



Ending Extreme Poverty and Hunger Worldwide

Chapter Summary

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of cutting hunger in half by 2015 is clearly within reach. Recent data show that the world has made more progress against hunger than previously thought. But progress against malnutrition has been too slow. Globally, 1 in 4 children are stunted. Chronic malnutrition poses one of the gravest threats to human development and achieving sustainable progress on other MDGs. Reducing malnutrition remains part of the unfinished agenda of the MDGs. As international debate around a post-2015 agenda intensifies, the United States should provide leadership and work with the global community to forge a unified and universal set of global development goals that includes a specific goal to end hunger and achieve food security and good nutrition by 2030. It should also include indicators that advance women's economic empowerment, community resilience, and good governance and effective institutions.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS CHAPTER

- The international community should make a concerted push to achieve the MDG targets by the December 2015 deadline.
- The international community must reach agreement on a set of development goals to succeed the MDGs.
- The next development goals should be for all countries, including the United States.
- The post-2015 development goals should include a stand-alone goal to end hunger by 2030 and achieve global food security and good nutrition for all.
- The next round of development goals should underscore the need to strengthen local capacity and resilience in low-income countries.

Why the Millennium Development Goals Matter

Global poverty is now falling with unprecedented speed. More people escaped poverty during the 2000s than in any other decade in history. Even more importantly, progress was made in every major region of the world. According to the World Bank, the percentage

of people living below the international poverty line (\$1.25 per person per day) has fallen already by more than half since 1990; the MDG target of cutting poverty in half by 2015 has been reached.¹ Accelerating this progress and reaching those left behind should be the focus of a post-2015 development framework.

The MDGs are the global community's most holistic approach yet to human development. Since they were set in 2000, the MDGs have become embedded in national development strategies; they also provide a framework for international donor agencies to align their support.² In the 2000s, as more aid became available to help achieve



UN Photo/David Ohana

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (center) walks with President Barack Obama outside the 37th G8 Summit in Deauville, France, in May 2011.

the MDGs, the resources dedicated to tracking progress also increased—with far-reaching improvements in accountability.³ “Although it seems obvious today to track progress on intended targets,” says Todd Moss of the Center for Global Development in Washington, DC, “common practice in the past was simply to calculate inputs: how much money was spent, how many books were bought, etc., rather than on the hoped-for changes in countries, such as healthier and more educated people. In fact, the approach of finding out how we are actually doing is obvious now in part because of the [MDGs].”⁴

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the MDGs is their role in encouraging the emergence of a new international social norm. The MDGs provided a lens to focus public attention. In the words of David Hulme and James Scott of the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom, they succeeded in “showing extreme poverty as morally unacceptable in an affluent world.”⁵ The MDGs have a fair share of critics, and they are certainly not perfect. But the

\$3.5 trillion:

the economic cost of malnutrition, equal to **5 percent** of global Gross Domestic Product.¹

34 countries are home to **90 percent** of the world's children stunted by malnutrition.²

point is that nothing like them has been tried before. The MDGs are the longest-standing global agreement to fight poverty in human history. That's why it would be a major step backward for the whole world if the MDGs turned out to be a short-lived, one-off experiment.

The next round of goals must be universal, requiring all countries to end hunger and poverty at home and work together to support leadership in low-income countries where the effort will require support from outside. Unlike in 2000, when the MDGs were established, 72 percent of the world's poor people now live in middle-income countries.⁶ To end hunger and poverty, a future set of goals will have to apply to middle-income and high-income countries as well.

Global development goals that apply to every country may well be necessary to win widespread political support for a new round of goals. The balance of power in the world has shifted since the MDGs were negotiated. Large middle-income countries such as China, India, and Brazil—home to many of the poor people who now live in middle-

income countries—are unlikely to let high-income countries escape setting goals of their own.⁸

In 2012, nearly 49 million people in the United States lived in households that experienced hunger or struggle to keep food on the table.⁷ This report starts by arguing for a goal to end hunger and poverty in the United States. We need these goals to drive progress just as they have in Ethiopia and Bangladesh.

The United States has not made significant progress against poverty since the mid-1970s. Many Americans have come to think the current levels of poverty are inevitable, the new normal. When Americans hear that the world as a whole has made great progress against poverty, they sometimes become more open to the possibility of dramatically reducing hunger and poverty in our own country. At the same time, if we can achieve progress against poverty and inequality in the United States, American voters may become more inclined to favor increasing U.S. support for poverty reduction worldwide.



UN Photo/Kibae Park

A child in Dhaka's Karial slum, Bangladesh.

