Chapter 2

AN AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Ending Hunger and Undernutrition by 2025

Shenggen Fan and Paul Polman

SUMMARY Much attention in 2013 was devoted to considering what should follow the Millennium Development Goals, which will come to an end in 2015. This chapter calls for prioritizing the elimination of hunger and undernutrition globally by 2025 and discusses what it will take to achieve that goal.

In 2000, the global community adopted the Millennium Development Goals, which called for halving both the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and the proportion of people suffering from hunger. At a global scale, the poverty goal has been achieved, but progress toward halving hunger is not on track. Close to 850 million people worldwide still suffer from chronic hunger, according to recent estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).1

The 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is fast approaching. As a result, deliberations on how to accelerate progress toward meeting the goals by 2015 and beyond have intensified. Now underway is a discussion of a post-2015 development agenda that will advance what began with the Millennium Development Goals. The UN secretary-general appointed a High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which proposed potential new goals and targets that will guide the agenda and culminate in a set of sustainable development goals.2 Central to the discussions of the post-2015 agenda is the goal of eliminating extreme poverty by 2030. Though ambitious and laudable, this goal is not enough: we argue that it is equally important to eliminate hunger and undernutrition and that we should aim to do so by 2025.

There are both economic and moral reasons for striving to end hunger and undernutrition. In countries where large numbers of people lack the food and nutrition security they need to lead healthy and productive lives, it is difficult to break out of poverty or sustain economic development.3 Research shows that undernutrition limits people’s educational achievements and productivity, which in turn leads to large global economic losses.4 In addition to

Shenggen Fan is director general, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC.
Paul Polman is chief executive officer, Unilever, London.
these economic considerations, ending hunger and undernutrition implies ending an important dimension of human suffering. It is thus a global ethical task that must be given top priority.

The goal of ending hunger and undernutrition by 2025 is colossal, but not unattainable. To achieve this goal, governments and donors must allocate sufficient resources and pursue appropriate policies and investments. The experiences of countries such as Brazil, China, Thailand, and Vietnam in reducing hunger and undernutrition suggest that it is realistic to strive for this goal if the pace of reduction is accelerated. Their achievements also offer lessons for charting pathways to even greater success. Moreover, recent technological, policy, and institutional innovations put us in a better position to spur faster progress in reducing hunger and undernutrition. Such progress can be achieved when ideas are broadly disseminated, when countries learn from each other, and when cooperation in pursuit of ever better solutions sets in—in other words, when a snowball effect triggers avalanches in innovations. It is important to note, however, that achieving the goal may still leave 5–8 percent of the population suffering from residual hunger and undernutrition.5

The recent attention to food security and nutrition and the pledged increases in nutrition investments are monumental. It is crucial to follow through on this momentum and develop a global and inclusive partnership for ending hunger and undernutrition that goes beyond rhetoric.

**WHY IT PAYS TO END HUNGER AND UNDERNUTRITION**

*Hunger* here means food intake that is insufficient to meet the dietary energy requirements of an active and healthy life.6 According to the FAO, the term *hunger* refers specifically to the consumption of fewer than about 1,800 kilocalories per day. Hunger can lead to undernutrition, which refers to the outcome of prolonged inadequate intake of macronutrients (such as calories, proteins, and fats) and micronutrients (such as vitamins and minerals).7 The World Health Organization estimates that more than 2 billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, often referred to as hidden hunger.8 Deficiencies of vitamin A, iron, iodine, and zinc are the most common.9

Undernutrition typically takes the form of micronutrient deficiencies, child stunting (low height-for-age), child underweight (low weight-for-age), or child wasting (low weight-for-height). This chapter focuses on stunting, because this form of undernutrition has been recognized as the most critical.10 Stunting is associated with adverse outcomes related to slow physical and cognitive development.11 It results from inhibited skeletal growth and low accumulation of muscle mass and fat and is linked to negative neurological outcomes because of the damage it causes to the chemical processes associated with spatial navigation, memory formation, and memory consolidation.12 This neurological damage leads to low cognitive development with both short- and long-term consequences, such as low school attainment and low lifetime earning potential.13 Worldwide, it is estimated that 25 percent of children under five years of age—162 million children—are stunted.14 In both Africa south of the Sahara and South Asia, the prevalence of stunting remains particularly high—approximately 38 percent in both regions.

