

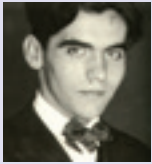
Chapter Ten

The Power of Advocacy



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“The day hunger is eradicated from the earth, there will be the greatest spiritual explosion the world has ever known. Humanity cannot imagine the joy that will burst into the world on the day of that great revolution.” Federico Garcia Lorca, Spanish poet and dramatist (1889–1938)

Key messages

- Advocacy is a key tool in the battle against malnutrition.
- Advocacy requires a solid evidential base in order to succeed.
- The ability to present a case in powerful and simple language is one of the prerequisites for effective advocacy.
- Advocacy is important, but acting on it is even more so.
- There will be a great work of advocacy to be done in the decades to come.

Food and nutrition security have moved to the political center stage over recent years, both at national and international level. This chapter attempts to identify the key political factors, the changing policy landscape and the people which and who have brought this about. The particular focus of the chapter is the role and power of advocacy in changing politics and policy. But while advocacy has played an important role in this change, it is the combination of shifting political priorities in response to changes in the real world; evidence which demonstrates costs and benefits of particular policies; insights into how policy can be more effective; and the influence and use of power by individuals which bring about real change.

I would like to try to identify some of the most significant factors which have led to food and nutrition security becoming a more important political issue in recent years. This is not the definitive story: that would require a longer and more comprehensive narrative. This is my subjective and selective account of some of the main political and policy milestones which have got us to where we are.

The politics

In 2008 food price riots occurred in over thirty countries. This was the flashpoint which led to food security receiving more serious political attention. The last time food security was high on the political agenda was in the early 1970s when a combination of crop failures, low stock levels and the first Middle East oil crisis drove world food prices to unprecedented levels. But between 1974 and 2005, the FAO index of real – inflation adjusted – food prices fell by 75%.

The simple explanation for this steady fall in real food prices was that supply on world markets outpaced demand and prices fell. The increased supply was due to the increased agricultural productivity from the Green Revolution, mainly in Asia, and subsidized production from the developed world which was exported to world markets. One consequence of steadily falling food prices was that many governments began to take food security for granted, investment in agriculture declined and aid programs for agriculture were reduced.

The last two decades of the 20th century saw big changes in the global food economy, as economic growth rates in China and India increased, bringing significant increases in the demand for food and changes in food consumption patterns. At the same time, agricultural productivity slowed, both in developing and developed countries. These trends led to tighter and more volatile food markets during the



A farmer in Kenya
Source: CIAT

first decade of the 21st century, a situation accentuated by severe weather events in some of the main agricultural exporting countries.

World food prices increased dramatically in the 2005–2008 period, starting with a moderate upward trend until early 2007, and then accelerating to a peak in mid-2008. Prices of cereals more than doubled during this time while the price of rice doubled over a four month period in 2008. The price of key inputs, particularly fertilizer, and fuel prices increased fourfold in 2008.

This was the background which required political action and policy change. In April 2008, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, established a High Level Task Force on Global Food Security, led by Dr David Nabarro, to provide leadership and a coherent UN policy response to the food price crisis. The Task Force produced the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), proposing a set of short- and longer-term policy measures needed to respond to the food price crisis. The World Bank, the EU and the 2008 G8 Summit all took action during 2008 through increased investment in agriculture.

In early 2009, the incoming Obama Administration increased the political prioritization for agriculture and food security. It introduced 'Feed the Future', a program aimed at increasing food security in its partner countries, as a priority USAID program. A further important influencer of policy within the Obama Administration was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,

who took a significant interest in early childhood nutrition, particularly in promoting better nutrition for pregnant women and for children up to two years, the so-called crucial 1,000 day 'window of opportunity'.

The G8 Summit meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, in 2009 adopted a major package valued at US\$20 billion aimed at increasing global food security. US government leadership was seen to be important in reaching agreement on this, but there was also strong support from the EU and other G8 members.

While there was subsequent criticism that these G8 commitments made in 2009 were not fully delivered upon, the G8 meeting of 2012 in Camp David, USA, returned to the issue when they committed to a New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, a partnership involving the G8, a number of African governments and the private sector.

In addition, between 2009 and 2012, a number of the main aid donor nations increased their support for food and nutrition security. Within the EU, the more notable examples of this were the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and Ireland. Canada was another important supporter for change. Over this same period, the evolution of the G20 group of nations brought a potentially important new political grouping, with some significant food producing and exporting countries – for example Brazil and South Africa – into the debate on the global food economy.

The changing policy landscape

While the above-mentioned events represent some of the high-level political changes, the policy landscape was also changing in tandem. Indeed some of these policy changes were underway well in advance of the 2008 food price crisis.

The policy changes on which I will focus are the following:

- Significant Policy Change in Africa;
- Changes in Nutrition Policy;

Significant policy change in Africa.

The Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s had rescued Asia from the specter of major food shortages and had, arguably, laid some of the foundations for the region's economic development. However, for a variety of reasons, the Green Revolution had little positive impact in sub-Saharan Africa. For the last three decades of the 20th century, African agriculture experienced low productivity growth, inadequate investment and significant neglect from policy-makers and political leaders.