38.5 percent:
the world land area dedicated to agriculture.³

By 2050 food production needs to increase by **70 percent**, but the total arable area in developing countries may increase by no more than **12 percent**, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.⁴

The Final Stretch: The Global Hunger Target Within Reach

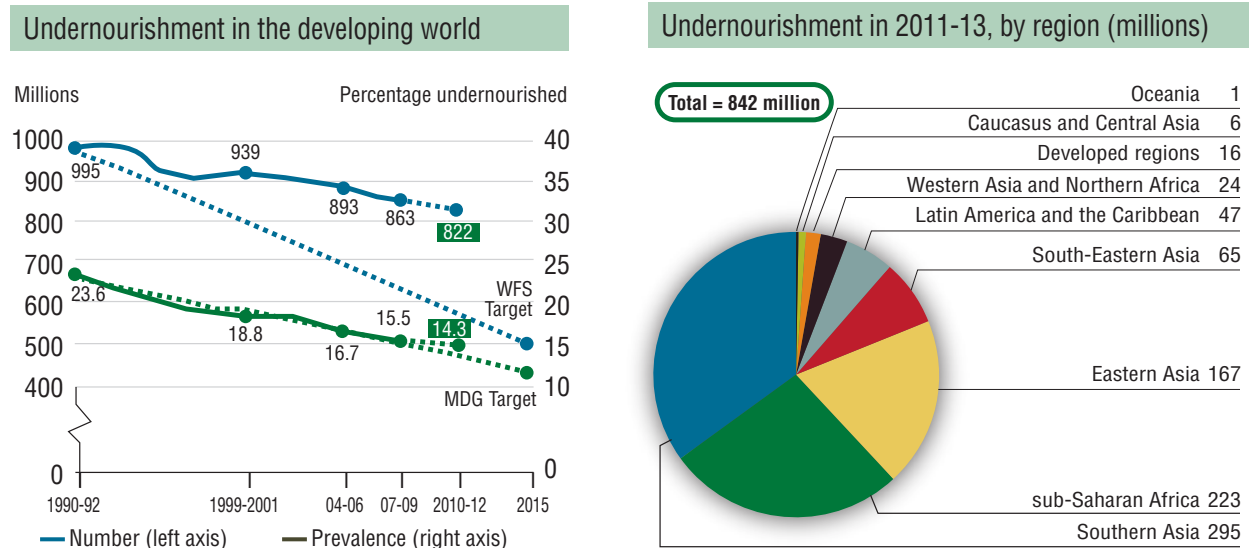
With just over two years left to the MDG deadline of December 2015, now is the time for an intensive effort to reach the MDG hunger target of cutting in half the proportion of people around the world who are undernourished, meaning “hungry.” In the developing world, the hunger rate decreased from 23.2 percent in 1990–1992 to 14.3 percent in 2011–2013. This puts the MDG hunger target within reach. The United States has led a global effort to invest more in agriculture and nutrition in low-income countries. If these efforts are maintained and intensified, we can achieve the MDG hunger goal of cutting hunger in half between 1990 and 2015.

Reducing all forms of malnutrition will help achieve many of the MDGs by ending preventable child deaths and building smart, strong, and resilient individuals, communities, and economies. Hunger is a form of malnutrition, resulting from an insufficient food intake and too little calories. There is also another type of malnutrition, known as hidden hunger, resulting from insufficient intake of vitamins and other micro-nutrients. Every dollar invested in nutrition generates as much as \$138 in better health outcomes and increased productivity,⁹ and of the “10 best buys in development” identified by a group of top economists, five are nutrition interventions.¹⁰

Chronic malnutrition is an enormous drain on a country’s financial and human resources, translating into deficits of several billion dollars a year. In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 41 percent of all children younger than 5 is malnourished.¹¹ It is the only region in the world

“Chronic malnutrition is an enormous drain on a country’s financial and human resources, translating into deficits of several billion dollars a year.”

Figure 5.1 Global Progress on Hunger to Date



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* (2013)

where the number of child deaths is increasing, and the only one projected to suffer further increases in food insecurity and absolute poverty.¹²

Improving nutrition among pregnant women, lactating mothers and young children, in particular, is crucial to ending preventable child deaths and to unlocking the potential of the millions of children who face early childhood malnutrition. Malnutrition during the critical period between pregnancy and the second birthday, often called the “1,000-day” window, causes irreversible physical and cognitive damage. In 2008, the leading British medical journal *The Lancet* declared that malnutrition among children younger than 2 is a global development challenge of the greatest urgency. Nutrition interventions during this window have a profound impact on the long-term economic development and stability of entire nations.



UN Photo/Martine Perret

The United States works through its global food security initiative, Feed the Future, to emphasize the urgent need to improve maternal and child nutrition.¹³ Bread for the World and other anti-hunger organizations have urged U.S. policymakers to use investments in Feed the Future to promote maternal and child nutrition in the 1,000-day window.

In South Sudan, Murle women, children, and the elderly began to assemble at the World Food Program (WFP) facility in Gumuruk, Jonglei State, in search of food assistance.

Moving Forward: A Post-2015 Agenda

With increased political support, it is indeed feasible to imagine a world free from hunger by 2030. The global community must build on the achievements of the MDGs so far and redouble its efforts. This is the time. The final push and a strong finish by 2015 are critical to building momentum and creating an appetite for a universal post-2015 development framework.