Poverty, hunger, and undernutrition are linked in a vicious cycle. To break this cycle, it is important to prioritize the elimination of hunger and undernutrition, which cause and perpetuate poverty, have detrimental effects on human health, and impose huge social and economic costs. These costs and burdens can be felt at the individual, household, and societal levels. Growth failure in early life is likely to be passed to the next generation. Women affected by stunting are more likely to have their first child at younger ages, have more children, and live in poor households as adults.16 Productivity losses and direct healthcare costs caused by hunger and undernutrition also have adverse economywide effects. According to the FAO, hunger and undernutrition reduce global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2–3 percent, equivalent to US$1.4–2.1 trillion a year.17 Another study estimates this loss to be 8 percent of world GDP over the 20th century and projects it to be 6 percent in the first half of the 21st century.18 Recent country-level cost estimates range from
Concerted Action against Hunger and Malnutrition beyond 2015

DAVID NABARRO

In 2013 the vision of ending hunger and malnutrition rose higher on the agenda of governments, development agencies, foundations, civil society groups, businesses, and the research community, with increasing support for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and the Zero Hunger Challenge. At the same time, the international community is looking beyond the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals to discuss the post-2015 development agenda. In March 2013, the Open Working Group, established at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference, began deliberating how to formulate a set of sustainable development goals. At its third meeting in May 2013, the group discussed issues of food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture and desertification, and land degradation and drought. Meanwhile, the United Nations system and its partners have been engaged in an unprecedented process of country, regional, and global consultation as a contribution to this post-2015 development agenda. This process included the High-level Consultation on Hunger, Food Security, and Nutrition hosted by Spain and Colombia in Madrid in April 2013. The promotion of food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture in the post-2015 development agenda was also discussed at the 40th session of the Committee on World Food Security in Rome in October 2013.

Many reports delivered to the UN secretary-general during this process put food security, nutrition, and sustainable agricultural and food systems high on the agenda. The High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons (appointed by the secretary-general) and the UN Global Compact propose a specific stand-alone goal for ending hunger and malnutrition. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network adds a specific goal of improving agricultural systems and raising rural prosperity to the overall goal of ending poverty and hunger. All the reports call for a focus on ending stunting (low height-for-age).

The UN secretary-general’s report, A Life of Dignity for All, summarizes the vision emerging from these discussions: a universal and transformative post-2015 development agenda for eradicating poverty through sustainable development. Member states and other stakeholders concur that ending hunger and malnutrition through inclusive and sustainable agricultural, rural, and food systems is an essential part of the overall post-2015 vision. In his report, the UN secretary-general included ending hunger and malnutrition in the set of transformative and mutually reinforcing actions that apply to all countries and that are required to bring the overall post-2015 vision to life. In his words, “Addressing hunger, malnutrition, stunting and food insecurity…will require a combination of stable and adequate incomes for all, improvements in agricultural productivity and sustainability, child and maternal care and strengthened social protection for vulnerable populations.”

Taking action in a comprehensive way will bring multiple benefits, including stronger economic growth, social inclusion, and sustainable rural development. One of the most important determinants of success for the post-2015 development agenda will be its means of implementation, particularly adequate financing. In this respect, the funds pledged at the June 2013 Nutrition for Growth summit in London are an important first step.

International stakeholders are supporting this discussion and developing proposals for global goals and rights. They recognize the importance of underpinning these goals and rights with incentives and policies that are kept coherent, and then legislated and implemented, at the country level. This process requires the involvement, ownership, and accountability of all stakeholders. The United Nations system supports member states and partners as they advance this work in ways that take account of people’s voices.

David Nabarro is special representative, United Nations Secretary-General for Food Security and Nutrition, and coordinator, Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, Geneva.

2 percent of GDP in Egypt and Panama to more than 10 percent in Ethiopia and Guatemala.

The economic returns to eliminating hunger and undernutrition can be very high (see the box “Addressing Hunger Has High Returns on Investment” on page 20). It may be possible to cut the deaths of children younger than five years by 15 percent by adopting ten core nutrition
WHY WE ASPIRE TO END HUNGER AND UNDERNUTRITION BY 2025

The experiences of Brazil, China, Thailand, and Vietnam suggest that we should aspire to end hunger and undernutrition on a global scale by 2025. The strategies implemented by these countries can be broadly classified as agriculture-led, social protection– and nutrition intervention–led, or a combination of both of these approaches (Figure 1). Successes in China and Vietnam, for example, may...
be seen as resulting mainly from an agriculture-led strategy. In Brazil, success has likely been primarily driven by social protection programs and targeted nutrition interventions for those most in need. Success in Thailand has likely been catalyzed by a combination of these strategies.

