Food flows are lifelines of food systems. Tracing food flows helps identify vulnerabilities and design for sustainable diets, jobs and resilience.

Mukuru is a low-income, multi-ethnic settlement next to Nairobi’s industrial area. The settlement houses 100,000 households and 400,000 people. Residents lack secure tenure and decent housing. Mukuru spends around $3.6 million on food monthly. The informal food economy is in a dynamic equilibrium reproducing power asymmetries and food-related injustices.

HUMAN DRIVERS
- **Demography**: Population growth drives food demand, increased competition over land, high social innovation, adaptive capacity.
- **Economy**: Food prices increase (maize +8%; cooking oil 33% in a year), food inflation 20%; rising energy prices (+16% VAT). Unemployment > more food vendors.
- **Infrastructure**: New access roads and evictions.
- **Environment**: Pollution of rivers, inadequate sanitation and waste management.
- **Governance**: Informal governance, gatekeepers and protection fees, NGOs supporting urban farming, Community Health Workers increase nutrition outreach.

FOOD SYSTEM TRENDS
- **Food supply**: Food imports through Mukuru-based vendors from Wakulima, Gikomba and Muthurwa Markets; comparably little ‘domestic production’: urban vegetable gardening/livestock keeping (eggs, milk, rabbits, vegetables). Rationale: subsistence, business, emergency, loss of animal manure, organic waste and energy.
- **Availability**: Cooked/uncooked food from informal food vendors (69.07%) and local shops (87.29%), ‘hotels’ and few family-owned supermarkets. Security improved, but not for women, Lack of storage/cooling. Local millers compete with packaged flour.
- **Affordability**: Mixed; Upgrading road infrastructure could mediate food prices hikes and improve availability. Vendors offer food on credit, manipulate sizes to attract customers.
- **Consumption**: Mixed bag of food security/insecurity; Signs of nutrition transitions: Sugary, processed foods (instant noodles for children), animal products, low food safety. Undernutrition declined, but child malnutrition remains. Diabetes, ulcers, stunting and blood pressure.

Levers of food system transformation

**SOCIETAL RESPONSE**
- **Social protection**: Cash transfers/food drives, traditional food coping (e.g., reduction of meals), school dropouts and consumption shortfalls.
- **Food safety**: COVID-19 protocols improved hand hygiene, positive effects on food safety.
- **Urban farming**: Supported by concerns about pesticide residues; meat export from Mukuru to slaughterhouses.

**LEVERAGE POINTS**
- **Level 1. Resource flows**: Support multi-functional urban farming: food availability, micronutrients, income, link to school feeding, reduce food waste, biomass management, increase agency and political voice.
- **Level 2. Feedback**: Increase demand for sustainable diets, change food flow governance, accountability, incentives, relations amongst actors, political economy. Social protection, new green jobs.
- **Level 4. Food paradigm**: Food-sensitive urban planning and work with local authorities to change food narrative. Support localised Mukuru Food System Strategy, policies to improve food affordability.

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Source: Adapted from Google Earth