In May 2013, the High Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda—a group tasked with advising the United Nations Secretary General—released its report *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*. The report advocates five “global shifts”:

- Leave no one behind;
- Put sustainable development at the core;
- Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth;
- Build peace and effective, open, and accountable institutions for all;
- Forge a new global partnership.

The panel also recommended that the post-2015 agenda adopt a goal to achieve food security and good nutrition for all, emphasize the economic empowerment of women and girls, improve governance and institutions, and integrate equality and shared prosperity into all of the development goals so that no one is left behind.

In July 2013, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon released a report outlining his vision for

the post-2015 agenda—*A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress toward the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015*. The report calls for a universal development agenda that promotes inclusivity. This is very important. In order to be considered “met,” a target must be reached by all relevant income and social groups—thus ensuring a measure of inclusiveness that would be overlooked by basing progress on averages alone.

The post-2015 development agenda provides an opportunity to promote equitable growth in all countries. It is also an opportunity to recognize linkages across key areas: food security and good nutri-



UN Photo/Logan Abassi

A mother and young daughter at the general hospital in Port au Prince, Haiti.

tion; agricultural development; women’s economic empowerment; and good governance, effective institutions and strengthening local capacity. Goals should be formulated in ways that capture the great potential of coordinated approaches, which have proven to be highly effective in responding to multiple development challenges.

Nutrition

In a new set of global development goals, reducing stunting rates should be explicit and prominent. Stunting is the leading cause of death and disability among children under 5. Today, there are 165 million stunted children around the world. Being far too short for their age is only the most visible sign. Their cognitive and physical development have been compromised by chronic malnutrition, and for their entire lives, they will be more likely to suffer from health problems—all of which will make them less productive than they could be.¹⁴ In the end, stunting is a tragedy for individuals and families that also impedes a nation’s ability to develop economically.¹⁵

In 2012, the World Health Assembly called for reducing the number of malnourished children by at least 40 percent by 2025.¹⁶ This will require a nearly 4 percent reduction in stunting each year. This rate of progress has been achieved in countries that are making significant nutrition-specific investments, as well as nutrition-sensitive investments. Nutrition-specific investments are directly related to food intake—for example, school-feeding

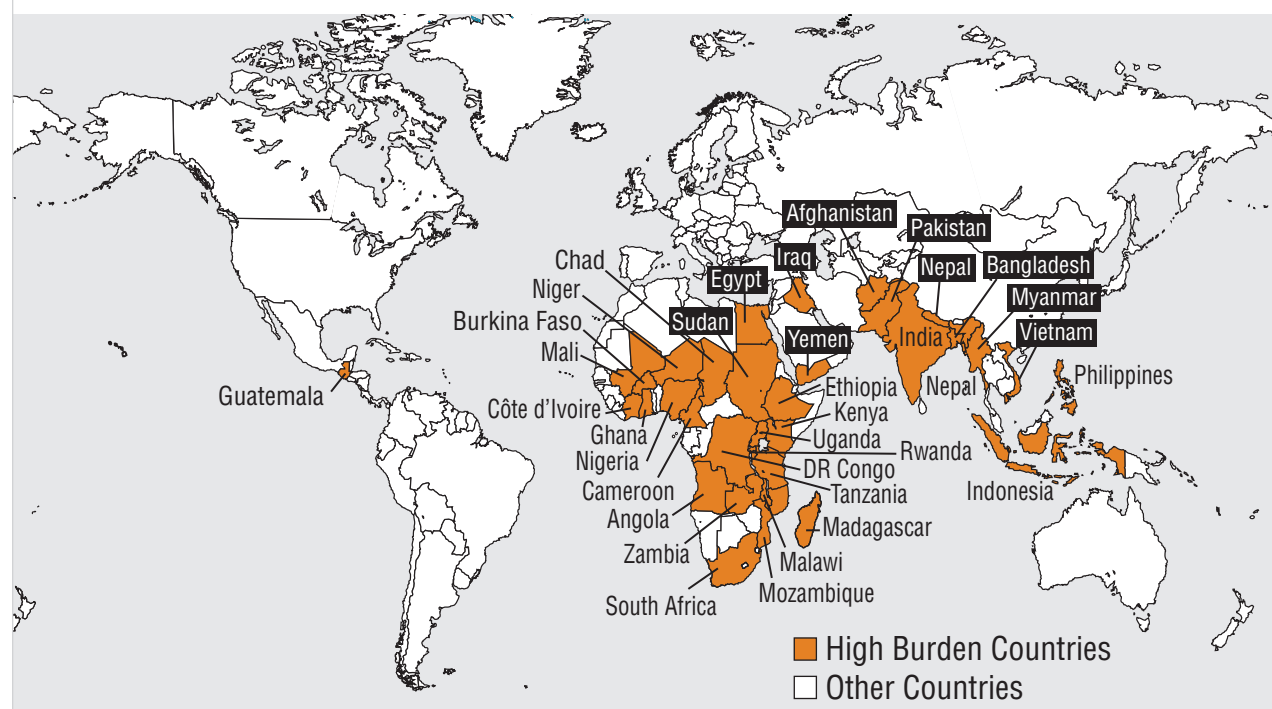
programs. Nutrition-sensitive relates to underlying determinants of good nutrition, such as investments in agriculture, health, or education. Homestead gardening programs are an agriculture investment that is nutrition sensitive. In Bangladesh, Helen Keller International (HKI) provided seeds and technical assistance to village families to grow nutrient-rich vegetables. In Bangladesh, a poor family's diet consists of rice and little else. Vitamin A deficiency causes 30,000 children in Bangladesh to go blind every year. HKI reported the children participating in the program consumed significantly more nutrient-rich food. The surplus of vegetables also contributed to raising family incomes.