By drawing on the experiences of these countries, other developing countries have the opportunity to design and implement successful context-specific strategies to address hunger and undernutrition. In this chapter we discuss trends of relevant indicators in countries that have had successes in reducing hunger and undernutrition. We also provide a brief overview of the main elements of the strategies employed. As an indicator of hunger, we use FAO data on the prevalence of undernourishment (which occurs when a person’s daily food intake is less than his or her minimum energy requirement, typically around 1,800 kilocalories). As an indicator of undernutrition, we use World Bank figures on the prevalence of child stunting. Because a 5–8 percent rate of hunger or undernutrition may be unavoidable, we use 8 percent as a cutoff below which we consider hunger and undernutrition to be “eliminated.”

Agriculture-Led Strategies: China and Vietnam

If China continues its current rate of reduction, it can eliminate hunger and undernutrition by 2025. Between 1990 and 2013, China was able to halve the prevalence of undernourishment from roughly 23 to 11 percent. More impressively, between 1987 and 2010, China reduced the prevalence of child stunting by more than two-thirds, from 32 to 9 percent.

China’s agricultural and economic success was catalyzed through the decollectivization of agriculture (through the introduction of the Household Responsibility System for securing land rights), pro-market reforms and the dismantling of state planning and monopolies, and the implementation of policies that supported human capital development and rural nonfarm economic growth. These reforms, which began in the late 1970s, had a strong initial emphasis on agricultural growth—stimulated by improved incentives in smallholder agriculture—and rural development. These changes resulted in significantly higher incomes among rural residents, where levels of poverty and hunger were initially the highest, and in increased availability of food at affordable prices. In addition, nutrition, health, and family-planning interventions were implemented on a large scale. To complement these interventions, investments in education, clean water, and good sanitation were also expanded.

The experiences of Brazil, China, Thailand, and Vietnam suggest that we should aspire to end hunger and undernutrition on a global scale by 2025.

Even though social protection policies have the potential to promote inclusive growth, such policies were not at the forefront of China’s strategies during the reform period. China could probably have achieved much greater progress if it had launched and scaled up well-targeted social protection programs earlier. Instead, it relied on social welfare benefits provided by individual firms to their employees, even when major economic transformation, including rising unemployment and labor mobility, meant that this approach led to inequality in social welfare provision. In recent years, the government of China launched its main social protection program, the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee Scheme (widely known as Dibao).

Overall, careful experimentation was vital to the design, sequencing, and implementation of successful reforms in China. A strong monitoring and evaluation system, including an effective data-collection strategy, facilitated the flow of information for policymaking. The reforms also profited from other factors, such as good initial conditions in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, and institutional capacity.

Like China, Vietnam has the potential to eliminate hunger by 2025 if it continues its current rate
of reduction. Between 1990 and 2013, the prevalence of undernourishment fell remarkably from about 48 to 8 percent. The prevalence of child stunting was reduced from a high of 61 percent in 1988 to 23 percent in 2010. Although Vietnam is not likely to eliminate stunting by 2025, with the right policies and strategies in place it could come close to achieving this goal.

As in China, initial progress in Vietnam was likely driven largely by growth in agriculture, supplemented by targeted nutrition and health programs. The Doi Moi reforms, introduced in the late 1980s by the Vietnamese government,
consisted of four main elements: (1) equitable land reform, (2) liberalization of agricultural markets and trade, (3) pragmatic and sequenced liberalization for attracting and benefiting from foreign direct investment, and (4) sustained investment in human development. The 1988 implementation of Resolution 10, which recognizes that the household is the basic production unit of the rural economy, drastically improved agricultural incentives. Both Resolution 10 and the 1993 Land Law played a critical role in spurring agricultural growth in the 1990s, enabling Vietnam to become one of the world’s major rice-exporting countries. Rapid agricultural growth contributed to higher rural incomes and the movement of labor into nonagricultural sectors.

Vietnam also targeted significant public spending toward improving nutrition and health outcomes. It implemented a comprehensive nutrition policy to improve dietary diversity and programs to increase micronutrient supplementation. Furthermore, Vietnam established child-health and family-planning programs, maintained national health coverage, and provided health subsidies to the poor. Notably, these reforms were implemented with a focus on promoting equity while improving living standards.

