



Anticipate and Localize

Leveraging
Humanitarian
Funding to Create
more Sustainable
Food Systems

APRIL 2023



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About the Report Chair

Carol Bellamy is an American non-profit executive and former politician. She recently completed her term as Chair of the Board of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). Previously, she was Director of the US Peace Corps, Executive Director of UNICEF, President and Chief Executive Officer of World Learning, and Chair of the Global Partnership for Education. After three terms in the New York State Senate, she was the first woman to be elected to any citywide office in New York City as President of the New York City Council. Ms. Bellamy has also worked in the private sector at Morgan Stanley and Cravath, Swaine & Moore.

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Foreword

Concerted efforts by the international community in the first decade of this century to reach the Millennium Development Goals almost halved the share of undernourished people in developing regions. The world was clearly going in the right direction. Encouraged by this progress, United Nations Member States adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, including SDG 2: zero hunger by 2030. Today's global food crisis, however, has magnified the challenges to the achievement of that goal.

Far from speeding towards zero hunger, we seem to be moving further away from it. The current global food crisis has its origins in a persistent lack of investment and effective policy reforms over the years, and has been triggered by the war in Ukraine, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating climate change, food price hikes, and large refugee migrations. It has revealed the fragility of global food systems and weaknesses in the humanitarian assistance architecture that have been there for decades. In essence, the crisis shines a light on challenges that have required urgent action for years.

The Rockefeller Foundation sees food security as a priority. Building upon its decades-long commitment to food systems innovation, The Foundation launched a Global Nutrition Security portfolio in September 2022 to spur catalytic action to respond to an ongoing food crisis while building longer-term resilience to achieve

sustainable food and nutrition security. This aims to support women, children and others who are bearing the brunt of food insecurity, while helping leaders take action to prevent future crises and make food systems more resilient and sustainable.

This report represents one early part of this portfolio. Its conclusions have emerged from discussions with a diverse Convening Group comprised of thought leaders with immense expertise, including those with lived experience. They have shared their insights on the development of a bold plan that has one aim: To ensure sustainable, equitable and resilient food security by transforming humanitarian assistance and the governance of global food systems. The Convening Group has discussed an urgent issue: How to best mobilize and leverage funding to ensure food security for all.

I'm delighted that Carol Bellamy has spearheaded this convening process, asking tough questions and drilling down to find workable solutions. The perspectives of the Convening Group have shaped her proposals, which span policy, organizational and operational spheres.

This report will be shared with policymakers and food security advocates to help guide the global agenda on food security. Our collective goal is not only to strengthen the response to this current crisis, but to help prevent similar crises in the future.



Catherine Bertini

Catherine Bertini
Managing Director
of Global Nutrition Security,
The Rockefeller Foundation

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Summary



Unless something changes, there will be as many hungry people in 2030 as there were in 2015 when the world pledged to **end hunger** once and for all. We are seeing the reversal of decades of hard-won progress, and a continued failure to build sustainable and resilient food security. The challenges pre-date the current global food crisis, which has exposed fault-lines in humanitarian food assistance and global food systems that existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic or the conflict in Ukraine.

Funding for humanitarian food assistance is not keeping pace with the scale of need and only a fraction of current funding aims to build food security that is truly resilient and sustainable. While food aid is saving lives, it isn't necessarily changing them.

Progress at a global level may be stalling, but initiatives around the world show real potential if they could be taken to scale. We also have alliances and networks that could galvanize collective action, a Roadmap to show the way, and new funding options that are ready to go.

We know that the world can move as one when it needs to, as shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. What we need now is a similar global push for lasting food security.

A Convening Group, which gathered in 2022 under the auspices of The Rockefeller Foundation, has shared approaches to leverage funding for sustainable food security. The Convening Group was led by Carol Bellamy, who has drawn on its discussions to compile her own key recommendations. As well as setting out the hurdles – a lack of effective anticipation, a lack of localization, and a failure to join the funding “dots” – **she suggests four ways in which these could be overcome.**

FOUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Fund anticipation

Humanitarian donors are urged to spend 1% of their 2024 budgets on anticipatory action, and increase that share by 1% for the next 10 years.

Crack the siloes and join the dots

United Nations Country Teams are urged to establish and resource humanitarian, development and peace nexus teams to find linkages across their work and signal future needs and trends. This includes collaborative action to respond to the vast majority of food insecurity “hotspots” that are in areas affected by armed conflicts.



Fund localization

All donors are urged to increase the share of their funding that goes to local actors to 25% of their total expenditure over the next five years, supporting the role of local communities as effective first responders. National governments are urged to invest a similar share of their spending on domestic food security in local approaches.

Make the investment case

Put workable solutions to the test through a concerted campaign – backed by a dedicated team and a toolkit of proven approaches – to implement best practice on funding in a real-time situation of food insecurity.

The world has made commitment after commitment on food security, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: zero hunger by 2030. Carol Bellamy argues that it is time to stop making promises, and start keeping them.

This requires a shift in donor approaches: while more funding is welcome, it is vital to make better use of that funding. While there is also a role for innovative finance options, such as bonds and insurance, governments will continue to be the primary funders for food security for the foreseeable future. It is vital, therefore, that the resources they provide have a greater impact on hunger.

The prospects of achieving SDG 2 within the next seven years are remote. Bellamy concludes, however, that we could make good use of those years by demonstrating what works, backed by effective funding and collaboration, to chart a new course for sustainable food security.



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Introduction



Millions of people will go to bed hungry tonight.¹ And far from falling, their numbers are rising. Despite the United Nations pledge made in 2015 to end hunger by 2030,² **there could be more hungry people in 2030** than there were when that promise was made.

Back in 2015, we were making progress. The goal of zero hunger seemed ambitious, yet within reach: the percentage of undernourished people in developing regions had fallen from 23.3% in 1990–1992 to 12.9% in 2014–2016.³ Today, however, humanitarian funding for food security is being outpaced by growing and accelerating need. In short, we are going in the wrong direction.

What has caused this reversal? While the 2022 global food crisis has revealed deep fault-lines in humanitarian assistance in general – and food assistance in particular – the fault-lines themselves are nothing new. This particular crisis may have been triggered by the “three Cs” of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change, but there have been cracks in the governance of the global food system, in donor policies, and in food aid for decades. The three Cs have split those cracks wide open to reveal policies, approaches and programs that cannot cope with the current situation, let alone what could be heading our way in the future.

The crisis has, however, generated a new awareness of the fragility of our existing food security systems. Even in the wealthiest countries, many families are struggling to put food on the table as a result of price hikes spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic and, since February 2022, the Ukraine conflict.

Elsewhere, a perfect storm of complex crises is plunging people into hunger, if not famine. In the Horn of Africa, for example, millions have faced acute hunger as a result of the worst drought in 40 years, as well as the lingering impact of the pandemic and ongoing conflicts. Now a region that relies heavily on imports of wheat and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine has seen supplies evaporate at its moment of greatest need. The Ukraine conflict has demonstrated just how interconnected we are, and compels us to scrutinize our collective food security.

This issue is climbing up the global agenda as more families, communities and countries face the grim realities of food insecurity – some of them for the first time. It is



¹ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable* (SOFI 2022) (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2022), p. XIV.

² Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

³ United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report* (New York, United Nations, 2015), p. 4.

now on the table at global summits and conferences. We also have a Global Alliance for Food Security, as well as a Roadmap for Global Food Security and a Call to Action.

We must seize this moment. If we do not address funding and approaches for truly sustainable food security now, we will face even greater challenges in the future. There are eight billion people on this planet. Soon there will be 10 billion of us, adding to the demand for food and to the pressures on systems already at breaking point.

People are also on the move as never before. An estimated 103 million had been forcibly displaced by mid-2022,⁴ uprooted from their homes by conflict, persecution and human rights abuses – more than double the numbers seen in 2012.⁵ Then there is climate change, with extreme weather events having displaced, on average, more than 21 million people each year over the past decade.⁶

On the positive side, the unprecedented international response to the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the world can move as one when it must. There are also new and innovative approaches to food security, as this report will show. There are workable solutions, from the technology that speeds food from farm to fork, to funding streams that promote social capital alongside emergency response. What we often lack is the vision, resourcing and determination to take them to scale.

Prevention is always better than cure: Long-term food security is better than endless rounds of emergency food aid. And yet time after time, it is the people who are

already the most vulnerable who are plunged into food insecurity with every shock, from a flood to a drought, a conflict to a disease outbreak. Often contending with systemic inequalities and injustice, they have little chance to regroup or salvage what they can from the wreckage before another crisis hits. Increasingly, they endure complex, protracted (and often man-made) crises that are more difficult to address than a single, immediate (and often natural) disaster.

The Rockefeller Foundation has asked me for concrete proposals on how to leverage humanitarian funding to ensure more sustainable and resilient food security. This daunting task has been made far easier by the insights of a Convening Group of immense expertise and experience. The Group has included current and former staff from governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks and the media. Importantly, it has also included those with lived experience of both food aid and food insecurity. The perspectives shared by the Group have been inspirational (Box 1).

The issues raised in our discussions resonate across many development debates. In essence, to get food security right means getting many other things right as well: Long-term resilience, true equity, gender equality, inclusion, localization, and more. The discussions have been a reminder that food security is vital not only for our own lives, but also for wider security, social cohesion and economic growth. It is an integral part of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.



⁴ UNHCR Refugee Data Finder (Geneva, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, update of 27 October 2022) (<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>).

⁵ UNHCR, *Global Trends, Forced Displacement in 2021* (Geneva, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 16 June 2022), p.12.

⁶ UNHCR, *Displaced on the frontlines of the climate emergency, data visualization* (Geneva, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.) (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/065d18218b654c798ae9f360a626d903>).

While this report builds on the discussions of the Convening Group, its conclusions are my own. They are based on what is practical and, where possible, what has been proven to work. In every case, they demand far greater collaboration across governments, donors and humanitarian agencies and an end to siloed priorities, approaches and mind-sets.

As shown in Box 2, we have a plethora of global agreements and promises on food security, including Sustainable Development Goal 2: zero hunger by 2030. There are many multilateral initiatives, ranging from statements of principle to actual funding for programs (although there seem to be more of the former than the latter). And yet the share of the world population facing food insecurity seems to be rising.

This report reflects a wide consensus across the Convening Group that we must demonstrate what works and then push to take that to scale. It argues for a concerted campaign – backed by a dedicated team and toolkit – to implement best practice on funding in a real-time situation of food insecurity. Far from letting donors and others off the hook, this would test current measures and tools against new and innovative approaches to generate concrete examples of what works and what does not.

Food security should be seen as a right for all, not a privilege for the few. However, it raises very real dilemmas in practice. For example, should we push for yet more funding? As this report shows, we have the largest humanitarian appeals, the largest numbers of people who

are food insecure and the largest funding gaps in history. These funding gaps run from the global to individual level, with some of the most vulnerable people in crisis countries receiving a dwindling share of aid dollars. Should we aim to make better use of the funding available or is that an admission of defeat – a recognition that if donors are not funding current appeals, it is pointless to ask for more?

My own view is that more funding is always welcome. However, we need to use funding in ways that not only save lives during long-term emergencies, but that also change them for the better. That means changing the mind-set about how to make the best possible use of humanitarian funding.

Let us put this to the test. We have seven years until the deadline for SDG 2. We have an opportunity to use these years to test the many proven and innovative approaches that are out there – often in a pilot phase – and bring them to scale. Let us find out what is possible, and use that to push for lasting progress and a world with zero hunger.

“Everything that is already on the table, including the Global Compact, must be translated into action.”

**— Arnauld Akodjenou
Convening Group**

BOX 1

ABOUT THE CONVENING GROUP

This report has been informed by the discussions of the Convening Group on Funding for Sustainable Food Security. The group met online three times in late 2022: on 15 and 21 November and on 8 December. Participants were encouraged to provide insights on the challenges and examples of promising practice before, during and after each discussion, as well as key resources. They were also invited to select the “one big thing” that might move the needle forward on this issue, generating a range of priority areas for action.

BOX 2

LANDMARK AGREEMENTS AND ALLIANCES ON FOOD SECURITY



NOVEMBER 1996

World Summit on Food Security

The Rome Declaration is adopted by 10,000 participants, who pledge their political will to *“achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015”*.⁷

JULY 2000

United Nations Global Compact

The United Nations Global Compact commits to drive business engagement in the global effort to advance food security and sustainable agriculture. Its work focuses on the key pillars of food and agriculture, which are aligned with the five elements of the Zero Hunger Challenge of the SDGs: Sustainable Food Systems; Rural Poverty; Loss and Waste of Food; Access to Adequate Food and Healthy Diets; and Ending Malnutrition.⁸

SEPTEMBER 2000

Adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations

The MDGs are adopted by 189 nations during the UN Millennium Summit. The eight MDGs aim to respond to the world’s main development challenges by the year 2015. MDG 1 – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – includes the target of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (Target 1c).

OCTOBER 2015

2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations General Assembly adopts the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a *“plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity”*. The Agenda includes 17 SDGs to be achieved by 2030, including SDG 2: *“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”*. SDG 2 aims to end hunger in all its forms, ensuring that everyone, everywhere, has enough good quality food to lead a healthy life.⁹

MAY 2016

World Humanitarian Summit and The Grand Bargain

The Grand Bargain is launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul – an agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations to reform the delivery of humanitarian aid. The aim: to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action and *“get more means into the hands of people in need”*. The Grand Bargain version 2.0, agreed in 2021, aims to ensure *“greater support... for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs”*.¹⁰

⁷ FAO, World Food Summit, 13–17 November 1996, Rome, Italy, webpage (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996) (www.fao.org/3/x2051e/x2051e00.htm#P45_1647).

⁸ United Nations Global Compact, Promote sustainable food and agriculture systems, webpage (New York, United Nations Global Compact, n.d.) (www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/environment/food-agriculture).

⁹ United Nations, Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/Res/70/1, adopted 25 September 2015 (New York, United Nations, 2015) (<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/291/89/PDF/N1529189.pdf?OpenElement>).

¹⁰ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), About the Grand Bargain, webpage (New York, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, n.d.) (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/node/40190>).