The Lancet identified 10 evidence-based interventions proven to have an impact on the nutrition and health of children. The cost of scaling up these interventions in the 34 countries with 90 percent of the world's malnourished children would be \$9.6 billion annually.¹⁷ It would result in a million lives saved and avert a fifth of all stunting.¹⁸ Shared among developing countries and donors, this should be easily affordable. It is not just money that is needed. Many developing countries don't have the institutional capacity to plan and deliver nutrition interventions at scale.¹⁹

The good news on nutrition is that the governments of many of the most affected countries are committing leadership and resources, donor funding is rising, and civil society

“Stunting is the leading cause of death and disability among children under 5.”

Figure 5.2 Countries with the Highest Burden of Malnutrition



These 34 countries account for 90% of the global burden of malnutrition.
Source: *The Lancet*, 2013.

and the private sector are increasingly engaged. Recent commitments made at the June 2013 Nutrition for Growth High-Level Meeting²⁰ hosted by the governments of the United Kingdom, Brazil and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation will be critical in filling the funding gap. In preparation for the June 2013 meeting, the U.S. government identified \$10 billion a year in nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive investments, including food aid, agricultural development, and health. The U.S. government committed itself to developing a whole-of-government nutrition strategy and will improve the impact of its programming by adopting the evidence-based approaches that are being promoted by the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.

The SUN movement brings together countries—41 at last count—that are committed to expanding effective, evidence-based nutrition actions so that they reach all young children and pregnant women at risk of malnutrition. The SUN movement is supporting SUN countries in developing and implementing country-specific strategies. Each SUN country identifies priorities and promotes both specific nutrition interventions that focus on the 1,000-day window and nutrition-sensitive policies. SUN has great promise, and its efforts must be supported because malnutrition remains one of the biggest challenges to development in high-burden countries.

Agricultural Development

The evidence is clear that agriculture-led growth is far more effective in reducing hunger and poverty than growth driven by other sectors.²¹ From 1993 to 2002, for example, poverty declined rapidly in East and Southeast Asia. More than 80 percent of the decline was attributable to better conditions in rural areas, where agriculture was a source of livelihood for 86 percent of the population.²²

Economic growth that does not include agriculture as a leading sector often fails to help hungry and poor people. For example, Tanzania's economy has been growing steadily over the past 10 years—by an average of 6.9 percent a year. Five sectors were the source of almost 60

BOX 5.1

NUTRITION-SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

- **Agriculture:** Making nutritious food more accessible to everyone, and supporting small farms as a source of income for women and families;
- **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Improving access to reduce infection and disease;
- **Education and Employment:** Making sure children have the energy that they need to learn and earn sufficient income as adults;
- **Health Care:** Improving access to services to ensure that women and children stay healthy;
- **Support for Resilience:** Establishing a stronger, healthier population and sustained prosperity to better endure emergencies and conflicts; and
- **Women's Empowerment:** At the core of all efforts, women are empowered to be leaders in their families and communities, leading the way to a healthier and stronger world.

Source: <http://scalingupnutrition.org/about>

percent of Tanzania's economic growth between 2008 and 2012: communications, banking and financial services, retail trade, construction, and manufacturing. The five leading growth sectors are concentrated in urban areas, but about 80 percent of Tanzania's poor people live in rural areas.²³ This urban focus explains why years of steady economic growth has not significantly lowered Tanzania's poverty rate.²⁴

Today, more than half of the world's 848 million hungry and malnourished people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.²⁵ In 2008, the number of hungry people in the world surged perhaps by more than 100 million as a result of doubling food prices.²⁶ The food-price crisis was a wake-up call for the international community about the need for a much greater focus on agricultural development in developing countries.

In July 2009, Group of 8 (G-8) leaders representing eight developed economies gathered in L'Aquila, Italy, where a U.S. proposal to invest significantly more resources in agriculture won support from other donors. In what became known as the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative, G-8 members committed to providing \$22 billion in financing for agriculture and food security over three years. More than four years into the L'Aquila initiative, the United States has fulfilled its pledge of \$3.5 billion, but other donors are falling short. The primary U.S. contribution is the Feed the Future initiative.

