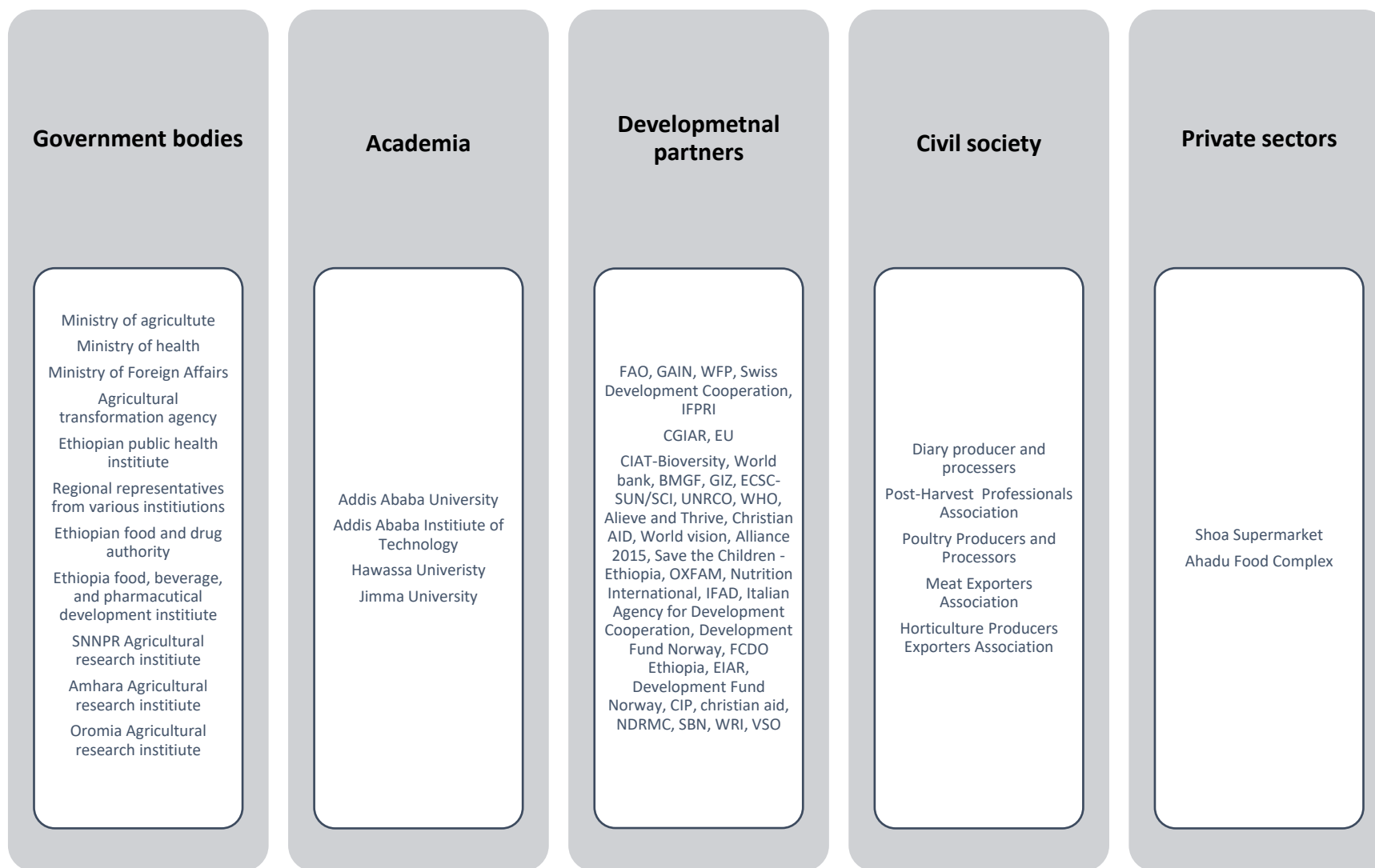


Figure 2. Stakeholders involved in the process of Ethiopia national food system dialogues towards the UNFSS

The role of CGIAR program in food system policy anchoring in Ethiopia

Various stakeholders are actively involved in the food system policy anchoring efforts in Ethiopia. CGIAR, Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) is one of the key stakeholders at the forefront that has been playing a pivotal role in food system policy anchoring in Ethiopia. Since the start of food system discussion in Ethiopia around 2015/16, the A4NH's Food Systems for Healthier Diets research flagship has been contributing significantly through embarking on food system discussions, bringing experience and leadership in international projects related to food systems, developing a food system's profile for Ethiopia, training of young researchers to build their capacity, released a series of fact sheets to provide a detailed, at-a-glance look at the food systems in Ethiopia and other countries.