In recent years, however, inequality has been rising—for example, between the North and the South and between urban and rural areas—as it has become more difficult to reach poor and vulnerable groups. Given that a majority of Vietnam’s poor earn 75 percent of their income from agriculture and related activities, this sector is likely to continue to play a critical role in stimulating more pro-poor growth. Measures such as improved access to markets, rural infrastructure, and basic services, as well as further development of the private sector (both within and outside of agriculture), will be important to promote more inclusive growth. The implementation of the Enterprise Law in 2000, for example, which streamlined the registration process for business, set in motion a move toward private-sector growth. Effective social protection policies will also be crucial as Vietnam continues to experience economic transformation.

Social Protection–Led Strategies and Targeted Nutrition Interventions: Brazil
Based on our cutoff point of 8 percent, Brazil has eliminated both hunger and undernutrition. Between 1990 and 2013, the prevalence of undernourishment declined from 15 to 7 percent, and between 1989 and 2007, the prevalence of child stunting fell from about 19 to 7 percent.

This success was arguably spurred by Brazil’s macroeconomic and trade policy reforms introduced in the mid-1990s, accompanied by pro-poor social spending. Social protection reforms, which played an important role starting in the late 1990s, involved expanding and better targeting the country’s social assistance and social security programs. Existing transfer programs were consolidated under Brazil’s flagship social program, popularly known as Bolsa Família. The program, which promotes improved education and healthcare for beneficiaries, is the largest conditional cash transfer program in the world to date. Key to the success of Bolsa Família is its integration with other social programs and social policies for food and nutrition security.

To support these programs, the government put in place key social legislation and policies—in particular, the 1988 statutory right of every citizen to social security, the 2003 Zero Hunger strategy, and the 2004 basic income law. It also scaled up investments in education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation.

Despite these advances, Brazil began with a high initial level of inequality that, coupled with inequality-promoting policy distortions, seems to have hampered progress. In more recent years, however, inequality has declined in the face of higher macroeconomic stability and more progressive social policies, creating room for accelerated progress.

At the current rate of reduction, Thailand has already eliminated hunger based on our cutoff point of 8 percent prevalence. However, it will only come close to eliminating stunting by 2025. Between 1990 and 2013, the country dramatically
In measuring progress toward ending hunger and undernutrition, no single indicator can capture all the dimensions of these two conditions. Therefore, it is important to use multiple indicators that together can capture the multidimensional nature of both phenomena. A comprehensive assessment of hunger and undernutrition needs to include indicators of both inputs to food and nutrition security (such as calories and dietary diversity) and outcomes (such as stunting, underweight, and wasting). It is also crucial to collect and report data for these indicators, as well as for the household and institutional factors that drive them, in a timely fashion. Data are already collected for many of these indicators, but not in a regular, comprehensive, and timely way.

The prevalence of undernourishment—computed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)—is the most widely used measure of global and national hunger. For a country, the prevalence of undernourishment is a function of food availability (dietary energy requirements and supply) and access (the likely distribution of these calories within the country). To estimate the distribution of calories, FAO does not make direct observations; instead, it simulates the distribution using data from occasional household surveys. In 2012, FAO made some important revisions to the methodology and data it uses to construct the undernourishment indicator. Among other things, FAO revised its estimations of food losses and updated its parameters for dietary energy requirements and access to food. Although these are steps in the right direction, important information gaps remain. The indicator does not consider imbalances in people’s consumption of macro- and micronutrients, variation within countries, and short-term or within-year variations. Encouragingly, FAO’s 2013 State of Food Insecurity in the World report includes discussions of the different dimensions of hunger and undernutrition, with a suite of proposed indicators to measure each of them.

Researchers evidence suggests that indicators of dietary diversity are better measures of hunger, in a broad sense, than indicators of calorie deficiency. Dietary diversity indicators are sensitive to people’s nutrition intakes, shocks that affect their food consumption, and seasonal shortages. Household survey-based indicators, such as the World Food Programme’s Food Consumption Score and the US Agency for International Development’s Household Dietary Diversity Score, are examples of indicators that can be used to better assess nutrient adequacy. It should be noted, however, that dietary diversity indicators still require improvements to allow for more frequent measurement and cross-country comparisons.