A projected surge in world population to 9 billion by 2050,²⁷ accompanied by only slight increases in available farmland, means that additional production will need to come from strategies that increase productivity. The coming years are also likely to create additional stress on agricultural production. Climate change—the long-term shifts in temperatures now taking place and expected to continue, and the results of those shifts—is expected to increase the frequency of shocks such as flooding and drought. Around the world, climate change is already damaging food and water security in significant and highly unpredictable ways. Increased investments in agricultural research and extension and rural infrastructure will help prepare for these challenges. Extension services can help farmers adopt new technolo-

BOX 5.2

MDGS AND FOOD PRICES

"When food prices surged in 2007-2008, we were not as flatfooted as we would have been without the Millennium Development Goals," says Cheryl Morden of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.³⁰ It was the MDGs that prompted world leaders to ask questions like "Who is poor and hungry?" and "Where are they?" One answer became clear: 70 percent of people in extreme poverty who are hungry live in rural areas. "Because the Millennium Development Goals helped them to see the depth of rural poverty," says Morden, "world leaders responded swiftly with aid targeted to smallholder farmers, the largest group of rural poor."

gies and improved seeds and livestock varieties, build farmers' knowledge and skills, and encourage them to form networks for sharing information. Donors should support effective local, national, and regional agriculture efforts. For example, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) is working to create the right technical and regulatory environment for agriculture and to strengthen agricultural innovation systems.

In developing countries, significant volumes of grain are lost after harvest. The annual cost of grain losses to African countries is estimated at \$4 billion, an amount that could provide food every day of the year for at least 48 million people.²⁸ This is far more than the continent receives in food aid—in fact, \$4 billion is equal to two-thirds of all the food aid provided to sub-Saharan Africa from 1998 to 2008 (an estimated \$6.1 billion). Building infrastructure to support the food supply chain will help reduce grain losses as well as improve food quality and safety, generate more income, and contribute to food and nutritional security.²⁹ International finance institutions and the private sector should join donor countries in assisting recipient countries in strengthening their capacity to prevent post-harvest losses.

Women's Economic Empowerment

More than 50 percent of the reduction in hunger from 1970 to 1995 is attributed to improvements in women's status in society. It is true that the lives of girls and women have

changed dramatically over the past 50 years. While the pace of change has been astonishing in some areas, progress toward gender equality has been limited in others. Hunger and poverty remain stubbornly “feminized”—globally, 70 percent of people living in absolute poverty are female.³¹ In too many households and communities, women and girls are often the last to eat.

In 2011, a severe drought struck the Eastern region of Guatemala, leading the U.S. government to send food aid. Without the food aid, many children there might have died from malnutrition, and this is what almost happened anyway to a five-year-old girl

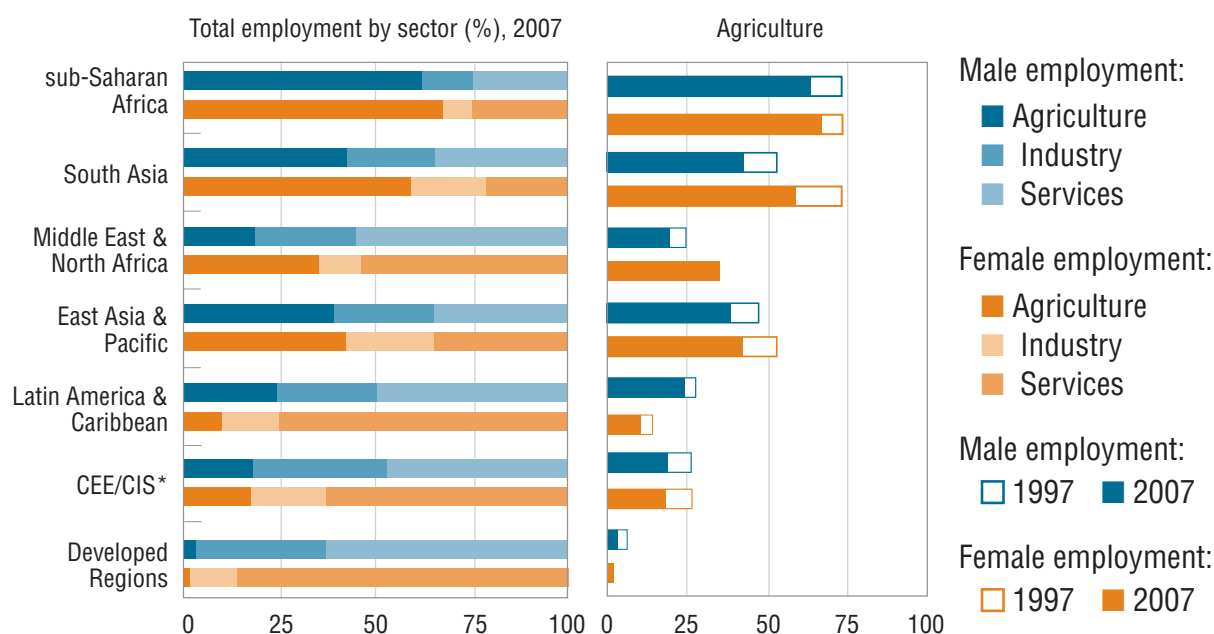


Laura Elizabeth Pohl for Bread for the World

Tohomina Akter, 18, washes herself at the neighborhood well in Char Baria village, Barisal, Bangladesh.