SEPTEMBER 2021

United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS)

Nearly 300 commitments are made by civil society, farmers, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Member States to accelerate action and to transform food systems. The Summit process generates 2,200 ideas for accelerated action and results on five action areas: Nourish All People; Boost Nature-based Solutions of Production; Build Resilience; Advance Equitable Livelihoods, Decent Work and Empowered Communities; and Means of Implementation (to connect countries to initiatives and resources).¹¹ The Summit leads to the development of almost 120 country-level action plans, known as UNFSS National Pathways.



MAY 2022

Roadmap for Global Food Security – Call to Action

More than 100 countries commit to act with urgency, at scale and in concert to respond to the urgent food security and nutrition needs of millions of people, to provide immediate humanitarian assistance, to build resilience, to support social protection and safety nets, and to strengthen sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and the objectives of the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit.¹²



JUNE 2022

G7 Statement on Global Food Security and creation of the Global Alliance for Food Security

Leaders at the 2022 G7 Summit in Germany issue the following statement: *“We, the Leaders of the G7, will spare no effort to increase global food and nutrition security and to protect the most vulnerable, whom the food crisis threatens to hit the hardest. We are convinced that this multidimensional crisis can only be solved through a joint global effort. Therefore, and in strong support of the [United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance], we are building the Global Alliance for Food Security jointly with the World Bank as a coordinated and solidarity response to the challenges ahead.”*¹³

DECEMBER 2022

Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27)

Food security features prominently at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Governments agree a new four-year plan on Agriculture and Food Security and a new initiative to scale up finance to transform agriculture by 2030: Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation (FAST), launched by more than 20 agriculture ministers.¹⁴ This multi-stakeholder program also has support from foundations, banks, the private sector and NGOs.¹⁵

¹¹ United Nations, Nearly 300 commitments from civil society, farmers, youth and Indigenous Peoples and Member States highlight Summit’s inclusive process to accelerate action, press release (New York, United Nations, 24 September 2021).
¹² Office of the Spokesperson, Chair’s statement: Roadmap for global food security – Call to action, press release (Washington DC, U.S. Department of State, 24 June 2022) (www.state.gov/chairs-statement-roadmap-for-global-food-security-call-to-action-2/).
¹³ G7 Information Centre, G7 Statement on global food security (Toronto, G7 Research Group, 28 June 2022) (www.g7.utoronto.ca/summit/2022elmau/220628-food-security.html).
¹⁴ United Nations Climate Change, Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation Initiative, webpage (Bonn, United Nations Climate Change, n.d.) (<https://cop27.eg/#/presidency/initiative/fast>).
¹⁵ United Nations Climate Change, Governments step up a action on agriculture and food security at COP 27, article (Bonn, Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 5 December 2022) (<https://unfccc.int/news/governments-step-up-action-on-agriculture-and-food-security-at-cop27>).

— 03

The state of food insecurity

The big
(and bigger)
numbers



“Around 80% of food insecure situations are happening in protracted humanitarian situations.

Which means, by definition, that we need to get out of emergency response mode as quickly as

possible and deal with things more holistically.”



— Peter Mulrean
Convening Group

There is debate on the precise numbers of people who face food insecurity, and even on the definition of food security itself. Not surprisingly, different measurements arrive at different estimates, depending on who and what is being measured and, very importantly, where.

The 2022 *Global Report on Food Crises*, for example, estimates that almost 193 million people are acutely food insecure and need urgent assistance across 53 countries or territories. That's up by nearly 40 million people on the figure for 2020 – the previous high – and a rise of 80% since 2016.¹⁶

The World Food Programme (WFP) finds that the number of people who are acutely food-insecure in 79 countries will have hit a record high of 349 million in 2022 – up from around 200 million people before the COVID-19 pandemic. These include 49 million people across 49 countries who are at risk of falling into famine unless they have urgent support.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the joint United Nations report on the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World in 2022* (SOFI 2022) estimates that nearly a half-billion people, more than eight in 10 of them in South Asia, were under-nourished in 2021 and that more than 1 billion faced moderate to severe food insecurity. For the world as a whole, the prevalence of food insecurity rose to more than 29% in 2021 from 21% in 2014.¹⁸

The *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* on progress towards the SDGs notes that nearly one in three of us (a staggering 2.3 billion people) were moderately



or severely food insecure in 2021, lacking regular access to adequate food. This represents an increase of almost 350 million people since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁹

At the top end of the scale, an estimated 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020, up from 112 million in 2019, according to the 2022 SOFI report. This signals the impact of food price hikes in response to the economic impact of the pandemic and the measures taken to contain it.²⁰

Who is included in these statistics – and who is not – matters for policymakers and humanitarian agencies. But it is most crucial for those who are food insecure, as it will shape the response to their needs.

¹⁶ GNAFC and FSIN, *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint analysis for better decisions* (New York, Global Network Against Food Crises and Food Security Information Network, 2022), p. 6.

¹⁷ WFP, *WFP Global Operational Response Plan 2022, Update #6* (Rome, World Food Programme, 2022), p. 4.

¹⁸ Kurtenbach, Elaine, 'FAO: Rising prices, food insecurity add to ranks of hungry', Associated Press, 24 January 2023 (<https://apnews.com/article/health-healthy-eating-united-nations-asia-climate-and-environment-18738a435ef9b492605400b7be7c9681>)

¹⁹ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022* (New York, United Nations, 2022), p. 28.

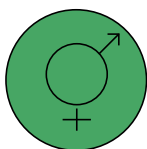
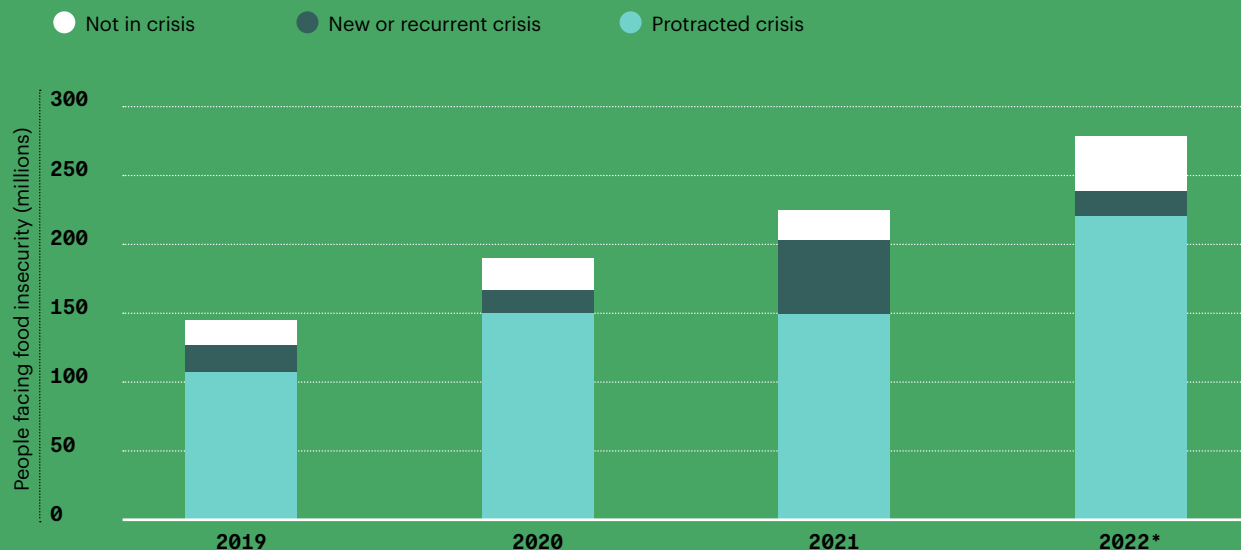
²⁰ FAO et al., SOFI 2022.

FIGURE 1

Most of those facing food insecurity (80%) live in countries experiencing protracted humanitarian crises

Source: Walton and Mason (2022) based on IPC/Cadre Harmonisé (CH) and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Notes: Totals cover between 53 and 60 countries annually. Data combine results from IPC/CH assessments and humanitarian needs assessments coordinated by the United Nations, which may use differing definitions of food security. *2022 data are preliminary and are based on partial-year existing data and projections. See the Appendix in Walton and Mason (2022) for more information.



GENDER MATTERS

There is a growing gender gap in food insecurity. In 2021, **31.9% of women** worldwide were moderately or severely food insecure compared to **27.6% of men** – a gap of more than 4 percentage points, up from 3 percentage points in 2020.



AGE MATTERS

45 million children under the age of five were suffering from wasting in 2020, the most deadly form of malnutrition, which increases their risk of death by up to 12 times. And the growth and development of 149 million children was stunted by the chronic lack of essential nutrients in their food.



LOCATION MATTERS

While most of the world's undernourished people live in Asia (around 425 million people in 2021), Africa has the highest prevalence of undernourishment. **One in five people in Africa** (20.2% of the population) faced hunger in 2021, compared to **9.1% in Asia, 8.6% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 5.8% in Oceania**, and less than **2.5% in North America and Europe**.²¹



CONTEXT MATTERS

The risk of food insecurity soars if you are living in poverty, and particularly if you live in an area affected by a protracted humanitarian crisis. In all, 80% of those who are food insecure live in such a context (see Figure 1).²² Many "hotspots" for food insecurity are affected by armed conflicts. While diplomacy might resolve conflicts between states, protracted, localized conflicts over the control of limited resources need different approaches, from land tenure reform to technologies to improve crop yields and access to water.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Dan Walton, Erica Mason, The food insecurity gap and protracted humanitarian crises, factsheet (Bristol, Development Initiatives, 2022), p. 4.

Whatever the measure or definition used, the number of people who are food insecure is unacceptably high in a world that is capable of feeding itself.

Where are we heading if nothing changes? On current trends, the picture looks bleak. Some projections suggest that nearly 670 million people will still be facing hunger in 2030 – around 8% of the world population. In other words, the proportion of hungry people will be exactly the same as it was in 2015 when the world adopted SDG 2: zero hunger by 2030.²³

As I mentioned in my introduction, we are seeing the reversal of decades of hard-won progress. At the most severe end of the spectrum, the numbers of people who are acutely food insecure or who need urgent humanitarian assistance are soaring. They have more or less doubled every five years since 2017, and have skyrocketed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Humanitarian budgets for food assistance are increasing in response to this situation, but they are not keeping up with the sheer scale of need. There are also concerns that they may divert resources that could support long-term solutions to prevent food insecurity, from resilient livelihoods to effective food systems. More broadly, there are concerns that humanitarian food assistance, as currently structured and delivered, is not the way to achieve resilient and sustainable food security.



The state of funding for food security

Gaps and more gaps

The current state of funding for food security can be characterized by one word: Gaps. There are gaps between the overall volume of humanitarian funding and the amount requested; gaps between the share of funding for food aid and for sustainable food security; and gaps between the amount of funding per person and their needs.



“We should consider whether part of the reason that we are stretching the humanitarian dollar almost to

the breaking point is the lack of sustained investment in many of the actions which could help

mitigate the need for people to resort to and become dependent on emergency assistance.”

— Deborah Saidy
Convening Group



Gaps in humanitarian funding

Statistics from the *2022 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report* show that humanitarian funding reached an all-time high of \$31.3 billion in 2021 (Figure 2). Even so, funding has stalled. Despite the growing needs triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing impacts of climate change and emerging conflicts (Afghanistan in 2021 and Ukraine in 2022), humanitarian financing was only slightly higher in 2021 than it was in 2018. Having grown by more than 10% each year between 2012 and 2017, its growth has slowed to just 2.6% in the years since.²⁴

Appeals coordinated by the United Nations also reached an all-time high in 2021, with \$38.4 billion requested for

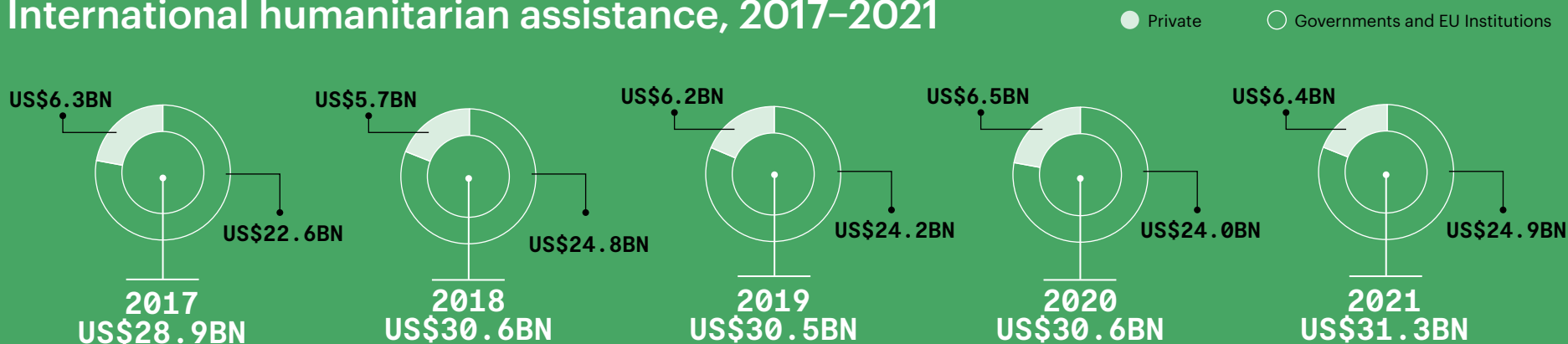
48 appeals, almost \$8 billion more than the amount requested in 2019 for 36 appeals. However, as of late 2022, these appeals had received only 56% of the funding requested (\$16.9 billion) – the second-highest shortfall ever and only slightly less than the shortfall of \$19.1 billion in 2020.²⁵

When we look back over the past decade, we see that the bigger the appeal, the bigger the funding gaps. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the 2022 global humanitarian appeal for \$50.8 billion had received \$21.2 billion as of November 2022 – just 42% of the funding requested. This was almost 10% down on 2021 (53% funded) and 20% down on 2012 (63% funded).²⁶

- ²⁴ Development Initiatives, *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022* (Bristol, Development Initiatives, 2022), p. 12.
²⁵ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 15.
²⁶ OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, October Update* (Geneva, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022).