On the outcome side, anthropometric indicators that measure consequences of undernutrition, such as stunting (low height-for-age), should also be tracked frequently. Stunting is increasingly recognized as the most useful indicator of chronic undernutrition because of its greater specificity compared with other indicators such as underweight (low weight-for-age). However, frequent measurement of underweight and wasting (low weight-for-height) is still needed to capture relatively short-term impacts of undernutrition. When using anthropometric indicators, researchers must control for other confounding factors, such as lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, which directly affect these undernutrition outcomes.

Dietary diversity indicators and anthropometric measures often rely on expensive surveys of households or individuals that are challenging to update regularly. This problem is compounded by many developing countries’ lack of capacity to collect reliable and timely data due to shortages of statistical infrastructure and human capital. To design and implement evidence-based policies and programs, it is essential to invest in building developing countries’ capacity for data collection. Investments in innovative tools, such as information and communication technologies, should also be accelerated to reduce the cost and time needed to collect data and publish findings, as well as to improve the quality of data collected.

Reduced the prevalence of undernourishment from about 43 to 6 percent. Child stunting has also fallen significantly, though more slowly, declining from about 25 to 16 percent between 1987 and 2006. If Thailand accelerates the implementation of appropriate strategies, it could likely eliminate stunting.

Agriculture was the driving force of pro-poor growth in Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s. Growth benefited from macroeconomic stability, more secure land rights, strong public spending on rural infrastructure, and a 1972–1974 world commodity boom. Fast-paced agricultural growth
Thailand’s agricultural sector became characterized by a market-oriented approach with well-developed marketing chains and interaction between smallholders and private companies, as well as high diversification and specialization of products, as encouraged by public expenditures on agriculture. In this period contributed to higher rural incomes and reduced poverty. Starting in the mid-1980s, pro-poor growth was led by the development of the nonfarm sector and a structural shift of household income from farm to nonfarm activity. In the 1990s, however, government policies refocused on

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### Proposed measures of global hunger and undernutrition

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Proposed improvements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Input-side indicators</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevalence of undernourishment</td>
<td>The proportion of the population experiencing inadequate calorie intake lasting more than one year</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
<td>• Increase use of representative household surveys  &lt;br&gt; • Regularly update distribution framework of calories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dietary diversity indicators</td>
<td>Frequency-weighted consumption of different food groups by a household in the past 7 days before the survey</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
<td>• Compute at individual level and make comparable over time and space  &lt;br&gt; • Report yearly at national and subnational levels</td>
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<td>(for example, Food Consumption Score)</td>
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<td><strong>Outcome-side indicators</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevalence of stunting</td>
<td>The proportion of children under 5 who are stunted (low height-for-age)</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
<td>Report yearly at national and subnational levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevalence of underweight</td>
<td>The proportion of children under 5 who are underweight (low weight-for-age)</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
<td>Increase frequency of data collection, especially in hunger hotspot areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prevalence of wasting</td>
<td>The proportion of children under 5 who are wasted (low weight-for-height)</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
<td>Determine frequency of data collection by extent of food crisis</td>
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**Source:** Authors’ compilation.  
**Note:** Data for all the measures should be collected collaboratively by international organizations and national and regional governments.

Tolulope Olofinbiyi is program manager and Sinafikeh Gemessa is senior research assistant, Director General’s Office, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC.
agricultural research and extension. This situation contributed to increased incentives for agricultural production, which enabled Thailand to become one of the largest global exporters of rice.48

Beginning in the early 1980s, Thailand adopted an integrated, community-based approach to improving nutrition and health outcomes.49 In the early to mid-1980s, Thailand’s Second National Health and Nutrition Policy focused on targeted nutrition interventions to tackle undernutrition.50 Nutrition programs, which were included in the National Economic and Social Development Plan, focused on underdeveloped areas, targeting mainly children and pregnant and lactating women.