named Gilma. Gilma has four siblings, all of them boys, and that means she and her mother eat last and often there is nothing left for them. Her greatest disadvantage is not that she is a poor child in a region where food is often scarce, but that she is a poor girl there. By November 2011, Gilma was suffering from a condition known as severe acute malnutrition. Her legs were swollen and ulcerated, as happens when children suffer such severe malnutrition. Gilma was fortunate in that her village was receiving food aid. Save the Children, the NGO administering the food aid program, contacted health officials when Gilma slipped

Figure 5.3 Employment by Sector (as a share of total employment) by Gender



* Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States.

Source: United Nation's Development Fund for Women, 2008.

from moderate to severe acute malnutrition. She is alive today because of the persistence of Save the Children staff in getting the officials' attention.

Gender equality and the economic empowerment of women are preconditions for overcoming poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. Therefore, they must be given priority in the post-2015 development agenda. Evidence shows that reducing gender inequality increases agricultural productivity. Removing discriminatory land and labor laws, improving their access to tools, fertilizers, and credit could be a game-changer in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Raising women's income has been shown to improve children's nutrition, health, and education.³² The fate of children is directly tied to the status of their mothers. A woman's level of education is a key factor in determining whether her children will even survive to the age of 5.³³

The U.S. government has intentionally focused on women smallholder farmers in its approach to reducing hunger and malnutrition. In 2012, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), partnering with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, launched the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI).³⁴ WEAI was developed to track changes in women's empowerment levels as a direct or indirect result of interventions under Feed the Future. WEAI measures women's roles in the agriculture sector

“Gender equality and the economic empowerment of women are preconditions for overcoming poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.”

and the extent of their engagement in five domains, each with indicators that are assessed individually. These are production (e.g., the degree of autonomy a woman has in agricultural production); resources (e.g., access to credit and equipment); income (e.g., control over expenditures); leadership (e.g., comfort speaking in public); and time (e.g., satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the amount of leisure time available). It measures these dimensions both for women independently and relative to men in the same household. A woman is assigned an empowerment score, and the man also gets a score. “We’ve developed a tool that can dramatically reshape our policy response,” says Emily Hogue of USAID’s Bureau for Food Security.³⁵ “There really is nothing like this.” Having this information will enable USAID and its partners to tailor strategies to make the most difference in helping women overcome the barriers they face.

Good Governance, Effective Institutions and Local Capacity Strengthening

Governance and accountability, though not formally mentioned in the MDGs, are recognized as crucial dimensions of development and should be incorporated throughout the

post-2015 development agenda. Cross-country evidence has shown how poor governance and corruption harm a country’s population. Corruption siphon off resources needed to provide services to poor people and equip them to improve their lives. Each time poor people are forced to pay bribes, they are stripped of what little income they have. Corruption also leads to the misuse of government resources that could serve the public good. Corrupt officials, wherever in the system they may be, undermine confidence in government institutions and the very idea of government itself.

Improving governance is essential to further progress on develop-

ment; “big issues” surrounding governance, political will, capacity, and leadership need to be thoughtfully incorporated into the approach to a new set of global development goals. The topic was conspicuously absent from the MDGs, which said in effect that it doesn’t matter how countries reach targets as long as they get there. This may be good enough to cut hunger and poverty in half, or maybe more—but actually eliminating hunger and extreme poverty will mean dealing with difficult issues that stall progress. The corrosive effects of government corruption are just one example of how governance problems under-



File photo

The U.N. Secretary General has endorsed a post-2015 development agenda that includes a goal on peace and effective governance.

mine progress. Good governance, on the other hand, is an enabling condition and a prerequisite to lasting change. Good governance includes many elements, but the most relevant for reducing poverty have to do with creating space for a strong civil society that can hold governments accountable for making progress; building effective institutions to manage and deliver public services; and respecting the rule of law—for example, by protecting the rights of minorities and ensuring that people have recourse to redress for injustices. Most of the work to put these elements in place must be done by national governments and by civil society in developing countries. What the United States and other countries can do as partners is set high expectations for levels of accountability and transparency. Additionally, they can provide technical know-how, strengthen global institutions that foster good governance, and support leaders who want to govern well.

The United States and other development partners should explicitly support a goal on good governance, effective leadership and the institutions that make them work. This should include a focus on citizen participation and strengthening capacity for institutional and policy change. An example in Ghana shows how the U.S. government could support this kind of capacity strengthening through its development partners in the NGO community. The Development Action Association (DAA) is a Ghanaian NGO that provides technical assistance to women farmers in villages across the country. DAA's leaders received advocacy training from the U.S. NGO Women Thrive Worldwide. The training came in handy in 2012 when DAA members participated in a nationwide lobbying effort to change the laws that affected their livelihoods. In Ghana, the traditional way agricultural products are measured is with cups and bowls, a practice that makes it easy for buyers to cheat producers, especially those who are poorly educated, which describes many of the women farmers in DAA. Before they received the advocacy training, few of the women from DAA who participated in the lobbying campaign would have dared to speak up in public, but the training gave them the confidence. In 2012, the government banned the use of the traditional measuring instruments in place of scales.

