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“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:  
Trade-offs and synergies”

## Community action plans to enhance sustainable food availability and accessibility in Busia County, Kenya

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### Abstract

On-farm or landscape biodiversity and diet diversity are positively linked. Rural families often depend on their own farm production for food security. Eating a variety of foods across food groups is associated with sufficient intake of several micronutrients and subsequent good health. In Teso North and South sub-counties of Busia, 20 community units were randomly selected, 10 from each sub county. A cross-sectional survey including 400 women with children 6–23 months was conducted to identify challenges in dietary practices. This informed a co-creation process with 10 out of the 20 community units (5 from each subcounty). They took part in a series of participatory workshops to identify solutions to the dietary challenges and developed community action plans with interventions that were implemented for one year. The co-creation process included community members, researchers, and the county government. Monitoring and evaluation took place throughout the implementation period. At baseline, 42% of the households owned kitchen gardens. Less than 10% had received training in kitchen gardening. About 63% of surveyed children met the minimum dietary diversity score (4 out of 7 food groups), while only 30% of women met the minimum score, 5 out of 10 food groups. To improve the availability, accessibility and consumption of diverse foods, the communities implemented selected interventions which included ground nuts, fruits, vegetables, orange-flesh sweet potato farming, and poultry keeping. All community groups registered as self-help groups through which the members conducted table banking to raise capital to fund selected intervention activities. Community health workers (n=117) were trained in nutrition education and counselling and cascaded the knowledge to 17,167 households within their villages. Twelve agricultural demonstration gardens and 5 poultry projects were established. 232 farmers trained in kitchen gardening, entrepreneurship, financial records, and book-keeping. Analyzed endline data will be presented at the conference. The co-creation process enhances community participation and ownership of intervention activities. Since the community members have invested their financial and human resources in the intervention activities, they are committed to their success. Active government involvement in the process is vital.

**Keywords:** Co-creation, community action plans, community participation, dietary diversity