FIGURE 2

International humanitarian assistance, 2017–2021



Source: Development Initiatives (2022) based on Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (FTS), United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Development Initiatives' unique dataset for private contributions.

Notes: Figures for 2021 are preliminary estimates. Totals for previous years differ from those reported in previous Global Humanitarian Assistance reports due to deflation and updated data. Data are in constant 2020 prices.

BOX 3

SNAPSHOT OF THE MAJOR DONORS

The three largest donors – the United States, Germany and the European Union – accounted for **59%** of all public humanitarian assistance in 2021, a proportion that has remained largely unchanged over the past decade.²⁷

Increases from the US and Germany balanced out a second large annual fall in funding from the United Kingdom (down by **39%** since 2020).²⁸

Japan was the fourth-largest donor in 2021, doubling its assistance to **\$1.2 billion**.²⁹

Total international humanitarian assistance from private donors increased by **5%** in 2020 to reach a record **\$6.5 billion**, with **\$4.5 billion (68%** of all private assistance) coming from individuals.³⁰

The volume of assistance from multilateral development banks to the largest 20 recipients doubled from **\$5.8 billion** in 2015 to **\$11.6 billion** in 2020.³¹

In terms of overall development funding, total official development assistance (ODA) increased by **\$5.4 billion** (or **3.5%**) in real terms between 2019 and 2020, to reach **\$161 billion**. This was the highest level ever, triggered in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, and followed three years of sluggish growth in aid flows.³²

Analyses of the ODA data related to SDGs show that in 2018, the total ODA from G7 countries allocated specifically to food security and rural development amounted to **\$17 billion**, an increase of **109%** compared to the amount allocated in 2000. A doubling of the G7's ODA for agriculture, food and rural development (from the \$17 billion allocated in 2018) could support the G7 commitment made in 2015 to lift 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030.³³

²⁷ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 53.

²⁸ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 13.

²⁹ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 51.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 63.

³² Development Initiatives, ODA in 2020: *What does OECD DAC preliminary data tell us?* Factsheet, April 2021.

³³ ZEF and FAO, *Investment costs and policy action opportunities for reaching a world without hunger (SDG2)*, (Rome and Bonn, Centre for Development Research at the University of Bonn and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2020) (<https://doi.org/10.4060/cb1497en>).

Gaps in the share of funding for food security

Food security has received the largest amount of humanitarian funding for any sector every year for the past decade. 2021 was no exception: the sector received \$6 billion – almost four times the amount received by the next largest sector, nutrition (\$1.7 billion). Even so, the sector received little more than half of the \$11.1 billion funding requested.³⁴

Gaps in the funding for sustainable solutions

The biggest funding gaps of all relate to early recovery: the sector that aims to support sustainable recovery from crises, strengthen resilience and pave the way for longer-term development. This area faced a “double whammy” in 2021, with the smallest amount of funding by volume and the largest funding gap, receiving just 17% of the \$0.3 billion requested.³⁵

³⁴ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 41.

³⁵ Development Initiatives, 2022, p. 42.

³⁶ GNAFC, *2022 Financing Flows and Food Crises Report*, executive summary (Rome, Global Network Against Food Crises, 2022).

³⁷ WFP, Food assistance: Cash and in-kind, webpage (Rome, World Food Programme, n.d.) (www.wfp.org/food-assistance).

More funding for crisis countries, but wider gaps in funding per person

In 2021, 193 million people in 53 countries and territories faced high levels of acute food insecurity, surpassing all previous record numbers. In the same year, humanitarian assistance to the food sectors in these countries increased by 20% on the previous year to reach a record \$9.8 billion. However, humanitarian assistance for each person in crisis fell by 40% between 2018 and 2021, from \$85 per person to just \$52. What’s more, development assistance to the food sectors in these food crisis countries fell by almost 10% to \$6.2 billion between 2019 and 2020.³⁶

BOX 4

CASH ASSISTANCE VERSUS FOOD AID

Since the late 2000s, the World Food Programme (WFP) has shifted from an emphasis on food aid to food assistance in general, and cash assistance in particular. In contrast to food aid, food assistance aims to draw on a deeper understanding of people’s long-term nutritional needs and the diverse approaches required to meet them. For WFP, “cash” involves physical bank notes, vouchers or electronic funds that beneficiaries can spend directly in local markets to meet their own essential needs. Increasing from \$10 million transferred in 2009 to \$2.1 billion in 2019, cash now accounts for more than a third of all WFP assistance.³⁷

? DILEMMAS

The benefits of cash assistance include flexibility, efficiency and greater local choice (and voice) for those who receive the cash. But cash assistance itself is not a “cure-all” and there are questions about whether it can really support the building of long-term resilience in local food systems without complementary – and context-specific – interventions. Meanwhile, food aid continues to account for the lion’s share of support.

Reflections

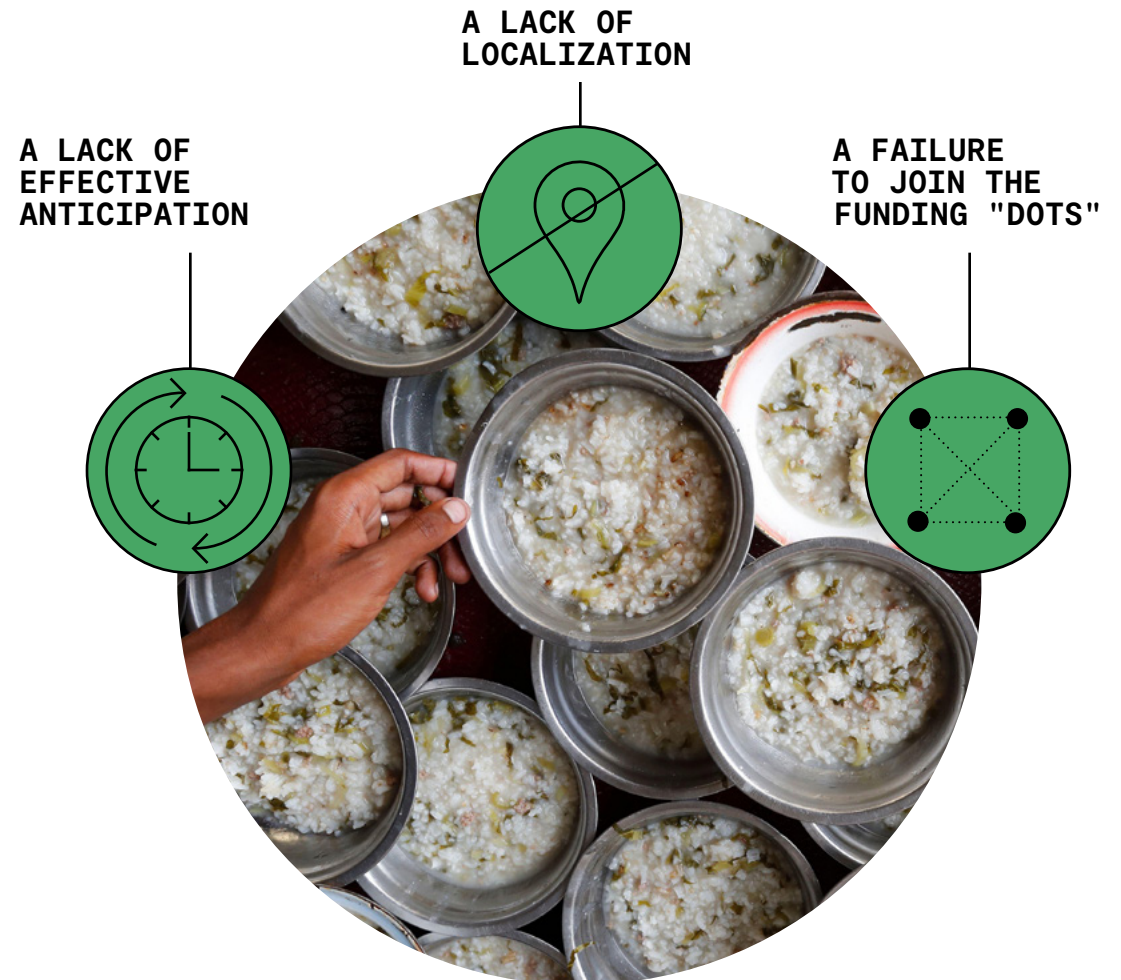
Food security already gets the largest piece of the United Nations' humanitarian funding pie, and it's unlikely that this share is going to get bigger any time soon. Meanwhile, the funding gaps for food security are enormous and growing. Current funding falls so far short of what is needed for even the most basic life-saving activities that its transformation into something more sustainable – and life changing – could even be seen as a non-starter.

The fault-lines in humanitarian funding for food security were at the very heart of our discussions in the Convening Group, with participants raising three persistent challenges:

- **A lack of effective anticipation**
- **A lack of localization**
- **A failure to join the funding “dots”**

In every case, however, the Convening Group offered positive examples of what is working and what could work, particularly if these examples were to be taken to scale.

THREE PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

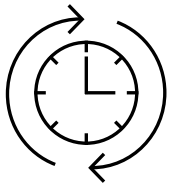


What Works

(or could work) for food security?

Two broad priorities emerged from our discussions in the Convening Group: **anticipation** and **localization**. However, these need to move forward as one, with all stakeholders **“joining the dots”** to ensure lasting impact. There are also three common threads that must be woven into every policy, program and approach: a gender lens, the meaningful inclusion of those most directly affected by food insecurity, and intensive collaboration. Without these, the chances of success are bound to be limited.





Anticipation and smart investments

Think "Anticipation"

The concept is simple: If you can plan for the disaster before it hits, you can save more lives and save money at the same time. But anticipatory action requires a shift in how the international community approaches crises.³⁸

The Convening Group was clear on the need to think “anticipation” even at the height of a crisis – to always be looking ahead. There was a sense that once we are in full emergency response mode, it may be too late to start the thinking around anticipation. Rather than backtracking or “retrofitting” anticipation, it must be part of the mind-set at all times.

According to research commissioned by the Start Network, at least half of all humanitarian crises are foreseeable and more than 20% are highly predictable. But less than 1% of humanitarian funding goes to anticipatory action.³⁹

The good news is that anticipation is gaining traction. In 2020, OCHA facilitated the development of five collective anticipatory action pilots: Bangladesh (monsoon floods), Ethiopia (drought), Malawi (dry spells/floods), Somalia (drought), and preliminary work in Chad to demonstrate how anticipatory collective humanitarian action through multisectoral activities reduces the humanitarian impact of drought for people at risk. In 2021, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) selected six more pilots: Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Nepal, Niger,



“There is always this question: do I address real, known and urgent humanitarian needs right now? Or do I invest to anticipate and hopefully nip in the bud a crisis that is likely to happen but hasn’t happened yet?

The prevailing attitude is ‘wait and see’. And you can understand the logic when there’s not enough resources to go around. But that keeps us on this humanitarian merry-go-round, and our objective should be to get off.”

— **Dan Maxwell**
Convening Group

³⁸ Heba Aly, The push to anticipate crises gains steam, *The New Humanitarian*, 13 September 2021.

³⁹ Start Network, Financial flows mapping: The potential for a risk finance facility for civil society (London, ODI, n.d.) p. 3. The Start Network is a network of over 80 humanitarian agencies around the world (<https://startnetwork.org/organisations/hpg-odi>).

the Philippines and South Sudan. In addition, the ERC initiated an improved anticipatory action pilot in Bangladesh. This work is being carried out in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WFP, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Start Network.⁴⁰

In September 2021, delegates from more than 75 governments and 60 aid agencies, international financial institutions and the private sector met for the High-level Event on Anticipatory Action and committed to early action to mitigate the effects of crises. They made new pledges of anticipatory financing and programming worth tens of millions of dollars.⁴¹

Germany promised to raise its funding for anticipatory action to €100 million by 2023, with 5% of its overall humanitarian funding allocated to anticipatory approaches. Ireland said it already provides a quarter of its humanitarian budget directly to funds that support anticipatory action. Save the Children pledged to use 15% of its internal flexible funding for this approach by 2024 and FAO pledged to dedicate at least 20% of its emergency funding to anticipatory action by 2025.⁴²

Multilateral banks are also thinking anticipation. The World Bank has doubled its Early Response Facility to \$1 billion for the current funding cycle of its International Development Association, while the International Monetary Fund is developing a new strategy to anticipate crises in the most fragile places.⁴³

? DILEMMAS

Many anticipatory action projects have yet to really prove themselves in some of the world's toughest and hard-to-predict emergencies.⁴⁴ In addition to political hesitancy, we see patchy data and fragmented pilots of limited scope, and there are questions about how best to use this approach in conflict zones. What's more, anticipatory actions by the humanitarian community have not yet plugged into the national response systems that may be in place,⁴⁵ or the innovative and flexible finance and insurance schemes that could be mobilized.

🚧 HURDLE

There is a continued lack of investment in anticipatory action.

🚧 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

All humanitarian donors should spend at least 1% of their budgets on anticipatory action in 2024 and increase that share by 1% for the next 10 years.



⁴⁰ OCHA, Anticipatory action, webpage (Geneva, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, n.d.) (www.unocha.org/our-work/humanitarian-financing/anticipatory-action).

⁴¹ Heba Aly, 13 September 2021.

⁴² Heba Aly, 13 September 2021.

⁴³ Heba Aly, 13 September 2021.

⁴⁴ Jessica Alexander, What's on our aid policy radar in 2023: The issues and dilemmas shaping humanitarian policy over the next 12 months and beyond, *The New Humanitarian*, 4 January 2023.

⁴⁵ Heba Aly, 13 September 2021.

Make smart investments between and before crises

“Investing in the resilience of communities that have been impacted by a humanitarian crisis is a hugely wise investment. When you invest in the capacity of a community that has already suffered a serious humanitarian challenge, you build their capacity to deal with the next one.”

— Tom Arnold
Convening Group

Invest in integrated resilience

Wherever there is a humanitarian imperative, we must also build resilience. This is closely linked to anticipation and an understanding of context, as well as to early action to help people withstand and recover from shocks. Building resilience may well save money on humanitarian responses while reducing vulnerability, land degradation and even the conflicts that are so often fuelled by lack of resources.