Leveling the playing field so that women and men have equal chances to actively engage socially and politically—to make decisions and shape policies—is likely to lead over time to more representative and more inclusive institutions and policies. Evidence suggests a direct correlation between a country's policy and institutional framework and progress towards the MDGs.³⁶ This also will help local stakeholders “own” national development goals. Both the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the U.N Secretary General



Villagers in Guatemala's Dry Corridor region receive cook stoves and training to assemble them. The stoves and training were provided through USAID.

Ban Ki-moon have endorsed a goal on peace and effective governance based on the rule of law and sound institutions.

Strengthening local capacities and institutions remains a major challenge for the effective design and implementation of development programs and policies. Some past efforts to strengthen local capacity have been hindered by a lack of focus on indicators of success

and whether there are, in fact, any concrete results to show improved capacity. Capacity development has traditionally been associated with knowledge transfer and training of individuals, yet it is a complex, non-linear and long-term change process in which no single factor (e.g., information, education and training, technical assistance, policy advice) is by itself an explanation for the development of capacity. Development results should be measured not only by short-term outputs, or even by longer-term outcomes, but also by how well actors such as donors, civil society, the private sector, and national governments engage local, national, and



Agnes Kirabo of the Ugandan civil society organization VEDCO addresses members of a community who have been forcibly displaced from lands held by their families for generations. Poverty reduction in Africa is directly related to improving land governance.

regional leaders in strengthening country systems. Ultimately, developing capacity is about addressing the specific needs of partner countries and communities through three inter-linked dimensions: individual, organizational, and enabling environment.

The United States through its USAID Forward reform agenda should continue to emphasize a results-driven and systemic framework—based on rigorous needs assessment, innovative change process logic, and participatory implementation—that is driven by genuine local ownership, adaptive management, and measurable results. Within the USAID Forward reform agenda, Feed the Future is a good place to start. Its implementation should be used to illustrate the value of the U.S. government’s renewed commitment to strengthening local capacity in countries.

At the global level, good governance of the food system is an indispensable element for achieving food security and nutrition, and it calls for greater transparency and food policy coherence. This means that improving the likelihood of reaching the hunger target depends not just on increased productivity, but also and quite critically on an enabling policy environment for responsible investments. Realizing this goal will require expanded, less restricted regional and global trade to make food production more efficient and ensure that agricultural crops and livestock are produced in countries with the most abundant or inexpensive inputs. The Group of 20 (G-20) and others should also make more effort to liberalize trade in agriculture and agree to avoid export restrictions on food.