**Accelerating progress in improving nutrition demands well-targeted nutrition interventions that address both the immediate cause of undernutrition and the underlying causes.**

These nutrition programs were not implemented in isolation; rather, they had clear linkages with agriculture to help ensure that their impacts were sustainable.51 Intersectoral approaches and local participation continued to improve in the 1990s. In 2002, the government introduced the Universal Health Coverage Scheme.52 Fully financed by the government of Thailand, this scheme entitles every citizen to free basic healthcare. More recently, the government has extended social protection programs that go beyond healthcare to cover, among other things, death and old-age benefits to workers in both the formal and informal sectors.53

**WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THESE EXPERIENCES AND OTHERS**

In many countries, ending hunger and undernutrition will require a mix of agricultural, social protection, and nutrition strategies. Agricultural growth contributes directly to reducing hunger and undernutrition by increasing farm households’ ability to produce and purchase more nutritious foods, lowering food prices for poor consumers, and raising demand for rural labor.54 Evidence from a study of multiple countries suggests that in food-insecure countries, agricultural growth is associated with reductions in underweight and stunting.55 The experiences of China and Vietnam show that in agriculture-based economies where smallholders predominate, growth strategies focused on these smallholders may do the most to reduce poverty and hunger. Within agriculture, investments should be directed toward the subsectors with heavy participation of poor and hungry people.56

Because growth alone is not sufficient to eliminate hunger and undernutrition, well-designed and well-implemented social protection strategies are also important. As Brazil’s success shows, social safety nets, such as conditional cash transfers, can contribute to more inclusive growth by helping people build assets and protecting these assets from shocks, reducing inequality, facilitating structural reform of the economy, and increasing the effective allocation of resources.57 Effective social safety nets should have a clear objective, a feasible means of targeting beneficiaries, a reliable mode of transferring resources, a sound monitoring and evaluation system, and transparent operations.58

**Accelerating progress in improving nutrition also demands well-targeted nutrition interventions that address both the immediate causes of undernutrition (through nutrition-specific programs) and the underlying causes (through nutrition-sensitive programs in areas such as agriculture and early childhood development).** Thailand’s experience is instructive: Thailand was one of the few countries to prioritize nutrition in the early 1980s by targeting healthcare and nutritious food supplements to people affected by hunger and undernutrition.59 The effectiveness, coverage, and scale of nutrition-specific interventions (such as micronutrient supplementation and optimum breastfeeding practices) can be improved immensely when nutrition-sensitive programs (such as agricultural and early childhood development programs) are leveraged as delivery platforms.60 The nutrition
sensitivity of programs can be increased by, for example, improving the targeting of interventions, using nutrition-related conditions, integrating nutrition goals and actions, and focusing on the empowerment of women.

The relative importance of these strategies in different countries depends on the structure of the economy and where the vulnerable groups reside. In agriculture-based economies (mostly in Africa south of the Sahara), agriculture will play an important role in bringing about pro-poor growth and reducing hunger and undernutrition. In transforming economies (mostly in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East), growth originates less from agriculture, but poverty, hunger, and undernutrition remain largely rural phenomena. In these economies, growth in agriculture and the rural nonfarm economy is important for poverty reduction. In urbanized economies (mostly in Eastern Europe and Latin America), agriculture functions much like other competitive sectors, such as manufacturing, even though it may predominate in some areas. Eliminating hunger and undernutrition in these urbanized countries will depend more heavily on targeted nutrition and social protection programs. In large countries such as India and Mexico, different states may exhibit different economic structures, further emphasizing the need for strategies tailored to local circumstances.

HOW WE CAN MOVE FORWARD

Concerted actions by all stakeholders, including national governments, donors, civil society, and the private sector, are needed to eliminate hunger and undernutrition by 2025. The positive experiences of successful countries suggest that we can aspire to achieve this goal if sufficient resources are allocated and appropriate policies and investments are pursued. The sustainable development goals that will eventually be agreed upon must be ambitious, pragmatic, and time-bound; have clear objectives; and be facilitated by a global and inclusive partnership. This partnership should be characterized by clearly defined roles and responsibilities in order to increase accountability and avoid duplication of effort.

Approaches to accelerating the pace of hunger and undernutrition reduction include the following:

- **Country-led strategies and investments.** As the country experiences show, national ownership of strategies and policies is important. Policies aimed at ending hunger and undernutrition should be country led in order to be well adapted to the local context, highly effective, and sustainable, as shown by China’s partial and sequenced liberalization of markets. Beyond setting the direction of strategies for ending hunger and undernutrition, national governments must allocate adequate budgets to strategies that support more inclusive growth, including growth in viable smallholder agriculture; well-targeted social protection programs linked to improved food and nutrition outcomes; and specialized nutrition interventions. One global initiative that promotes country-led actions is the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, which brings together governments, civil society, the United Nations, donors, businesses, and researchers to make improving nutrition a priority in countries’ policy actions. Countries that join the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement are expected to create a coherent policy and legal framework for nutrition policies, work in partnership with stakeholders, agree on common objectives, and mobilize resources for scaling up nutrition.