In Niger, for example, WFP is working to build the resilience of those who are chronically vulnerable before they face another crisis. Its Resilience Learning Programme supports a range of activities, including Food Assistance for Assets (FFA), nutrition support, school feeding, Smallholder Agriculture Market Access (SAMS) and lean-season support, aiming to increase both household resilience and food security.⁴⁶ Some preliminary and anecdotal evidence suggests that up to 80% of the sites covered by the Programme may not have needed humanitarian assistance since its implementation, in contrast to other villages that have continued to need support.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ WFP, *Impact Evaluation for Resilience Learning in the Sahel Niger, inception report* (Rome, World Food Programme, 2022), p. 3.

⁴⁷ Personal communication, Susana Rico, Convening Group.



DILEMMAS

Integrated resilience can only be a game changer if delivered at scale and at a level that matches the needs. This is not yet happening. As a result, hard-won resilience may still shatter under the pressure of repeated crises.



HURDLE

There is a continued failure to invest adequate resources in resilience building before, during and between crises.



OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

It is vital to gather, learn from and build on proven examples of integrated resilience building.

Invest in social safety nets

Poverty and inequality are underlying causes of food insecurity, eroding the rights to adequate food, as well as housing, health, safe water, education and other essentials.⁴⁸ People who are already poor are vulnerable to hunger because they lack the resources to meet their basic needs on a daily basis. They are also highly vulnerable to even small shocks that will push them closer to – or into – destitution, starvation, and even premature mortality.

One key social protection response to chronic poverty-related food insecurity is social assistance linked to the promotion of livelihoods that enhance incomes. People who are not poor now could become poor and, therefore, vulnerable to hunger, if they are not equipped to face future risks. They need effective social safety nets.⁴⁹ These target specific groups in specific circumstances to enable them to respond to specific shocks.

Social protection can play a key role in the progressive realization of the right to adequate food for all. Social protection programs contribute to the eradication of poverty and hunger by transferring resources to people living in poverty, enabling them to generate their own income, protect their own assets and accumulate their own human capital.⁵⁰

Shock-responsive social protection is one of the best-researched and most promising practices for government-led, donor-supported responses to predictable shocks. It has been shown to be much more cost effective – and presumably therefore more sustainable – than creating a stand-alone humanitarian response every time a shock hits.

Strong empirical evidence gathered over the past three decades demonstrates the impact of social protection across a range of outcomes including poverty and food security. A 2017 study by the European Commission on food consumption, expenditure and assets, drawing on more than 70 evaluations of social transfers and public works programs, found that the average social transfer program increased the value of food consumed by 13%. The programs also boosted holdings of livestock, assets and savings.⁵¹

In response to the ongoing food crisis, UNICEF and WFP are working on a joint social protection program in Mali, Mauritania and Niger to support 1.8 million people through cash-based transfers and complementary services. Both agencies are also working with governments to strengthen their social protection systems, such as social registries, national policies and linkages with early warning systems. In Burkina Faso, FAO supports the social protection system through cash-based transfers and complementary services that target 408,000 people, in addition to efforts to boost the agricultural production and livelihoods of 620,000 people.⁵²

⁴⁸ OHCHR, Poverty, the right to food and social protection, webpage (Geneva, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

⁴⁹ HLPE-FSN, *Social Protection for Food Security* (Rome, High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, June 2012), p. 11.

⁵⁰ OHCHR, n.d.

⁵¹ European Commission, *Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: a game changer in supporting people through crises* (Brussels, European Commission, February 2019), p. 19.

⁵² FAO, UNICEF and WFP. FAO, UNICEF and WFP call for urgent and long-lasting action in West and Central Africa as the region faces yet another year of record hunger with thousands experiencing catastrophic levels of food insecurity, press release (Dakar, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, 8 December 2022).

? DILEMMAS

Social protection initiatives must be robust if they are to enhance food security and hold steady in a crisis. Social safety nets require flexible funding, which has been exhausted in many countries as a result of fiscal crises, as well as debt relief for countries in crisis situations. The Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia, and the Hunger Safety Net Program (HSNP) in Kenya had risen to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, but both seem to have struggled since early 2022: the PSNP in the face of conflict; and the HSNP for a variety of reasons – including drought, locusts, and the skyrocketing price of food since the invasion of Ukraine. Everything was in place for the HSNP to meet these challenges, yet it seems to have faltered. It is essential that the experience of shock-responsive social protection in Ethiopia and Kenya is documented to inform similar initiatives in the future.

🚧 HURDLE

There is too little investment in the social safety nets that can ease the impact of food crises by reducing vulnerability.

🚧 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

We need greater investment in shock-responsive social protection, and greater monitoring of the programs that are already underway.



Invest in sustainable and climate-smart agriculture

Production

People are usually undernourished because they can neither grow nor afford enough food. However, if they can produce it, they can not only feed themselves, but also provide food for local markets. FAO estimates that the world will need to produce 60% more food by 2050 to feed a growing world population. That is feasible, if we increase crop production sustainably through techniques that are in harmony with ecosystems and that help farmers cope with weather extremes.⁵³

Regenerative farming, for example, is based on farming principles that mimic nature. The aim is to ensure healthy soils to feed more people and increase resilience to climate change while creating thriving farming communities.⁵⁴ This kind of farming can adapt to the conditions faced by small-scale farmers, with the emphasis on local crop varieties and on harnessing traditional knowledge to sustain, rather than fight, natural ecosystem processes.⁵⁵ The Rockefeller Foundation is now supporting organizations that are scaling up regenerative agriculture practices around the world.⁵⁶

Strong cooperatives and farmer associations can strengthen collective organization, giving farmers more opportunities than they would have on their own. The Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA), for example, helps smallholder farmers increase their productivity and incomes through access to information, investment opportunities and agricultural support – from seed to market. Supported by its mobile app, FtMA reached over half a million people in 2020.⁵⁷

⁵³ José Graziano Da Silva, Feeding the World Sustainably (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2012) (www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/feeding-world-sustainably).

⁵⁴ Sara Farley, Four Steps to Transitioning to Regenerative Agriculture, blog (New York, The Rockefeller Foundation, 27 July 2022).

⁵⁵ José Graziano Da Silva, 2012.

⁵⁶ The Rockefeller Foundation. The Rockefeller Foundation Announces Ten Grants at COP27 to Scale Indigenous and Regenerative Agriculture Practices Globally. Press release. (New York, The Rockefeller Foundation, 11 September 2022).

⁵⁷ WFP. Digital Foundations: Digital transformation and our fight against hunger (Rome: World Food Programme, 2021), p. 10.



BOX 5

GAME-CHANGING PROPOSITIONS FROM THE 2021 FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

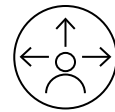
At the 2021 Food Systems Summit, farmers, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and governments pledged to accelerate action to transform food systems. The Summit process generated more than 2,000 ideas on how this could be achieved, including ideas to ‘Boost Nature-Based Production’. This included a focus on game-changing propositions for food security, such as:



—
The transformation of agricultural innovation for climate, nature and people



—
The promotion of agro-ecological value chains for small farmers and Indigenous communities



—
Embedding under-represented groups in decision-making



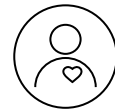
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The launch of a fund to de-risk arrangements for investment in sustainable agriculture



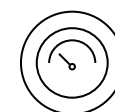
—
The adoption of nature-positive livestock production systems



—
The conservation and restoration of Indigenous peoples’ food systems



—
Supporting the right to a healthy and safe environment



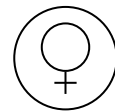
—
An accelerator facility to support the transition to sustainable agriculture



—
The adoption of regenerative agricultural practices



—
The incorporation of ‘blue foods’ into broader food-systems policy



—
Supporting women’s land tenure rights



—
The launch of a \$200 million Climate Smart Food Systems Impact Investment Fund⁵⁸

⁵⁸ UNFSS 2021 Community, Action Area 3.2 Manage sustainably existing food production systems (New York, United Nations Food Systems Summit Community).

“Food systems are both causes and victims of the climate and biodiversity crisis we find ourselves in. As we all know, both will have serious impacts on food production and it is not a stretch to think food insecurity will continue to rise if we can’t rein them in.”

— Thin Lei Win
Convening Group

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA)

CSA has expanded from a concept into an approach implemented throughout the world, and by all types of stakeholders. It has three pillars: the sustainable increase of agricultural productivity and incomes; adapting and building the resilience of people and agri-food systems to climate change; and reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions where possible.⁵⁹

FAO has gathered a wealth of CSA case studies from around the world. They range from the promotion of climate-smart livestock management and cocoa production in Ecuador to the development of inclusive, climate-smart value chains in Georgia. In Senegal, a case study captures the lessons learned from understanding Indigenous knowledge and perceptions of climate change, while a case study from Sri Lanka explores collaboration to scale-up climate-smart crop systems.

BOX 6

A PLEDGE ON CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

More than 2 billion people depend on smallholder farms for food and income. Yet less than **2%** of global climate finance is devoted to helping these farms adapt to climate change.

In November 2022, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a **\$1.4 billion** pledge to build a pipeline of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) projects that could benefit livestock farmers and women smallholder farmers, among others. It will also support the International Fund for Agricultural Development and double the budget for the CGIAR agriculture research system.

The pledge will support The Africa Adaptation Initiative (AAI) to support CSA projects across **23 countries** in Africa, and the development of new digital apps to ensure smallholder farmers can anticipate and respond to climate threats. This includes an innovative weather intelligence platform developed through a partnership between the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and TomorrowNow, which provides CSA strategies to farmers in East Africa via text messages. There will also be support for African-led climate-smart innovations to improve the health and productivity of livestock while reducing their climate footprint, in partnership with Canada’s International Development Research Center (IDRC).⁶⁰



⁵⁹ FAO, *Climate-smart agriculture: case studies 2021* (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization), p. vii.

⁶⁰ Gates Foundation Pledges \$1.4 Billion Climate Help to Smallholder Farmers at COP27, *ESG News*, 7 November 2022 (<https://esgnews.com/gates-foundation-pledges-1-4-billion-climate-help-to-smallholder-farmers-at-cop27/>).

Tackling food loss and waste (FLW)

Food loss and waste (FLW) is a key driver of global hunger. SDG target 12.3 is a commitment to halve global per capita food loss and waste by 2030, but it seems we have some way to go.

Each year, 40% of the food produced worldwide is wasted or lost at a cost to the global economy of an estimated \$2.6 trillion. That amounts to 2.5 billion metric tons of food – enough to feed up to two billion people. While food waste is primarily an issue in advanced economies, food loss happens in lower-income countries during food harvest and production, with crops ruined by poor storage and transportation. As a result, food ends up being destroyed before it even reaches the market.⁶¹

Efforts are underway to tackle FLW. The UN Environment Programme has launched Regional Food Waste Working Groups in 25 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, West Asia and the Asia-Pacific, at the request of national governments, to strengthen their understanding of, and capacity to deal with, FLW. WFP's Purchase for Progress program, backed by private-sector partners, focuses on post-harvest losses and operates in 35 countries. This initiative aims to increase smallholder farmers' access to local markets by building better roads and storage facilities. It also commits WFP to sourcing at least 10% of all its food purchases from smallholder farmers, which are then used primarily for local school meals and other food assistance programs.⁶²

? **DILEMMAS**

Producing more food and reducing food loss and waste cannot, on their own, guarantee food security. We have enough food to feed everyone on this planet, yet people are still hungry. This is about access to food, rather than its quantity. While greater and more efficient production is important, alongside CSA and measures to tackle FLW, what really matters is whether people can access the nutritious food they need. The solutions to this challenge often go far beyond agriculture itself, and touch on issues such as marginalization, poverty and discrimination.

HURDLE

There is too little emphasis on agricultural production that works with and for the smallholder farmers who produce so much of the world's food, on climate-smart approaches, or on the vast amount of food that is lost or wasted.

OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

Our current food production and agricultural systems need to be overhauled if we are to achieve global food security, with support for sustainable and regenerative agricultural production, climate-smart approaches and measures to curb food loss and waste – all informed by local knowledge and experience.



⁶¹ Saskia Bergengere Brain and Anjana Nair, Addressing the Impacts of Food Loss and Waste: Climate Change, Food Security, and the Global Economy, *FP Analytics*, n.d (<https://fpanalytics.foreignpolicy.com/2022/12/06/addressing-the-impacts-of-food-loss-and-waste/>).

⁶² Ibid.

Invest in gender-smart initiatives

“Humanitarian assistance is often ‘swayed’ by men. So they go to the President who is often a man and go to the director of an institution that they work with, who is also a man. And this leads to a chain of decision makers who are mostly men. But then, when you get down to the communities, they survive on subsistence farming, usually on the backs of women. And if we do not involve them in the planning and design, then we are often just imposing things on them through a patriarchal lens.”

— Joseph Kaifala
Convening Group

Resilient and sustainable food security is not possible without greater gender equality, given that gender is linked to every aspect of food systems. Women produce, process and trade food. They prepare it, provide it, consume it and are often responsible for feeding their households.

They also account for around 43% of the world’s agricultural labour force.⁶³ In some countries that proportion is far higher. In Burkina Faso, for example, agriculture employs more than 80% of women and is the main economic activity for 65% of them. Yet only 8.2% own arable land.⁶⁴

Persistent gender inequities are both a cause and outcome of unsustainable food systems. Women could play a transformational role in global food security, but are held back by gender norms that limit their participation and influence across food systems.

This also has an impact on their children. A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in 2022 on the impact of food price spikes has revealed that a 5% increase in the real price of food increases the risk of severe wasting among young infants by 14%, reflecting challenges for maternal nutrition.

BURKINA FASO



80%

OF WOMEN EMPLOYED
IN AGRICULTURE



65%

OF WOMEN WORKING
IN AGRICULTURE
AS MAIN ECONOMIC
ACTIVITY



8.2%

OF WOMEN OWN
ARABLE LAND

⁶³ Food Systems Summit 2021 Community, Accelerate action for women’s nutrition, empowerment, and leadership through transformative entry points for gender-equitable food systems, web-page, n.d.

⁶⁴ Angela Hawke, A local, gender lens to define policy options for women’s employment in Africa (Nairobi, Partnership for Economic Policy, 2022).