In addition, A4NH was one of the key stakeholders in the Ethiopia national dialogues for the preparation of UNFSS. Researchers from the team led the development of the background paper, actively engaged in the process and took part in the facilitation of the overall activity.

Outcome of the national dialogues

Based on the assessment, the objective of the EFSD has mostly been met. Through the process, the dialogues have allowed for identifying challenges and opportunities of the Ethiopian food system, identifying key solutions to transform the food system based on the identified challenges and organized them in the road map. In addition, there were also various engagements for the way forward. Key indicators are established for monitoring and evaluation of each food system component as well as for the overall food system transformation.

Identification of food system challenges and opportunity

The rapid population growth, rising incomes, rapid urbanization, the expansion of agro-processing companies, and climate change are all driving changes in Ethiopian food systems. This shift must be shaped in a way that expands food availability and choice, encourages equitable income distribution, and encourages the adoption of healthy eating habits. However, considerable obstacles must be overcome in order to reach these goals.

The first dialogue of the EFS dialogues enabled to identify various challenges and opportunities of the Ethiopian food system. Before the dialogue took place, a background paper was developed to underpin the major challenges in the EFS which was presented to the dialogue participants. The background paper was used in a brain storm to embark on further discussions and to bring participants to the same page. Some of the challenges identified includes limited diversity of the food basket for the majority of the population, high cost of nutritious foods, limited food production that mainly focuses on grain staples and very low productivity of horticultural crops such as fruits and vegetables, limited development of value chains, high post-harvest losses, challenging cultural and traditional practices regarding maternal and child feeding practice.

There were also opportunities identified. For example, the existence of multiple agro-ecological zones, population size, increase in production in recent years, and availability of various enabling policy frameworks.

Selection of game changing solutions

The main agenda of the second dialogue was to evaluate and select 'game changing solutions' that will address the challenges identified in EFS Dialogue 1. The selection of the game changers went through a lot of deliberation. Finally, 22 game changing solutions that can transform the food system were identified. Then the game changing solutions were clustered into six groups;

- i) Nutrient-dense food production; food safety, fortification and rural electrification and appropriate climate smart technologies;
- ii) Supply and value chain development, national food based dietary guidelines, nutrition literacy and awareness creation;
- iii) Integrated policy-making, land reform, and improved government finance provisions for agricultural and rural transformation;
- iv) Agricultural technologies, innovation and agricultural input supplies;
- v) Access to markets, market information, infrastructure and specialization; and
- vi) Managing risk and protecting the poor.

Each cluster of game changing solutions seeks to address key challenges identified. Addressing these challenges can bring about the transformation of Ethiopia's food systems and the national dialogues were successful in the selection of game changing solutions.

“The development of the background paper and the platform for the participants to put their reflections on the challenges and opportunities were very useful in shaping the discussion as well as making the dialogue useful to come up with solutions that can address the major challenges and build on the existing opportunities to transform the food system...” IDI participant, MOH

“...Yes, they gave us a chance for dedicated discussions because essentially people took two days out of their schedule to focus on a food system challenge, particular action tracks relevant to their work and discuss each of the game changing solutions to overcome the challenge in detail. And that got us a wide range of voices and perspectives that otherwise we would have really struggled to get.” KII Participant, ATA

“The dialogues were good enough in meeting the objectives because we have finally identified key priority game changing solutions to address the challenges. That was the final result.... By the way, this is a very big achievement. Any ongoing or new project is being revitalized to take up the food system perspective.... In my opinion, it was successful.” KII, Developmental partner

“...The dialogues were good enough in meeting these objectives because we have finally identified key priority game changing solutions for funding, the government or the stakeholder’s attention. This was the final result and created a common understanding regarding the food system perspective and intervention in Ethiopia. I think the dialogues have conveyed these messages properly and the key game changing solutions were already identified...” KII, Developmental partner

Development of position paper and roadmap

The other successful accomplishment of the dialogues was the development of Ethiopia's position statement and food system transformation roadmap. The position paper was developed through a systematic consultative national process and was presented at UNFSS. The roadmap presents implementation arrangements, timelines, roles and responsibilities, accountabilities and resource requirements. It puts an ambitious vision to transform the Ethiopian food systems by 2030.