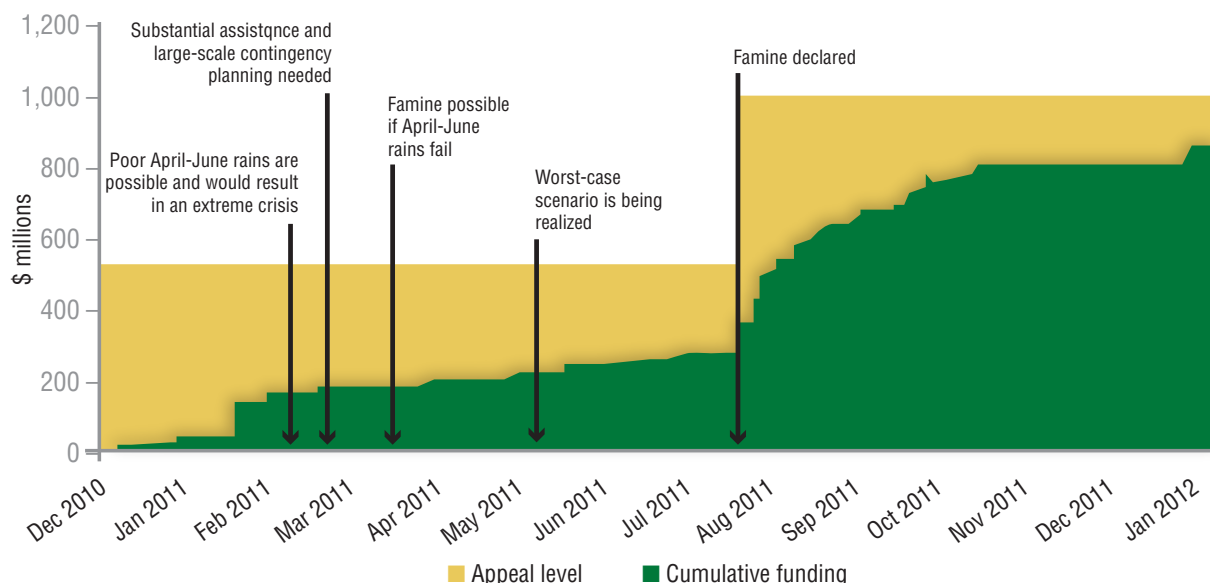
Resilience and Sustainability

Food emergencies can occur suddenly or slowly. What makes them unmanageable is the political response, or lack thereof. This was starkly apparent in Somalia during the 2010-2011 food emergency, which later crossed the threshold into famine. For months, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) pointed to an impending famine. Crops dried up, livestock died, and desperation spread. But the humanitarian system did not mobilize until the window of opportunity to prevent the worst had closed. Women carrying skeletal babies for hundreds of miles to find food in refugee camps were a telling sign that the early warning system had failed for lack of swift response. There is still no accurate count of how many died but they include tens of thousands of young children.

Sudden, dramatic spikes in staple food prices affect poor families worst of all because they spend up to 70 percent of their incomes on food. Prices spiked in 2007-2008, and then fell somewhat in 2009. The cycle was repeated in 2010-2011, again creating an urgent need to help people most vulnerable to hunger. The worst-affected countries were net food importers, where hunger and malnutrition rates soared. In the majority of these countries, households with children younger than 2 were found to be consuming significantly fewer calories than before the rapid price increases began.³⁷

“Preparing to feed 9 billion people in a sustainable way requires our urgent attention now, not when all 9 billion of us are already here.”

Figure 5.4 2011 Somalia Consolidated Appeal and Selected Early Warnings



Source: OCHA Financial Tracking Services (FTS), FEWSNET, Chatham House analysis.

In 2012, Guatemala launched the Zero Hunger Pact, with one of its goals to reduce rural poverty, especially among indigenous women.

The G-20 is not specifically a venue to discuss development assistance, but food prices have risen to the top of its agenda. At a June 2011 meeting, agriculture ministers of the G-20 countries called for more transparency in commodity markets and committed their countries to collectively establish an early warning system that would collect information on food stocks, crop supply and demand levels. The ministers agreed also “to ensure that national food-based safety nets can work at times when food prices rise sharply and governments cannot access the food required for these safety nets at an affordable price.”³⁸ It is far more cost-effective—and obviously more effective in preventing human suffering and death—to build social protection programs than to fly in emergency rations.

Responding effectively to climate change means building resilience in communities

where people have always struggled to produce enough food. It demands strong and organized political leadership, infrastructure, and resources at all levels—local, regional, national, and international. Strengthening local capacity to create and implement informed, effective adaptation measures is vital to building resilience.

Guatemala joins a growing list of developing countries affected by climate change. Agricultural production has fallen as a result of effects from climate change. In some areas of the country, it shows up as drought, while in others climate change brings severe storms. Guatemala has a persistently high chronic malnutrition rate—comparable to those of the poorest countries in Africa and Asia.³⁹ Climate change is far from the only reason that so many Guatemalan children are chronically malnourished. Given the large size of the U.S. footprint on climate change, the United States bears some responsibility for helping its neighbors to weather the changes. Added to this question of basic fairness is the reality that, given its proximity, any losing battle to adapt to climate change in Central America would almost certainly affect the United States.

Immigration from Latin America is at the center of the debate on immigration policy in the United States—yet very little attention has been paid to the conditions that drive people



Scott Bleggi/Bread for the World

in Latin America to enter the United States illegally. There are more undocumented immigrants from Guatemala in the United States than from any other country except Mexico and El Salvador—an estimated 520,000 people in 2010.⁴⁰ Guatemala's success in adapting to climate change depends mainly on what Guatemalans do. But the United States can provide much-needed support through development and emergency relief programs and by reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

In June 2013, President Obama announced a plan to cut carbon emissions in the United States. The president is right to make climate change a priority for his second term. The plan needs to go beyond cutting carbon emissions to include commitments to scale up the adaptive capacity of poor communities at the country and regional levels. Climate change demands a multifaceted approach that includes promoting resilient communities, fostering low-carbon growth, and reducing emissions from deforestation and land degradation. It should be integrated into all relevant foreign assistance programs. Preparing to feed 9 billion people in a sustainable way requires our urgent attention now, not when all 9 billion of us are already here.



UN Photo/Tobin Jones

A group of Somali men sit waiting for food aid at a distribution center in Afgoye, Somalia.

Partnership in a Rapidly Changing World

In the United Nations' MDG progress report for 2012, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon writes that continued progress in poverty reduction and other development outcomes depends on the global partnership for development.⁴¹ To achieve lasting progress against hunger and poverty, partners have to be adaptable to changing circumstances. In the years ahead, we can count on many new challenges and the need to adapt. Because of climate change, for example, there is now understanding about how to build a sustainable agriculture system, ensure an adequate global food supply, and help the most vulnerable people (and that includes "climate refugees"). The global partnership for development must continue to evolve and rise to such challenges.