Rising prices for food during pregnancy and the first year after birth also increase the risk of stunting for children of 2-5 years of age. This should be a strong rationale for interventions to ease the impact of food-price inflation on vulnerable children and their mothers.⁶⁵

There is much to be gained here. A 2021 study from Nigeria by Ikhida et al. reveals a ‘win-win’ scenario, with the potential of land reform to increase women’s access to agricultural land and improve food security while promoting effective and equitable agricultural development. The study found that increasing access to land for women farmers is one of the most effective and economically efficient policy options for the goals of Nigeria’s National Food Security Programme (NFSP), particularly on agricultural development and food security.⁶⁶

Organizations need to do more to elevate the leadership and voices of women in food systems, as recognized at the 2021 Food Systems Summit. A working group is now focusing on three transformative – and actionable – entry points for gender equitable food systems:

WOMEN’S NUTRITION

Recognizing that improving women’s nutrition not only addresses one of the most inequitable outcomes of food systems, but also ensures that women are healthy enough to take part in the transformation of food systems. The specific entry point is a new Alliance for Anaemia Actions, focusing on a pernicious nutritional problem that has a disproportionate impact on women and girls.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

To ensure the world’s most vulnerable women can benefit from, and contribute to, food systems economic activity. The specific entry points are hubs to support women-led enterprises.

LEADERSHIP

To ensure that women’s voices are heard in food system decision-making. The specific entry point is accountability for food systems organizations/actors to appoint women as leaders, enact gender-responsive internal policies, and be accountable for gender outcomes through a Global Food Systems 50/50 reporting mechanism.⁶⁷

? DILEMMAS

The gender dilemmas related to food security mirror wider challenges for women and girls, from having less access to resources and education than men and boys, to their under-representation in leadership positions. As has been well-documented elsewhere, women continue to be held back by deeply embedded gender norms that affect so many aspects of their lives, including their access to and control of food.

HURDLE

Women produce and sell much of the world’s food, yet continue to be affected disproportionately by food insecurity.

OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

A gender lens must be applied to every aspect of food security, recognizing the particular role of women in local, national and global food systems.

⁶⁵ Derek Headey and Marie Ruel, Food Inflation and Child Undernutrition in Low and Middle Income Countries, IFPRI Discussion Paper 02146 (Washington DC, International Food Policy Research Institute, November 2022).

⁶⁶ Angela Hawke, 2022.

⁶⁷ Food Systems Summit 2021 Community, web-page, n.d.

“There are technologies at hand that can have positive impacts upon humanitarian prevention and preparedness and response when it comes to food requirements and needs. If fully understood and implemented, they could go a long way to ensure effective use of funding over time.”

— Randolph Kent
Convening Group



The Convening Group stressed the need to invest in smart technology, while noting a serious digital divide: those in the greatest need are the least likely to have access to modern technologies. When we look ahead to the resources we will need for human survival towards the middle of this Century, technological transformations are certain to play a key role.

A Scientific Group was tasked by the 2021 Food Summit to reinforce the science that underpinned the Summit’s conclusions and recommendations. Its 2023 report highlights a wealth of innovative technological solutions, from the development of new forms of packaging to keep food fresh for longer, to plant-breeding techniques that capture nitrogen from the air and reduce the need for fertilizers. Smart-phone apps can provide farmers with information on local crop pests, weather risks and market opportunities, and are already being used in a number of countries, including Bangladesh, India, Kenya and Senegal.⁶⁹

Hand-held digital devices and remote sensing can track concentrations of soil carbon and other nutrients, while artificial intelligence (AI) and drones help farmers spot areas that need irrigation, fertilization or pest control. But to spread the benefits, all devices need to become cheaper and user-friendly. Rental services could be developed to improve access to technologies of all kinds, such as an Uber-like app for tractors in India.⁷⁰ It is likely that bio-engineered foods will become increasingly important for nutrition, as shown by genetically modified (GM) foods.⁷¹ Though there are recognized downsides, GM’s more positive role has also been acknowledged. In addition, urban farming,

⁶⁸ The author is grateful to Randolph Kent and Joachim von Braun for their inputs to this section.
⁶⁹ Joachim von Braun, Kaosar Afsana, Louise O. Fresco, Mohamed Hag Ali Hassan (Eds), *Science and Innovations for Food Systems Transformation*, Springer, 2023 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15703-5>).
⁷⁰ Ibid.
⁷¹ The 2016 US National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Law defines “bioengineered” to mean any food “(a) that contains genetic material that has been modified through in vitro recombinant DNA techniques; and (b) for which the modification could not otherwise be obtained through conventional breeding or not found in nature”.

under-water farming⁷² and 3D ocean farming⁷³ are other ways in which we might feed ourselves in the future.

WFP's Innovation Accelerator has been leading more than 100 projects worldwide. In Burundi, for example, WFP has deployed the School Connect application. Using digital devices, personnel in school canteens can report how many children are at school and what they're eating, providing WFP with valuable data on food stock and distribution quantities to prevent food shortages. School Connect is now being used in more than 500 WFP-supported schools.⁷⁴

Most of the UNFSS National Pathways that have emerged since the Food Security Summit call for more innovative action, backed by science-based partnerships.⁷⁵ It is vital that lessons learned on innovation are widely shared (including through South-South cooperation).

? DILEMMAS

A 2021 study by Nesta, a UK innovation agency notes that *"Slow adoption of new tools and innovative methods is often a result of a lack of senior advocacy within major humanitarian organisations. Many of these organisations have traditional structures and approaches that have been ingrained through decades of practice, often resulting in 'organisational inertia'. Persistent scepticism about the value of community or frontline derived knowledge and data has resulted in top-down preference for traditional data sources and a lack of process shift and/or willingness to include participatory approaches into the workflows."*⁷⁶

🚧 HURDLE

A digital divide means that those in the greatest need of technology are the least likely to have it – a divide reinforced by the continued 'top-down' use of technology to manage programs.

🔄 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

The emphasis should be on the grassroots use of technologies and applications, backed by advanced science. Technology needs to be in the hands of those who can use it to enhance food production and, therefore, their own livelihoods.



⁷² Rich McEachran, Under the sea: The underwater farms growing basil, strawberries and lettuce, *The Guardian*, 13 August 2015.

⁷³ 3D ocean farming grows a mix of seaweed crops and shellfish – including mussels and oysters – under the water's surface. It requires zero input because the sea plants filter and sequester carbon, making it, at this moment, the most sustainable means of food production on the planet.

⁷⁴ WFP, 2021, p. 5.

⁷⁵ United Nations, press release, 24 September 2021.

⁷⁶ Kathy Peach, Aleks Berditchevskaia, Issy Gill, Oli Whittington, Eirini Malliaraki, Nasra Hussein, *Collective Crisis Intelligence for frontline humanitarian response*, (London, Nesta) p. 78.

Invest in data

Investment in data is vital for a good understanding of local context, the scale of needs and progress (or the lack of it). However, data for data's sake is not enough. To be of any use, data must always be accessible, robust and current.

One key suggestion emerging from the Convening Group was the use of the blockchain approach, which gives all stakeholders access to the same data. Blockchains make it possible to store information in a way that is distributed across the Internet to those who need it.⁷⁷

A prime example is the Building Blocks initiative, which enables beneficiaries to securely access and receive multiple forms of assistance from different organizations via one access point. Building Blocks started as a 100-person pilot in Pakistan, with support from the WFP Innovation Accelerator. Since 2017, Building Blocks has been scaled up to provide \$325 million worth of cash transfers to 1 million refugees in Bangladesh and Jordan, making it the world's largest implementation of blockchain technology for humanitarian assistance.⁷⁸

One key element of the Global Alliance for Food Security created in 2022 is the Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard. This consolidates and presents up-to-date data on food crisis severity, tracks global food security financing, and shares global and country-level research and analysis. By bringing

disparate information together in one place and making it accessible to all, the Dashboard aims to reduce transaction costs, improve transparency and speed up analysis to inform the decisions made by governments and by country teams on the ground. It could also speed up financing by highlighting funding needs and gaps.⁷⁹

Biometric data also have real potential. In Jordan, for example, WFP has gathered biometric data to assist Syrian refugees living in camps. They can now buy food from local shops by using a scan of their eye instead of cash, vouchers or credit cards.⁸⁰ As well as reducing duplication of aid and the chances of any potential fraud, this approach helps to break down the barriers between refugees and their host communities and, by extension, supports the localization of aid. There is public trust in this transparent approach, which could be extended and explored in many other contexts (and particularly in refugee crises).

Artificial intelligence (AI) can capture, store and prioritize data to enable local communities to identify crisis patterns and prioritize their own responses. AI could also enable them to develop appropriate crisis prevention and preparedness measures – a useful contribution to the growing localization of solutions that puts communities in the driving seat.⁸¹



⁷⁷ James Smith, Data infrastructure technology: Are blockchains the answer? Blog (London, the Open Data Institute, 2015) (<https://theodi.org/article/data-infrastructure-technology-are-blockchains-the-answer/>).

⁷⁸ WFP, Building blocks: Blockchain network for humanitarian assistance – graduated project, webpage (Rome, World Food Programme, Innovation Accelerator, 15 February 2022) (<https://innovation.wfp.org/project/building-blocks>).

⁷⁹ Global Alliance for Food Security, Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard (www.gafs.info/home/).

⁸⁰ WFP, WFP uses innovative iris scan technology to provide food assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan, article (Rome, World Food Programme, 16 February 2016).

⁸¹ From inputs provided by Randolph Kent, Convening Group.

Good data can also enhance our understanding of the gender norms that influence food security. However, there has been a lack of practical guidance on how to gauge the impact of norms that can dictate when, what types and what quality of food women and girls are allowed to eat; whether they can own or inherit land and assets in their own name; and whether they can move freely to access markets and hold leadership positions. In 2022, FAO launched a practical, step-by-step guide to fill this gap, outlining how to develop and apply workable indicators and, importantly, track progress.⁸²



? DILEMMAS

Statistics are merely numbers on paper unless they are backed by a readiness to adapt to changing circumstances and, importantly, to failure. Do we use data to confirm what we already suspect, or to make us more nimble and responsive? When reinforced by strong monitoring and evaluation, data show us what works (and what does not) in a specific context and enable us to assess the impact of interventions.

Data gathering is not, however, risk free, and ethical issues have been raised. In a 2023 article for *The New Humanitarian*, Jessica Alexander asks whether people really give informed and free consent to sharing their personal data when it's tied to the aid they need, and when it could be re-used forever. Data privacy should not be the sole privilege of citizens of countries that have strict regulations, such as the EU's "Right to be forgotten".⁸³ This links to issues around ownership: who "owns" the data?

🚧 HURDLE

Global food security continues to be hampered by fragmented data that are not comparable and that are sometimes out-of-date.

🚧 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

Agreed definitions and measurements would be helpful, but it is also important to act on statistics as well as gather them. Data are only as good as their use to shape policies, programs and practice.

⁸² FAO, IFAD and WFP, *Guide to formulating gendered social norms indicators in the context of food security and nutrition* (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Food Programme, July 2022) (<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0673en>), p. 7.

⁸³ Jessica Alexander, 4 January 2023.

“We need to differentiate the type of crisis, whether conflict or climate-change related, or whether it is emerging from these.

This matters because some crises will

go away, while others will persist. Once we make that differentiation, we need to curate more specific solutions to specific situations.”



— **Fatima Muradi**
Convening Group



Localization

Think “local”

Localization is now firmly on the radar of donor governments. It seems only logical to shift funding, capacity building and potential solutions as close as possible to those who face food insecurity. Area-based approaches, for example, would treat needs holistically within a defined community or geography; they can provide aid that is explicitly multisector and multidisciplinary; and they can design and implement assistance through participatory engagement with affected communities and leaders.⁸⁴

Localization also makes sound financial sense. A 2022 study by the Share Trust on the economic implications of shifting 25% of official development assistance (ODA) to the local level estimates that local intermediaries could deliver programming that is 32% more cost efficient than that delivered by international intermediaries. Applied to the ODA funding flows allocated to the United Nations and international NGOs (INGOs) in 2018 (\$54 billion), this equates to \$4.3 billion annually, and could deploy an additional \$680 million per year in salaries and overhead costs to local actors.⁸⁵

Donor governments seem to agree. The US, the largest humanitarian donor country, has promised to spend half of its aid funding on programs that have local groups in the driver’s seat. In December 2022, USAID announced that it will “foster locally sustained change that is tied to each country’s unique context”. It has pledged to “shift and share power”, “work to channel high quality funding as directly as possible to local actors”, and “publicly advocate for locally led development”.⁸⁶

The Rapid Response Facility of the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) instructs grantees to include overhead costs for local partners. The EU’s humanitarian aid arm – the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) – is drafting a localization guidance note, and Sweden has evaluated its localization commitments.⁸⁷



⁸⁴ Jeremy Konyndyk, Patrick Saez, Rose Warden, *Inclusive Coordination: Building an area-based humanitarian coordination model*, CGD Policy Paper 184 (Washington DC, Center for Global Development, 2020).

⁸⁵ Share Trust, Warande Advisory, *Passing the Buck: The economics of localizing international assistance* (Share Trust, 2022), p. 6.

⁸⁶ USAID, Donor statement on supporting locally led development (Washington DC, United States Agency for International Development, 13 December 2022) (www.usaid.gov/localization/donor-statement-on-supporting-locally-led-development).

⁸⁷ Jessica Alexander, 4 January 2023.

We still, however, need agreement and a typology on what is meant by localization, and how it can be achieved. Thinking by ODI on this issue suggests the following four steps.

— Step 1

Learn from, and accelerate, localization models that already exist – especially from the Global South.

— Step 3

Reduce encroachment on local actors' agency and respect their ways of being by rethinking organizational roles, stepping back if appropriate, and shifting mind-sets.

The key is to find local actors who are astute in working with different entities (including political) to prevent political interference, and identify those who can take leadership if leadership is absent – an issue that links, in turn, to mapping, and to a strong understanding of local context and ownership.



— Step 2

Transfer greater resources, including by tackling root causes of risk aversion and redesigning funding flows.

— Step 4

Let Global South actors lead the campaign to promote localization and locally led development.⁸⁸

As noted in the section on smart investment in agriculture, it is crucial to invest in improved food systems as a key part of localization and resilience building. The question is how to build robust national and local food systems while also ensuring the availability of nutritious foods for humanitarian assistance.