"...I can say that the achievement was positive. One of the aims was preparing a pre-summit before the UN summit to reflect the nations stand and position. The event was a huge one and a model for other countries. The Ministers of MOH and MOA with other state ministers were present. A lot of things were achieved regarding the announcement of position of the government..." IDI, ATA

"The draft of the position paper was presented as much as possible. There were presentations to bring all the participants on the same page regarding how the UN food system dialog was framed, what was expected and the like. This has gone some way to bring us all on the same page..." KII, Academia

Strength of the process

Multi-stakeholder involvement: participatory and inclusive approaches to multi-stakeholder engagement are underpinned by policies and frameworks as part of an enabling environment. Ethiopia's national food system dialogues towards the UNFSS involved various stakeholders. The involvement of a wide range of participants from various constituencies such as ministries, NGOs, academia, private sectors, youth and farmers associations had facilitated strong and diverse discussions.

Engagement of higher-level government officials: involvement of higher government officials is crucial in getting political buy-in and facilitates the development and implementation of policies and strategies. The presence of ministers at each of the dialogues gave a sense of importance to what was done and it in turn impacted how participants acted and how serious they took it.

Coordination and collaboration between ministries: collaboration of participants is critical in any process that requires multi-stakeholder engagement. Participants mentioned that the two ministries (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture) who were leading the process had arranged good coordination and collaboration which facilitated the overall process and achieving the objectives.

Strong partner support: various developmental partners, for example FAO, GAIN, WFP, Swiss Development Cooperation, IFPRI; CGIAR, EU, World bank, BMGF, GIZ and others, were keen to support the process and contributed financially, and engaged in other activities throughout the process. This has contributed the successful accomplishment of the dialogue's objectives. *(See figure 2 for an exhaustive list of stakeholders who participated in the process).*

High effort to facilitation of engagement: COVID-19 created both opportunities and challenges. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, only a limited number of participants were invited to the event. In order to overcome this challenge and to be able to engage multiple stakeholders, various platforms such as hybrid (virtual and in-person) dialogue arrangement, development of open portal to collect game changing solutions, etc., were used. This experience was repeatedly mentioned as one of the important factors which facilitated the high engagement and contributed to the dialogue success

Weakness of the process

Some stakeholders were not represented: a food system is a broad concept and it touches almost every government body. Despite strong efforts to bring every stakeholder to the dialogues, some relevant ministries were missing. For example, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transport and Logistics, the Ministry of Science and

Higher Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, the National Planning Commission, and the Ethiopian Investment Commission were not actively involved in the process.

Time shortage: policy development process is a huge assignment and requires engagement in activities that are challenging and complex. Undertaking such a huge task demands allocation of an ample amount of time. However, the time allocated to the events were not sufficient enough.

Unclear recruitment process of participants: participants mentioned that the criteria for the invitation of dialogue participants were not clear. The process of organizing the core team, technical team and dialogue participants did not have a clear or standard procedure.

Having delegates who were not really prepared: there were diverse groups of participants with different levels of prior knowledge and experience. Pre-event preparation of the participants was important given the short time allocated to each of the events in addition to their different knowledge and experience level. However, participants mentioned that various delegates came to the event without adequate preparation. This has limited how much the participants contributed.

Inadequate sensitization about food systems and the summit: The goal of the summit is to increase public discourse about food systems and their importance in achieving the SDGs, to improve action to achieve measurable progress towards the SDGs, and develop a system to follow up and review progress. By virtue of this, various countries conducted subnational dialogues, youth summits and other events to enable everyone to share additional ideas and accelerate commitment to action. The Ethiopia food system dialogue was limited in this regard.

COVID-19: at the time of the preparation process, the government of Ethiopia had to put a restriction to the number of participants to any public gathering. For that reason, only a limited number of participants was invited to the dialogue. Yet, there were efforts to overcome the challenge by arranging the events in hybrid format, which was challenging due to internet breakdowns.

Key lessons and way forward

- ✚ The Ethiopian food system dialogue has leveraged from the participation of various stakeholders and similar activities will benefit if it involves multiple stakeholders. However, food systems are vast and touch every corner of the government sector. The dialogues could have benefited if all relevant government bodies took part. In addition, engagement of all government sectors eases the implementation of food system transformation activities.

“...I think one thing that we realized when we put together the plan is that whilst food systems primarily relate to the work of the Ministry of Health, they actually touch on basically all government departments, and we realized that to implement the plan, we would need a lot of engagement going forwards from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Education, and almost all government ministries because food systems are so vast...” KII ATA

- ✚ Participants in the discussion had various backgrounds and levels of knowledge on the subject matter (food system). So having an induction before participating in the actual sessions would have been helpful to bring participants on the same page.