- **Evidence-based policies and policy experiments.** National strategies should be guided by evidence. Pilot projects and policy experiments...
are important to provide decisionmakers with information on what investments and processes work before they scale up successful policies and programs. Experimentation contributes to proper design, sequencing, and implementation of country strategies.

- **Knowledge sharing and transfer.** Insights on policy, institutional, and technological innovations carried out by successful countries can provide some guidance in designing national strategies to reduce hunger and undernutrition. Successful countries should engage in knowledge sharing with other developing countries.

- **Data revolution.** Reliable and timely data on relevant indicators of hunger and undernutrition at the global, national, and subnational levels are

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**Ending Hunger and Malnutrition: Holding Those in Charge Accountable**

**LAWRENCE HADDAD**

Despite significant global progress in reducing the number of hungry and malnourished people, in Africa south of the Sahara and South Asia, high levels of hunger and malnutrition remain a stubborn and tragic stain on the fabric of a thriving and vibrant world. The goal of eliminating hunger and malnutrition sustainably by 2025 is an inspirational one because it stretches us, and yet, as several country experiences have shown—most notably in Brazil and China—we can get close to it. Meeting this ambitious goal will require the right policies and programs, the right investments, and a supporting legal framework. In addition, these commitments need to be monitored to guide action and to hold duty bearers to account. The world’s hungry and malnourished people cannot solve their plight on their own; they need support from their own governments and from the international community. Who can they count on, and how do they know whether those actors have delivered? Who should they hold accountable, and how should they do this?

Improving accountability will require measuring outcomes using credible data on hunger and malnutrition. Currently, the data on hunger are abundant, but their quality needs to improve. The data on malnutrition are more reliable but too infrequent. Yet it is not enough just to measure outcomes, because outcomes are determined by a range of more controllable and less controllable factors. The ones that governments (and other key actors) can control should be made transparent and monitored carefully.

The Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index, from the Institute of Development Studies in the United Kingdom, is one way of comparing the commitment of different governments in terms of policies, spending, and legislation designed to reduce hunger and malnutrition, and thereby of improving these governments’ accountability to their populations. The index ranks 45 countries that have high levels of hunger and malnutrition and for which data on commitments are available. It finds that the countries with the highest burden of hunger and malnutrition are often, but not always, the ones with the highest commitment to doing something about that burden. It also ranks donor countries and finds that some of the best donor performers (in terms of official development assistance as a share of gross national income) are some of the least committed to hunger and malnutrition reduction. It is important to collect data on these commitments as well as their outcomes.

Equally important, accountability at the subnational level in countries affected by hunger and malnutrition needs to be improved—in this way, the relationship between the state and civil society around these issues can be strengthened. New methods and tools of accountability are being developed. These include real-time monitoring of program coverage using mobile technologies, subnational Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index scores, social accountability mechanisms such as community scorecards, and better ways of diagnosing constraints on national strategies for reducing hunger and malnutrition to help clarify how programs should be sequenced and prioritized.

We often hear the food and nutrition community lament that hunger and malnutrition are everyone’s business but no one’s responsibility. Through stronger accountability mechanisms we can promote everyone’s responsibility for ending these twin scourges.

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Lawrence Haddad is director, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, United Kingdom.
urgently needed for evidence-based policymaking. Providing these data should be a collaborative effort by international organizations and national and regional governments. To support this effort, data collection and analytical capacity in developing countries (particularly in terms of statistical infrastructure and human capital) need to be improved significantly.

- **Enhanced role of the private sector.** The private sector has the potential to bring to bear sustainable solutions to ending hunger and undernutrition, provided the right conditions and incentive structures exist. Recently, the private sector has stepped up its actions and commitments to improve food and nutrition security in a number of ways. Through the New Vision for Agriculture, the private sector is engaging in public-private partnership programs (such as the Grow Africa Initiative) in 11 countries. Clear monitoring and evaluation systems and regulatory mechanisms are needed to ensure that the private sector can take an even larger role in ending hunger and undernutrition.

Ending hunger and undernutrition by 2025 should be a top priority in the post-2015 development agenda. This not only makes economic sense but should also be considered a global ethical duty. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to promote country-driven strategies, build on evidence and past experiences, allow for the sharing of ideas, enhance and expand partnerships, and employ integrated approaches.