⁸⁸ Arbie Baguios, Maia King, Alex Martins, Rose Pinnington, *Are We There Yet? Localisation as the journey towards locally led practice* (London, ODI, October 2021).

? DILEMMAS

Localization has its sceptics and raises questions on the prospects of achieving economies of scale through a mass of smaller local groups. A 2022 report by ALNAP at ODI notes the persistent failings of the international humanitarian sector to implement localization in ways that reflect the ambitions of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain.

According to the report, even when the international humanitarian sector relied on local and national NGOs to deliver assistance during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, those NGOs had few opportunities to participate in decision-making forums in any meaningful way – an issue that also goes to the heart of dilemmas around inclusion. It notes a failure to provide local actors with the capacities “to act themselves and set the agenda themselves”.⁸⁹ Some, however, argue that the problem is less about an alleged lack of capacity among local actors and more about a lack of capacity among international actors to engage at local level.⁹⁰

HURDLE

Despite the many agreements and pledges made over the years, there is a continued lack of investment in localization. As a result, current investments may fall short of their objectives.

OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

All donors are urged to increase the share of funding that goes to local actors to 25% of their total expenditure over the next five years, with national governments investing a similar share of their own domestic spending on food security in localized approaches and programs.

Think “context”

Everything flows from a strong understanding of context. Anticipation, preparedness and investment are all based on this understanding, which is essential to ensure that action works with the grain of local and national realities.

The key is to recognize that “one size does not fit all”. Even at the height of a crisis, some locations may be untouched, and some systems may continue to function – or new systems may even be created. A good knowledge of context makes it less likely that interventions will disrupt the systems and businesses that are working on the ground. It is also useful to track important transformations as people mobilize their own response systems.

Mapping what is happening, who it is happening to, and who is doing what at local level can lead to a more focused and effective international effort, as well as greater support for humanitarian action that is locally-led. For example, research by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at ODI on the flood response in Nepal has found that those affected cited local and national actors – Nepali NGOs, diaspora groups and extended family – as being first responders and playing the most prominent role.⁹¹

“All contexts are specific, as are the politics around them.”

— Dan Toole
Convening
Group

⁸⁹ ALNAP, *The State of the Humanitarian System 2022* (London, ALNAP, 2022), p. 239.

⁹⁰ Ken Opalo, Claims about USAID’s localization agenda, blog (An Africanist Perspective, 9 January 2023) (https://kenopalo.substack.com/p/claims-about-usaids-localization?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web).

⁹¹ John Bryant, Mapping local capacities and support for more effective humanitarian responses, Policy Brief 75 (London, ODI, November 2019).

More often, however, the capacities and resources of local and national actors go unrecognized, leading to inefficiencies, duplication and missed opportunities.⁹²

The Convening Group discussed this issue in relation to Yemen in particular, where a multisectoral Plan of Action on Nutrition spans the country's two governments in Aden and Sana'a. The Plan focuses on investments to promote more sustainable approaches led by local actors, together with a mechanism to bring all actors together. Yet some international actors seem to unaware of this established approach, resulting in blurred lines on leadership in a complex context.



⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

? DILEMMAS

The mapping of context can only take us so far. If it is to have real impact, it must be backed by robust political economy and situation analyses and a determination to act on the findings – even if this means rethinking the approach. It may also require a shift in emphasis: rather than mapping sources of assistance in order to integrate them into international responses, the aim should be to demonstrate how local actors and support already meet humanitarian needs.⁹³

🚧 HURDLE

Approaches that do not work with the grain of local context are far less likely to succeed. Without an understanding the specific context, there is a risk that humanitarian assistance may disrupt systems and services that are functioning on the ground, even at the height of a crisis.

🔄 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

Effective and ongoing mapping of the local context is essential, including a mapping of all systems that are functioning, as well as local leaders and those in need of support.

Seek out local leadership

“Yemen’s line ministries are not working, in part because donors’ policies mean that they don’t work with the government: they work with UN agencies instead. This means non-functioning line ministries and the destruction of national systems.”

— Karima Ahmed Al-Hada’a
Convening Group

The Convening Group agreed that leadership needs to vary according to what is happening and who is doing what. Crises that are constantly evolving across different contexts will need different types of leadership at different times. In some cases, a focus on local leadership could help to side-step problematic political issues at a higher level – separating the political from the technical.

As mentioned in relation to “context”, the Convening Group heard that line ministries in Yemen have been side-lined by international actors that seem unaware of the country’s established Plan of Action on Nutrition. Questions were raised on whether this reflects a more general lack of proactive engagement with local

actors who have much to offer, including experience in working with different entities and in averting political interference.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have eased doubts about the capacities of local leadership. Donors, governments and UN agencies have had to rely on local groups to deliver food and other essentials to communities in lockdown – and these groups have risen to the challenge.

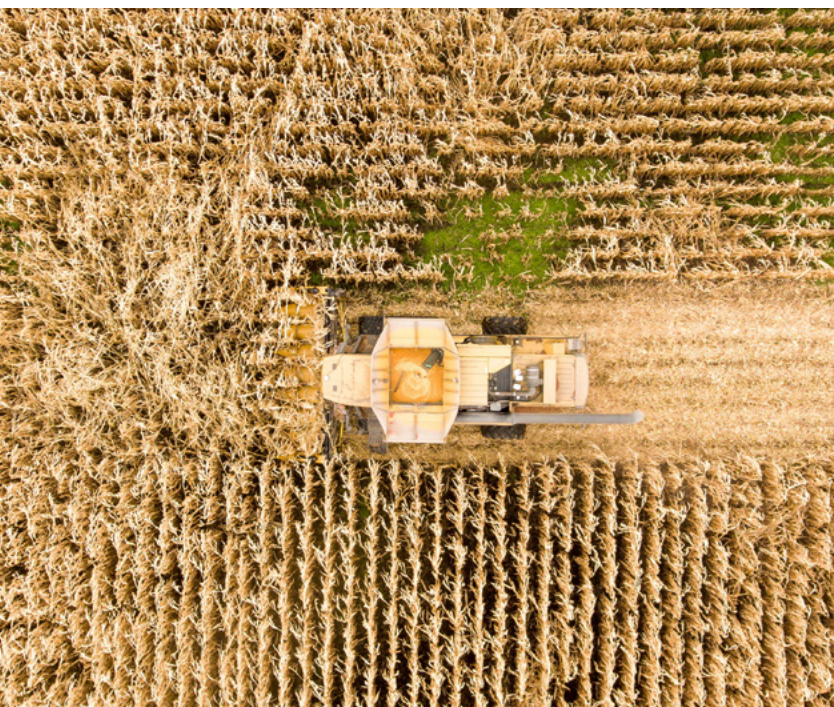
Some are now demanding more equitable relationships. They are, increasingly, being heard. A positive development has been the Pledge for Change 2030 adopted in October 2022, with more than 10 major INGOs pledging to, among other things, “prioritize and value the leadership of national and local actors and invest in making partners stronger and more sustainable.” The idea originated with Adeso, a national humanitarian and development organization in Somalia.⁹⁴

At global level, Version 2.0 of the Grand Bargain has zoomed in on local leadership. The Grand Bargain Intermediate Caucus has stated that “*unless there are objective and documented reasons against such an approach, the preferred mode of delivery should be through equitable partnership with local/national actors*”.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Pledge for Change 2030, web page (<https://pledgeforchange2030.org/>).

“Work should be Government-led; however in the resilience space – unlike in some other technical areas – there is usually no clear government partner.”

— Nils Grede
Convening Group



? DILEMMAS

How do we find those who can take the lead at local level if government leadership seems to be absent? Can we assume that local leaders are better connected to communities than staff from international organizations? In Yemen, for example, there have been concerns that a reliance on existing community powerholders has resulted in a “false localization” that further excludes marginalized groups. A 2019 report concluded that Yemenis did not always consider local authorities to be their representatives.⁹⁶ Support for local leadership may not be enough without additional measures to tackle existing marginalization.

🚧 HURDLE

There is a continued emphasis on working with leaders at national level, for obvious reasons. However, local leadership may be overlooked, even though it may be best-placed to circumvent political constraints and engage local communities.

🔄 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

Greater efforts are needed to identify and engage with local leaders who are trusted by their communities.

⁹⁵ The Grand Bargain Intermediate Caucus, Towards Co-Ownership: The Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally-Led Humanitarian Action (New York, Interagency Standing Committee, August 2022) (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2022-08/Outcome%20Paper%20Towards%20Co-ownership%20-%20Caucus%20on%20Intermediaries%20-%20August%202022.pdf>).

⁹⁶ CEPS – Community Engagement Perception Survey (2019) Community engagement perception survey of Yemen’s humanitarian response.

Ensure meaningful inclusion

“When I was living in a refugee camp, we only received what other people had decided we needed. That's because we were treated as mere refugees who needed assistance instead of as people who might be able to participate in the design of programs for their own benefit.”

— Joseph Kaifala
Convening Group

There's inclusion, and then there's *meaningful* inclusion – often two very different things. There was a sense within the Convening Group that we still have some way to go on this issue, with humanitarian support for food security often failing to provide what recipients say they need.

Meaningful inclusion entails the full accountability of humanitarian assistance to the crisis-affected people it serves – a principle embedded in everything from the SDGs to the Grand Bargain. However, according to a 2019 report from the Center for Global Development (CGD): “it means changes to the humanitarian system's incentive structures and power dynamics that go beyond technical methodologies, guidance documents, and pilot initiatives.”⁹⁷

This is about who controls resources and decisions. An ODI blog puts it neatly: “*Meaningful inclusion challenges the standard model of humanitarian action, where relief efforts are largely structured according to a basic logic of supply and demand (i.e. what are the needs, how far can we meet them?)*.”⁹⁸

In essence, it means shifting from this supply and demand approach to an approach that puts human rights and accountability front and centre. Here, the ODI blog notes that: “*a failure to meet the needs of the most marginalized people is not just a programming shortfall, but a failure to uphold obligations grounded in international law [...] Real inclusion means operationalizing one of the most fundamental components of humanitarianism – the principle of impartiality, with aid shaped by need*.”⁹⁹

There have been steps in the right direction. One high-level example was the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, which brought together farmers, youth, Indigenous Peoples, civil society and Member States. The Summit process generated 2,200 ideas for accelerated action and results, as well as multi-stakeholder initiatives that Member States have committed to support and many National Pathway action plans. The process itself was applauded by farmers' leaders for its inclusivity.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Jeremy Konyndyk and Rose Worden, *People-Driven Response: Power and Participation in Humanitarian Action* (Washington DC, Center for Global Development, September 2019), p.1.

⁹⁸ Veronique Barbelet, Oliver Lough, *In search of inclusive humanitarian responses*, blog (London, ODI, 18 April 2019) (<https://odi.org/en/insights/in-search-of-inclusive-humanitarian-responses/>).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, 24 September 2021.

? DILEMMAS

Are donors and agencies able to take this on? It means scrutinizing their own allocation and prioritization of resources, understanding and adapting to local realities, and involving the most marginalized people in decision-making.

HURDLE

Those most directly affected by food insecurity do not yet have a guaranteed seat at the table when it comes to the decisions made around food assistance and aid.

OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

Inclusion needs to become standard practice at every stage of every food security intervention, from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. To be truly meaningful, inclusion must not only inform, but also shape, policies and programs.

BOX 7

PROMOTE REGIONAL AS WELL AS NATIONAL AND LOCAL APPROACHES

While localization has proven benefits, it can present dilemmas in contexts where it is difficult to work with national and local governments and institutions. Regional approaches can build consensus and agreed approaches across a number of countries, helping to “depoliticize” both humanitarian and development assistance. Three examples from Africa illustrate the potential for appropriate regional and African ownership of food security issues that may be highly political at national level.¹⁰¹

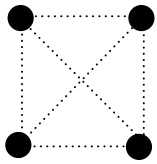
The Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa (PIATA), launched in 2017, aims to transition African agriculture from subsistence to sustainable business by driving integrated delivery, in-country coordination and deeper engagement with the private sector. Hosted by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), PIATA partners include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), The Rockefeller Foundation, the UK’s FCDO, BMZ Germany and USAID. The partnership has provided up to **\$280 million** to catalyse and sustain inclusive agricultural transformation in at least 11 African countries. PIATA has now reached **10 million** farmers, recruited and trained more than 30,000 village-based advisors, attracted **\$700 million** of private-sector investment, and supported 5,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises.¹⁰²

In September 2022, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), in partnership with several stakeholders, including AGRA and the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources (RCMRD), launched the digital Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS). This aims to accelerate the application of technologies to provide forecasts for major food commodities in East and Southern Africa and to address policy unpredictability and a lack of data. It uses technology – in this case good data – as a pathway towards food security.¹⁰³

In November 2022, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UK Government and other partners launched the ECOWAS Rice Observatory – a public-private platform to increase investment in the region’s rice value chain. The aims: to reduce the annual **£2.6 billion** bill for rice imports to West Africa, produce more rice within the region, facilitate trade and reduce costs to the consumer.¹⁰⁴

The initiative hopes to facilitate the movement of rice from places of surplus to places of deficit – a demand-led approach based on proven research and development.¹⁰⁵

- 101** Personal communication, Mansoor Ahmad, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office UK (FCDO), Convening Group.
- 102** AGRA, Partnership for Inclusive Agricultural Transformation in Africa (PIATA), webpage (Nairobi, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, n.d.) (<https://agra.org/piata>).
- 103** COMESA, Digital regional food balance sheet launched, webpage (Lusaka, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, 8 September 2022).
- 104** UK Government, UK invests in West Africa’s agriculture sector, webpage (Accra, British High Commission, 4 November 2022) (www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-invests-in-west-africas-agriculture-sector).
- 105** Mansoor Ahmad, FCDO, Convening Group.



Time to Join the Funding “Dots”

Effective anticipation and localization are entirely dependent on cooperation, with all actors – international, regional, national and local – playing to their strengths and being clear about their own roles and responsibilities. Again, that may mean a shift not only in mind-sets, but also in day-to-day operations.