“...One thing that became, I think, very clear throughout the process is, you know, you have the stakeholders who are engaged in the technical committee who really understand what you're trying to do and there are however other stakeholders that you just invite to the national dialogues. And it's very challenging to bring them up to speed and to get them to understand what you're doing. And I think we probably didn't invest in the early dialogues enough time in socializing and doing kind of exploratory meetings in advance of the dialogue. So, everyone would have understood what we were trying to do, and we have all those familiar with the content of the ideas that we were trying to develop...” KII ATA

- ✚ Creating an online platform (open portal) to collect suggestions on game changing solutions has created great opportunities to get ideas from a wide range of individuals and institutions. This effort could have been more impactful if the portal or the system was advertised to a wider audience.
- ✚ The development of the background paper has facilitated the discussion through priorly identifying the challenges and opportunities of the Ethiopian food system which needs solutions through transforming the food system.
- ✚ The selection of game changing solutions passed through an iterative process. This process enabled the selection of solutions that can transform the food system. However, some participants focused on pushing an agenda which reflects the interests of the organization they work for rather than focusing on the real game changers. This could have been resolved by following a standard procedure such as having a clear criterion for selection of technical and core team members, and a participant's declaration of conflict of interest before engaging in the process.

"...I would say that, this thing has eventually become a problem down the line. In my very humble opinion, I do believe that everyone came with their own agenda and there was a continuous push to prioritize agendas whether from the development partners, government bodies, NGOs, research institution or others. Most of them think that their component was the most important and was not getting enough attention..." IDI participant, ATA

"...the first challenge is, it was not clear how the core team was established. What was the criterion to be a core team? Has the core team declared any conflict of interest? This should be seen critical and should be made transparent. The team is going to shape the direction of one country but it is not clear who formed it in what way? Financed by whom? This is somewhat odd. We have seen this in Ethiopia many times before but for the future there should be a mechanism to address this. Imagine if someone says I will pay this amount if you include my idea in to food system; should I do that without knowing who is

financing me. This has a consequence later on as you know it will dominate that dialog...”

KII higher institution participants

- ✚ The involvement of higher level officials is always vital in getting a political buy-in. The national dialogue has leveraged that opportunity and stakeholders who were invited to participate in the dialogues were actively engaged.

Conclusion

The government of Ethiopia has acknowledged the importance of transforming the food system and regarded the UNFSS 2021 process as a chance for the world to define a good pathway towards food system change. Based on the global recommendation, a series of events was organized with the aim of preparing a position paper and develop an EFS roadmap.

The overall process was successful in identifying the challenges of the Ethiopian food system, and the selection of game changing solutions to transform the food system. There were various

efforts to bring multiple stakeholders into the dialogues and this has contributed a lot to their success. In addition, the presence of government officials at the higher ministry level, high partner support, good coordination between the two ministry who were leading the EFSD, and good facilitation of the discussions were the strengths of the process. However, time shortage, COVID-19, an unclear selection process of the committee and the participants, and a lack of adequate preparation from some delegates before their actual engagement are some of the challenges.

In spite of all the challenges, the dialogues were useful in identifying game changing solutions. Implementing these game-changing solutions and driving food systems transformations will require a call to action for all Ethiopians. It will require close coordination and cooperation between government departments and organizations, research bodies and institutes, the private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations, development partners and, ultimately, the general public.

Annex I: Information sheet

Introduction

Hello. My name is _____. I am working with Wageningen University and Research (WUR). WUR is trying to systematically document lessons learned from the process of the Ethiopia national food system dialogues towards the UNFSS and beyond for lesson learning. The process of providing technical support and advocating for change processes for development calls for those engaged to navigate dynamic stakeholder interactions intended to support government processes. However, such dynamic interactions are not usually document so that opportunities for lesson learning are invariably missed. The preparations processes for the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) by the Ethiopia government offer an opportunity for lessons learning to inform similar efforts, going forward. The lessons learned would be valuable not just in Ethiopia but in other countries as well to strengthen the modalities of engagement for technical assistance and advocacy.

Objective

The purpose of this assessment is to systematically document lessons learned from the efforts of the CGIAR Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) led by IFPRI, in supporting and advocating for food systems transformation, food and nutrition policy development and implementation in Ethiopia. More specifically, the aim of the assessment is to document lessons in the context of the UN Food System Summit (UNFSS) dialogues and the related processes, how the direction of the dialogues emerged, and map areas of opportunities or challenges to inform policy and strengthening scale-up efforts on realization of plans that have been made.

Specific Objectives

- ✚ Document the dialogue related interactions both front and backstage that were key to facilitating the process of the UNFSS dialogues for lesson learning
- ✚ Identifying main opportunities leveraged and how challenges were addressed

- ✚ Described anticipated challenges going forward that would need to be addressed towards scaling up
- ✚ Determine and map areas of opportunities for scaling up of UNFSS dialogues if the process were to be scaled up to cover subnational settings.