It means, for example, being proactive in seeking out potential linkages before a crisis hits and at every stage of a crisis – even at its height. It means being swift to signal the longer-term interventions that should work alongside, and complement, emergency responses from the outset. It also relates to a deeper understanding of context as a way to join the dots, making it possible to flag up areas where more complementary and longer-term action would be helpful.

The Convening Group discussed how best to signal longer-term food security needs alongside immediate life-saving food assistance. The Group debated if there was some way to “automate” this process, given that even humanitarian practitioners who understand the need for anticipatory action are caught up in a race to save lives. As one participant said: *“they cannot stop to negotiate with the budget holders in their system when their hair is on fire”*.

In theory, elements of an automated process are in place. We have United Nations Country Teams. We have consolidated appeals. We have alliances and roadmaps. And we have firm commitments on the delivery of sustainable food security. All of them aim to coordinate interventions, reduce duplication and streamline funding. Yet we see the same challenges arising, time after time.

At a minimum, the One UN approach needs to be mobilized in full to avoid duplication of effort and play to the strengths of the different UN agencies. This approach, and the cluster approach (a UN coordination mechanism) have been in place for years, but there are questions about whether they are working as well as they should on the ground.

The international community also needs to put its full weight, energy and resources into the alliances that are working on this issue and that are already emphasizing the need for cooperation and a long-term vision. The Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) created in 2016, for example, supports a transformation in the way international and local actors interact, aiming to address food crises in a holistic way.

This network of humanitarian and development actors focuses on tackling the root causes of food crises and promoting sustainable solutions. Its entire vision is based on cooperation and collective action across

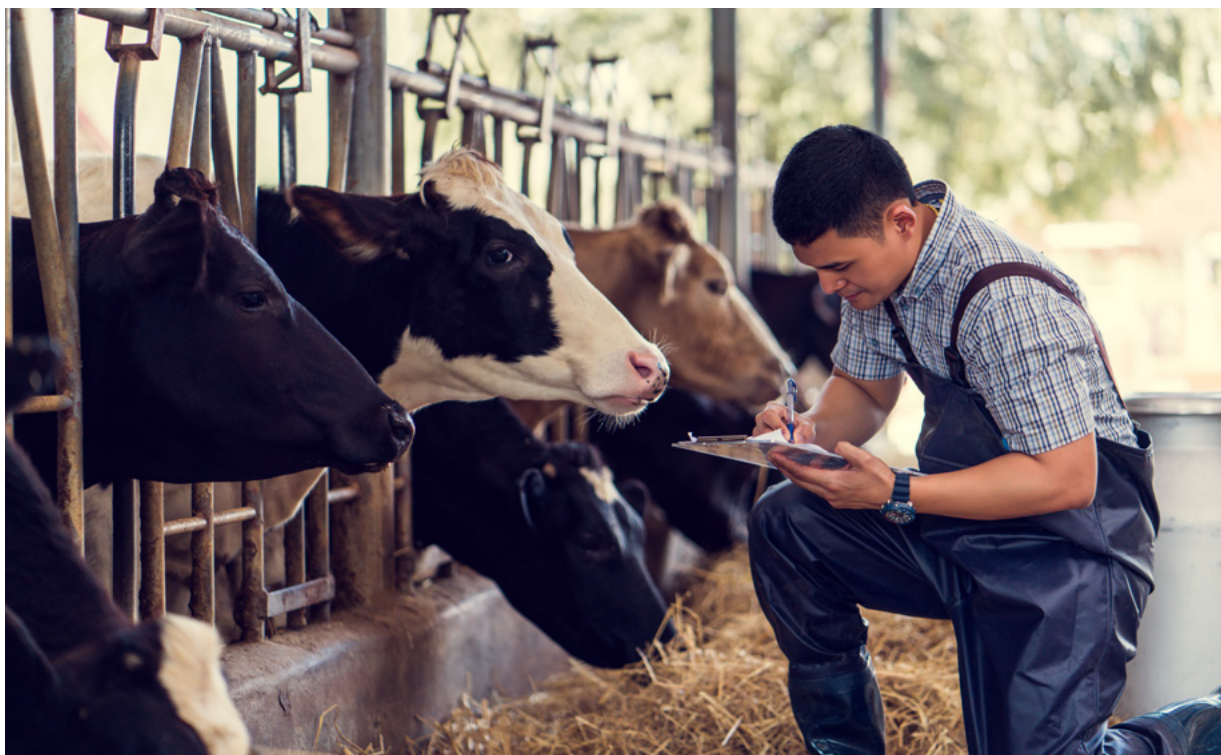


the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, incorporating humanitarian and development actions and linking to other sectors, such as education, health, the environment and peace.¹⁰⁶

In 2022, the German Government and World Bank launched a Global Alliance for Food Security in the G7 group in response to the global food crisis. The Alliance supports the UN Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance and coordinates funding and other support for food security.

The Alliance focuses on the long-term transformation of global agri-food systems to make them more resilient and sustainable. Germany, for example, has allocated €238 million to establish social protection systems, health and education, alongside food security measures. Members include not only the UN Global Crisis Response Group, the World Bank, the G7 countries and the EU Commission, but also like-minded governments, the African Union, WFP, FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The Alliance is also open to the private sector and to civil society organizations.¹⁰⁷

As mentioned in my introduction to this report: We probably have all the commitments, alliances and networks we need, and we know what is required to get the job done. Now we need to join the funding dots to ensure sustainable food security.



HURDLE

A number of mechanisms and processes are in place that should trigger cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation on funding for food security. And yet there are continued reports of 'stand-alone' approaches and siloed thinking.



OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

It may often be a case of fully operationalizing the commitments and ambitions that are already in place, such as greater funding for consolidated appeals, the more effective use of pooled funding and the full implementation of country-level cooperation mechanisms.

Break free from siloed funding streams

“We need to invest in low interest loans to impacted countries, making the political case for increasing the overall envelope of financing. How do we balance the global balance sheet to loan money to countries, rather than asking taxpayers to fund aid from charity? Ownership and accountability change the nature of the conversation.”

— **David McNair**
Convening Group

The international humanitarian system provides a global public service but is financed on a voluntary basis. This means that the way official donor funding is mobilized and allocated is unpredictable, reducing its efficiency and effectiveness.

We are, however, starting to see a shift from siloed, single-issue funding to more comprehensive approaches that span the humanitarian and development spheres. Donors such as Switzerland are integrating their humanitarian and development funding streams, while Sweden is among those donor countries

that are bringing agencies together from across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF) also allow donors to pool their contributions into single, un-earmarked funds to support local humanitarian efforts in a more timely and coordinated way.¹⁰⁸

As well as breaking down the siloes within current funding, it is important to be open to – and to facilitate – other types of finance. While governments will continue to be the primary source of funding for food security for the foreseeable future, their funding could be complemented and even multiplied through, for example, bond or insurance initiatives. In addition to public funding and international development flows (including official development assistance), there is a role for capital markets and the banking system.¹⁰⁹

The Convening Group noted that the multilateral development banks (MDBs) can play a crucial role in breaking down siloed approaches to funding.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example, has created a Resilience and Sustainability Facility, with \$60 billion that can be drawn down by countries to invest in long-term resilience. The Facility aims to help low-income and vulnerable middle-income countries address longer-term challenges in particular, providing policy support and affordably financing.¹¹⁰ The IMF also offers interest-free concessional support through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, which aims to ensure that low-income countries have the stable and sustainable macroeconomic position needed for poverty reduction and growth.¹¹¹



- ¹⁰⁸ www.unocha.org/our-work/humanitarian-financing/country-based-pooled-funds-cbpf.
¹⁰⁹ Joachim von Braun, et al., 2023.
¹¹⁰ www.imf.org/en/Topics/Resilience-and-Sustainability-Trust
¹¹¹ www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/IMF-Support-for-Low-Income-Countries

Joachim von Braun, Chair of the UNFSS Scientific Group and Eugenio Diaz Bonilla, Head, of IFPRI's Latin American and Caribbean Programme, have proposed that a small portion of the special drawing rights created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic could be used to create a trust fund to guarantee "zero hunger" bonds. These perpetual bonds would be issued by the central banks of developing countries that have credible plans to end hunger and could have a vast multiplier effect on public funds for food security. For example, for a trust fund of \$13 billion, the value of guaranteed zero hunger bonds may be at least 10 times that amount, under conservative estimates.¹¹²



The Bridgetown Initiative, meanwhile, aims to mobilize resources from a range of funders to address an unprecedented combination of crises: the cost of living, developing country debt and the climate crisis. The Initiative, launched in 2022, aims to model a new financial system that drives financial resources towards climate action and the SDGs. In a three-step process, the Initiative will provide emergency liquidity, expand multilateral lending to governments by \$1 trillion, and create new multilateral mechanisms to mobilize private sector funding for climate mitigation and reconstruction. This should result in more lending capacity for the MDBs for the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.¹¹³

¹¹² Joachim von Braun and Eugenio Diaz Bonilla, *Letter: Perpetual bonds can help states fight hunger*. Financial Times, 7 June 2021.

¹¹³ Government of Barbados, *The 2022 Bridgetown Initiative*. Bridgetown, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (www.foreign.gov.bb/the-2022-barbados-agenda/).

¹¹⁴ Jessica Alexander, 4 January 2023.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

BOX 8

THE NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY

Linear approaches struggle to address crises and dilemmas that are often evolving, protracted and complex. It is important to be flexible: to be prepared to shift direction as situations change, and to admit that something has not gone as planned. In a 2023 article for *The New Humanitarian*, Jessica Alexander writes that “Humanitarians are finding workarounds to an inflexible funding system, using pooled funds and other emergency stockpiles to power the programmes they need now. Could it be a proof of concept for how the system can be more nimble?”¹¹⁶

“Since we can anticipate the majority of humanitarian risks and funding requirements, why can't we pre-arrange the majority of funding itself? And why can't we pool it so that it can be allocated according to more objective data?”

— **Patrick Saez**
Convening Group

? DILEMMAS

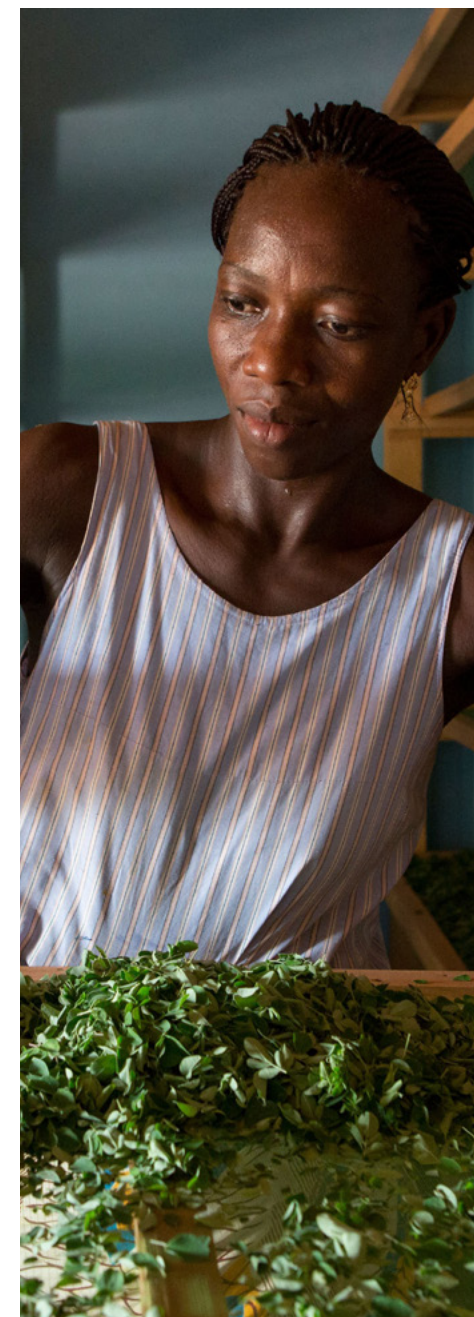
Pooled funds can struggle to attract funding. As of January 2023, pledges to the UN-run Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) amounted to less than the amount raised a year earlier.¹¹⁴ There are also concerns that pooled funds may not represent new money, and that a growing reliance on them reflects attempts to circumvent donor constraints.¹¹⁵ There is a sense that we need to move from grant-making to the use of a wider range of financial tools, with private finance playing a part in new partnerships to leverage investment finance. Food security bonds offer real potential, but have not yet been issued in any country – a greater emphasis on anticipatory funding could accelerate their use. There is also a need to reduce the conditionalities that so often accompany donor funding.

🚧 HURDLE

Siloed funding is closely linked to issues around ownership and accountability, with donors eager to demonstrate the way in which their own funding has been used.

🔄 OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

This means letting go of the reins to enable more comprehensive and holistic approaches that span the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.



Be realistic about donor constraints

“Donors can only do what their systems allow and sometimes their hands are tied. They need to put their rules on the table so we can understand the true conditions of donor funding.”

— **Dan Toole**
Convening Group

The Convening Group was clear on the need to recognize donors’ constraints and competing priorities. The view was that donors should be clear about these constraints, so that humanitarian and development agencies have a realistic understanding of what is currently possible, and what is not.

A 2021 CGD report zoomed in on these constraints, finding that donors lack the common analyses of needs that would enable more coordinated action. They also want to retain control over their priorities, and these are “often linked to other foreign policy priorities (without necessarily being politicized), planned in the short term and usually not transparent until final decisions are made”.¹¹⁷

Parliamentary decisions on budgets can make it difficult to plan and provide funding information in advance to partners, hampering effective system-wide planning. The choice of funding partners is often based more on trust than an objective measurement of impact. The report found no insurmountable legal or institutional obstacles to changing ways of funding or channels. However, “the political will for change is watered down by perceived reputational risks – both within governments and in terms of relationships with partners”.¹¹⁸

Donors were also realistic about their own capacities and competing priorities. While most had adapted some practices to align with their Grand Bargain commitments, they tended to focus on bilateral and multilateral dialogue and consensus on reform, rather than linking their funding decisions to reform objectives.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Rose Worden and Patrick Saez, *How Do Humanitarian Donors Make Decisions and What is the Scope for Change* (Washington DC, Center for Global Development, October 2021), p. 20.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.



HURDLE

Donors may face serious constraints related to their funding, which are often linked to political pressures and foreign policy objectives.



OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

An open and honest conversation about donor constraints can save time and energy, and enable humanitarian agencies to focus their advocacy on the donors that are best-placed to respond. At the same time, humanitarian agencies and others can advocate for an easing of donor constraints.

Shift the incentives

“We need to appeal to enlightened self-interest. Altruism clearly isn’t working. To achieve a food secure world, we must realign policies, systems and investments so everyone acts in their long-term self-interest.”

— Glenn Denning
Convening Group

A key point raised by the Convening Group was the need to create attractive incentives to leverage funding for sustainable food security. These would reinforce the investment case and appeal to donor self-interest by showing what is working – or not – and why. As one participant said: “If we want donors to change, we need to give them a reason to do so.”

One way to achieve this would be to show how food assistance can be provided in a way that is not only more affordable, but also provided in a way that makes the best possible use of resources to build lasting food security.

A 2021 CGD policy brief notes that past reform agendas have “sought to make the humanitarian sector more cohesive and responsive to affected people without altering the fact that the sector’s power structures, bureaucratic incentives, and core business model all tilt toward donors and aid providers rather than aid recipients. The result has been wave after wave of normative commitments and technical guidance, but power, incentives, and resource flows have been left fundamentally unchanged. The aid community must move beyond technical and rhetorical approaches to accountability and begin instead reshaping the power and incentive structures that influence aid decision-making.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Patrick Saez, Jeremy Konyndyk and Rose Worden, Rethinking Humanitarian Reform: What Will it Take to Truly Change the System? (Washington DC, Center for Global Development, 29 September, 2021).



HURDLE

Change is always unlikely without a clear incentive. Donors and humanitarian agencies are accustomed to working in a particular way, and need new incentives if they are to change the way they do things.



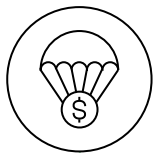
OVERCOMING THE HURDLE

We need to show what works – not only in relation to outcomes for food security, but also in relation to cost-effectiveness.

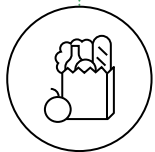
BOX 9

THE ROADMAP FOR GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY – CALL TO ACTION

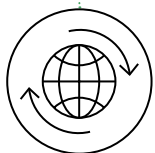
The Roadmap was adopted on 19 May 2022 at the Global Food Security Ministerial Meeting held at the United Nations Headquarters. It calls on United Nations Member States to:



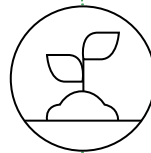
—
Make new and additional financial donations to key humanitarian organizations providing immediate life-saving humanitarian assistance while strengthening their resilience to multiple shocks



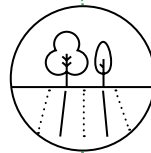
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Provide in-kind donations and associated costs to key humanitarian organizations for transportation and delivery of food commodities, based on assessed needs by the governments of affected countries or humanitarian organizations



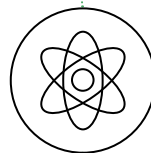
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Keep food and agricultural markets open and avoid unjustified restrictive measures, such as export bans on food or fertilizer, and ensure safe maritime transportation in the Black Sea



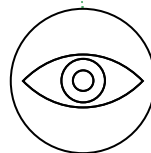
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Temporarily increase fertilizer production to compensate for shortages, support innovations and promote methods to maximize efficiency, invest in diversifying sustainable fertilizer production, and increase the use of residues as fertilizers for longer-term supply chain resilience



—
Increase support for the sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems to make them more resilient and available to smallholder farmers, and strengthen the infrastructure, logistical support and innovation needed to cultivate, store and distribute food



—
Increase investments in research to develop and implement science-based and climate-resilient agricultural innovations that contribute to building sustainable and resilient agricultural sectors and food systems



—
Closely monitor markets affecting food systems, including futures markets, to ensure full transparency, and share data and information on global food market developments.

121 Chair's Statement: Roadmap for Global Food Security, 24 June 2022.

— 06

Conclusions and Recommendations



We need a paradigm shift, not only in our approaches to food insecurity, but also in our mind-sets. We need to maintain what is effective and scale it up, and rid ourselves of the constraints that keep the numbers of people who are food insecure so high. The three Cs of climate, COVID-19 and conflict are forcing new thinking and we should embrace this as an opportunity to shift the needle towards food security for all.

This report has set out many areas for action – a reflection of the scale of the task ahead, with each priority dependent upon the achievement of the others. These areas need to work in combination to generate the comprehensive and holistic approach that is needed. In other words: “all of the above”!

The Convening Group discussed the need to find the food security “North Star”: to determine where we want to go and how we are going to get there. We need agreed outcomes beyond saving lives in the short term and ending hunger in the long term, and a route to get us from the former to the latter.

“What is our North Star?
Do we align on what we think
are the right outcomes to be
heading towards?”

— **Mansoor Ahmad**
Convening Group

In theory, everything we need is already in place. We have the international commitments, including SDG 2. We have mechanisms, from United Nations Country Teams to the Grand Bargain. We have new alliances, particularly the Global Alliance for Food Security, and a new Roadmap for Global Food Security – Call to Action. And we have the promise of innovative new mechanisms at the local scale.

In practice, we need to keep the many promises we have made: to do what we have said (repeatedly) we would do – as flagged up in this report. We have had commitments and mechanisms before, and yet millions of people are still hungry. So our call for action needs to be louder, and rooted in robust evidence of what works. The Convening Group agreed that we must take proven, innovative and impactful approaches – many of them stuck in the pilot phase – to scale.



BOX 10

KEY REFLECTIONS FROM THE CONVENING GROUP

Think “anticipation”

Even at the height of a crisis: always be looking ahead.

- Invest in integrated resilience between crises.
- Invest in social safety nets alongside immediate relief.
- Invest in sustainable and climate-smart agriculture.
- Invest in gender-smart initiatives.
- Invest in smart technology.
- Invest in data.

Think “localization”

with solutions not only reaching, but also emerging from, local communities.

- Think “context”.
- Seek out local leadership, detaching the political from the technical where possible.
- Ensure meaningful inclusion.



Join the funding “dots”

and find linkages from the outset, signalling the longer-term interventions that should work alongside – and complement – emergency responses.

- Break free from siloed funding streams.
- Be realistic about donor constraints.
- Shift the incentives by making the investment case: show what is working – or not – and why.

— 07

Recommendations



RECOMMENDATIONS

— Fund anticipation

The Convening Group discussed the potential for a far greater share of donor funding for anticipation and localization. It may not be realistic to expect a major shift in the near future. However, **I call on humanitarian donors to take the first step by spending 1% of their 2024 budget on anticipatory action, and to increase that by 1% for the next 10 years.** This might make a crucial difference in a few places, making it possible to measure and document the impact of that investment.

— Fund localization

Donors and governments have pledged to support and fund localization, and a number are taking concrete steps to follow through on that pledge. It requires new approaches and internal mechanisms for finance and oversight by donors, but all the evidence tells us that effective localization has tremendous potential for food security.

Some donors are leading the way, and I urge others to follow by **increasing the share of their funding that goes to local actors to 25% of their total expenditure over the next five years.** Further, I would **urge national governments to invest a similar share of their own domestic spending on food security in localized approaches and programs.**

— Crack the siloes and join the dots

From the pursuit of the SDGs – each one of which is dependent upon the achievement of the others – to the pledges to harmonize aid and ensure national ownership and leadership, there is general consensus that we work best when we work together. In practice, however, there is a tendency for stakeholders to retreat into their siloes and pursue their own distinct policy objectives. This has to stop.

One suggestion is to ensure, at a minimum, that **United Nations Country Teams establish and resource humanitarian, development and peace nexus teams.** This needs to happen everywhere. These teams should be tasked to seek out synergies and linkages across the different UN agencies and their implementing partners on the ground, and to signal future needs and trends. They could also prepare joint, cross-agency prevention and risk mitigation needs assessments.

Breaking free of siloed funding is no easy task, given current donor constraints. It is, however, essential. It involves a **re-shaping of humanitarian funding** along a horizontal and demand-driven continuum from anticipation, to mitigation, to response, rather than a top-down approach focused on supply. It also means **removing conditionalities** that may not align with country priorities or development plans.

It means being prepared to be flexible on the basis of changing circumstances and needs. **When the context shifts, funding must shift with it.**



“Before we go tilting at the windmill of reforming the system, we need clear examples where we have had a very significant impact on food insecurity in a country.”



— Peter Mulrean
Convening Group

— Make the investment case

By any realistic measure, our chances of achieving zero hunger by the 2030 deadline for SDG 2 are minimal. But it cannot be beyond us to **achieve zero hunger in a real-time situation of protracted food insecurity** over the next seven years, to show how it can be done. The Convening Group agreed that the time to put workable solutions to the test is now: to make the case by demonstrating success.

One key suggestion was **a concerted campaign – backed by a dedicated team and a toolkit of proven approaches – to implement best practice** on funding in a real-time situation of food insecurity.

Far from letting donors and others off the hook, this would test current measures and tools against new and innovative approaches to generate concrete examples of what works (and what does not). A toolbox could, for example, include a roster of actors (from NGOs, multilateral development banks, foundations, businesses, etc.) who have expertise, regional experience and a track-record of innovation. They could become part of a core group pulling together a strategy for a particular situation.










I recommend the **identification and convening of a core group of committed actors** that would consist of:

- a key donor
- a host government
- United Nations agencies
- a multilateral development bank
- a regional organization
- international and national humanitarian and development organizations
- local leaders
- the business community
- civil society, including the media
- experts on key areas, including sustainable and climate-smart agriculture, gender-smart approaches, technologies and data
- people with lived experience of food insecurity.

Together, this group could **develop a multi-year, innovative strategy to address food insecurity holistically** and tackle all of its drivers, from conflict to poor water management, and from gender norms to inadequate food storage. The aim would be to show what works, and what does not, but also to track progress and demonstrate cost efficiencies, as well as human impact.








It may be that some of these mechanisms, groupings and approaches are in place or underway and simply need a nudge. If so, I hope that this report can be a small part of that nudge, shifting the needle a little closer to sustainable and resilient food security for all.

– THE HURDLES (AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM)

 HURDLE	 HOW IT CAN BE OVERCOME
 <p>There is a continued lack of investment in anticipatory action.</p>	<p>All humanitarian donors should spend at least 1% of their budgets on anticipatory action in 2024 and increase that share by 1% for the next 10 years.</p>
 <p>There is a continued failure to invest adequate resources in resilience building before, during and between crises.</p>	<p>Gather, learn from and build on proven examples of integrated resilience building.</p>
 <p>There is inadequate investment in the social safety nets that can ease the impact of food crises by reducing vulnerability.</p>	<p>Greater investment in shock-responsive social protection, and greater monitoring of the programs that are already underway.</p>
 <p>There is a lack of emphasis on agricultural production that works with and for the smallholder farmers who produce so much of the world's food, on climate-smart approaches, and on the vast amount of food that is lost or wasted.</p>	<p>Food production and agricultural systems need to be overhauled, with support for sustainable and regenerative agricultural production, climate-smart approaches and measures to curb food loss and waste – all informed by local knowledge and experience.</p>
 <p>Women produce and sell much of the world's food, yet continue to be affected disproportionately by food insecurity.</p>	<p>Apply a gender lens to every aspect of food security, recognizing the particular role of women in local, national and global food systems.</p>
 <p>A digital divide means that those in the greatest need of technology are the least likely to have it – a divide reinforced by the continued 'top-down' use of technology to manage programs.</p>	<p>The emphasis should be on the grassroots use of technologies and applications, backed by advanced science. Technology needs to be in the hands of those who can use it to enhance food production and, therefore, their own livelihoods.</p>
 <p>Global food security continues to be hampered by fragmented data that are not comparable and that are sometimes out-of-date.</p>	<p>Agreed definitions and measurements would be helpful, but it is also important to act on statistics as well as gather them. Data are only as good as their use to shape policies, programs and practice.</p>
 <p>Despite the many agreements and pledges made over the years, there is a continued lack of investment in localization. As a result, current investments may fall short of their objectives.</p>	<p>All donors should increase the share of funding that goes to local actors to 25% of their total expenditure over the next five years, with national governments investing a similar share of their own domestic spending on food security in localized approaches and programs.</p>

 **HURDLE**

 **HOW IT CAN BE OVERCOME**

	<p>Without an understanding of the specific context, humanitarian assistance may disrupt systems and services that are functioning on the ground, even at the height of a crisis.</p>	<p>Effective and ongoing mapping of the local context is essential, including a mapping of all systems that are functioning, as well as local leaders and those in need of support.</p>
	<p>Local leadership may be overlooked, even though it may be best-placed to circumvent political constraints and engage local communities.</p>	<p>Greater efforts are needed to identify and engage with local leaders who are trusted by their communities.</p>
	<p>Those most directly affected by food insecurity do not yet enjoy meaningful inclusion when it comes to the decisions made around food assistance and aid.</p>	<p>Inclusion needs to become standard practice at every stage of every food security intervention, from design and implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. To be truly meaningful, inclusion must not only inform, but also shape, policies and programs.</p>
	<p>Mechanisms and processes are in place to trigger cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation on funding for food security – yet there are continued reports of ‘stand-alone’ approaches and siloed thinking.</p>	<p>Fully operationalize the commitments and ambitions that are already in place, such as greater funding for consolidated appeals, the more effective use of pooled funding and the full implementation of country-level cooperation mechanisms.</p>
	<p>Siloed funding is closely linked to issues around ownership and accountability, with donors eager to demonstrate the way in which their own funding has been used.</p>	<p>Donors need to let go of the reins to enable more comprehensive and holistic approaches that span the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.</p>
	<p>Donors may face serious constraints related to their funding, which are often linked to political pressures and foreign policy objectives.</p>	<p>An open and honest conversation about donor constraints can save time and energy, and enable humanitarian agencies to focus their advocacy on the donors that are best-placed to respond. At the same time, humanitarian agencies and others can advocate for an easing of donor constraints.</p>
	<p>Donors and humanitarian agencies need new incentives if they are to change the way they do things.</p>	<p>We need to show what works – not only in relation to outcomes for food security, but also in relation to cost-effectiveness.</p>

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