Benefits and Risks

There will be no direct personal benefit that you will obtain because of your participation. However, the information we obtain will help us to systematically document the Ethiopia national food system dialogue, examining key things that shape the direction of the dialogue and map areas of opportunities for scaling up the dialogue in future policy development. There will be no harm to you except for the time that you will spend with us. You are selected to be part of the activity due to your adequate experience and information about the food system dialogue you are working on or participating.

Content

I would like to ask you some questions about your role in the planning, organization and implementation of the national food system dialogue and your overall experience about it.

How long will it take?

The questions usually take about 45 to 60 minutes. We can take a break if you need to.

Confidentiality

We record your interview. We will not share information linked to your name or any other personal identifier to anyone. Whatever information you provide to us will also be kept strictly confidential. Participation is completely voluntary. You can choose not to answer all or any specific question.

Voluntary Participation

If you have questions or points of clarifications, you can ask me at any time. You may also stop your interview at any time if you feel discomfort or unhappy by the process. However, we hope that you will participate fully since your experiences and advices are important for the documentation.

Do you have any questions before we proceed to the interview? Please let me know if anything I have stated is not clear. I will be happy to explain it further to ensure you understand.

In case you need more information about the assessment, you may contact the person listed hereunder.

Contact

For any questions related to the work

Dr. Kabeab Baye

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Background information	Reponses
Level of the interview	A. Core team B. Stakeholder
Name of the organization	_____
Position of the respondent	_____
Date of interview	_____
Name of interviewer	_____
Code of the participant	_____

Annex II: Interviewer guide

I. Ethiopia food system understanding and engagement in food system activities

- 1. How do you see the Ethiopia food system?
Probe: What are the futures, opportunities, challenges
- 2. Did you know about UNFSS dialogue?
Probe: What is the aim of the summit? Who are taking part?
- 3. Did you engage in any of the summit activity before the national dialogue?
- 4. Have you participated in other FS dialogue other than the national dialogue?
If yes, how many UNFSS related events did you participate in? tell me about that experience on those events

II. The national dialogues (major focus, expectations, and outcomes of the dialogues)

- 5. In how many of the national dialogue have you participated?
Prob If missed any of the dialogue: What was the reason for not participating in all the dialogues?
- 6. What were your expectations from the dialogues?
- 7. How was the event compared to your expectations?
Probe in terms:
 - Aim
 - Procedure/process of the dialogue (advocacy, communication)
 - Stakeholder involvement/ representativeness/ engagement?
 - Overall organization of the dialogue
 - Selection of game changing ideas
 - In terms of addressing challenges and building on opportunities you raised regarding Ethiopia food system (*refer to responses in Q1*)

8. At the beginning of the dialogue, were there available evidence, knowledge, and policy to embark the discussion?

Prob: Can you mention few of the policy document used?

Were there policy document that is missed which you think should have been reviewed?

9. Before and during the dialogue, how do you see the dialogue in facilitating engagement of various constituencies across food system thorough the process?

Prob: Who took part in the process? Can you mention them?

How do you see stakeholder representation in the dialogue?

Who would you add if you were given the chance?

10. Was there empowerment of participants to improve their engagement in the dialogue?

Prob: Can you tell me the activities done to empower them?

Was there any barrier for active engagement? Tell me if there is any,

11. How do you see the action tracks in shaping the discussion and in terms of leading solution to the issues you raised above (*based on the responses in Q1*)

Prob:

Do the action tracks offer you a space to share your idea or expertise as well as to learn?

Were they engaging? (Were they good enough to unlock conversation?)

Have they addressed important issues that you think are important to Ethiopia food system?

Did you/ any of the dialogue participants have idea that does not fall into any of the action tracks? Can you give me example on that?

III. Identifying areas of opportunity, gap, and challenges

12. Is there anything that you would like to do it differently?

Probe in terms:

Aim

Procedure/process of the dialogue (advocacy, communication)

Stakeholder involvement/ representativeness/ engagement?

Overall organization of the dialogue

Selection of game changing ideas

In terms of addressing challenges and building on opportunities you raised regarding Ethiopia food system (*refer to responses in Q1*)

13. In your opinion was the dialogue useful? how? in what ways?

14. Do you think the objectives have been met? how?

Which ones are met? which ones are not likely to be met?

15. Forward looking, what do you think needs to happen next?

Probe:

Have there been discussion about post summit activities? (Discussion on continuous review and measure progress, post summit activities)

16. What major challenges and weakness have you observed in the dialogue?
17. If similar dialogues are planned in the future, what should be done to make the best out of it?
18. Do you have anything to add?

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