The political recognition that this situation needed to change came in 2003 when an African Union Summit meeting in Mozambique adopted the Maputo Declaration which committed African governments to spend 10 percent of national budgets on agricultural and rural development. Subsequently African leaders adopted the Comprehensive

African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). The goal of CAADP is to contribute to the elimination of hunger and poverty through agricultural development. The aim is that the investment of 10 percent of national budgets for agriculture, allied to improved coordination of efforts, at the continental, regional and national levels, should lead to an annual growth rate of 6 percent in African agriculture by 2015.

In 2006, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) was formed, aimed at increasing African agricultural productivity and production. AGRA is financed by a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. The Board of AGRA is chaired by Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General.

The Copenhagen Consensus is an international project that seeks to establish priorities for advancing global welfare using methodologies based on the theory of welfare economics. The project considers possible solutions to a wide range of problems, presented by experts in each field. These are evaluated and ranked by a panel of leading economists.

The project has held conferences in 2004, 2008, 2009 and 2012. The 2012 conference ranked bundled micronutrient interventions the highest priority and the 2008 report identified supplementing vitamins for undernourished children as the world's best investment.



Struggling African farmer

Source: Photo taken in 2010 in Kenya by Klaus Kraemer

The Irish Hunger Task Force

The Irish Hunger Task Force was established by the Irish Government to identify how Ireland's foreign policy and aid budget could have the maximum impact on poverty and hunger. The Task Force started its work in September 2007 and produced its final report in September 2008.

The report examined the particular contribution that Ireland can make in tackling the root causes of hunger, especially in Africa. It concluded that hunger could best be tackled by increasing the productivity of (mainly female) smallholder farmers in Africa; implementing programs focused on maternal and infant undernutrition; and ensuring real political commitment, at national and international levels, to give hunger the absolute priority it deserves.

The report recommended that Ireland, through its government and civil society organizations, should seek to provide leadership on hunger and nutrition issues at international level. The impulse was to try to make Ireland to hunger what Norway was to conflict: Norway has a 50-year history of helping other countries to resolve conflicts peacefully. With a deep folk memory of famine on a national scale, Irish people have a powerful motivation to help other countries combat the scourge of malnutrition; they also have credibility in the eyes of others.

The report was launched at the UN in September 2008 by Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Brian Cowan and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. In launching it, Taoiseach Cowan said that 'Ireland's history and experience of famine echoes through the generations and influences our approach in helping those with whom we share our humanity in the fight against poverty and hunger'. The report quoted the words uttered by the UN Secretary-General at the High Level Conference on World Food Security held in Rome on June 3, 2008: 'Nothing is more degrading than hunger, especially when man-made. It breeds anger, social disintegration, ill health and economic decline'.

The role of advocacy

This chapter has provided a limited narrative about the scale and direction of change in thinking on food and nutrition security over the past decade. Major changes in the global food economy have provided the political backdrop to this. In tandem with these changes, there have been significant shifts in policy, based on evidence that undernutrition had large human and economic costs, and that nutrition interventions provided high economic and social returns.



Staple grains on sale in a market place in Bangladesh, 2008
Source: Mike Bloem Photography

Advocacy has been a key tool in bringing about these changes. It is much more than simply articulating a case about a specific topic, although the power of reason, analysis and expression is an essential component of it. Advocacy involves articulating a case with a view to achieving a specific change in a proposed direction. More than this, it requires an understanding of the people and organizations that might be able to effect this change, and a grasp of how to communicate with them and engage them for the desired change. Advocacy is therefore more than

having a message: it is about understanding how to get that message across and, crucially, following through so that a transformation is indeed achieved. This requires time, a commitment to dialog, and identification of the right people to address.

This chapter has identified a number of the key documents which have been effectively used by advocates in helping to achieve change. The World Bank's policy document in 2006 on repositioning nutrition was very significant, particularly for the focus it gave to the critical importance of good

nutrition during pregnancy and the first two years. The Lancet series on nutrition in 2008 gave the world a new way of looking at the subject of dietary intake, particularly among mothers and young children, and a new language in which to discuss it. It also brought home to politicians and policy-makers the scale of the cost of undernutrition and the high economic and social returns of effective nutrition interventions.

The Irish Hunger Task Force report was highly influential for a number of reasons. It was produced at a time, just after the peak of the 2008 food price crisis, when the world was focused on food security. Its recommendations were clear – there should be a greater focus on African smallholder productivity and supporting women farmers: a greater emphasis on nutrition; and that Ireland should play a leadership role in advocacy in the fight against global hunger. The fact that the Irish government accepted that recommendation about its advocacy role was also of considerable importance.

The SUN Movement may indeed be seen as the culmination of many of these separate developments. Although the Movement is not without its critics, it has provided a framework to tackle undernutrition in the countries now committed to it, which involves a range of stakeholders, including governments, donors, civil society and the private sector. In terms of coordination, it has had the benefit of strong leadership from Anthony Lake, the Chair of the Lead Group, and Dr David Nabarro, Coordinator of SUN.

These various developments have also changed the general perception of malnutrition over the past decade. Malnutrition used to be equated in the general imagination with starvation. In fact, starvation only accounts for approximately ten percent of the incidence of malnutrition worldwide. The problem of chronic malnutrition is both bigger and more complicated than many had previously thought – bigger in terms of its scale, and longer-lasting in terms of its impact. The world needs to be aware of this, and advocacy has done much to bring about a change of perception on this score.

It is essential to understand that advocacy, while needing a strong evidence base, requires much more than this to be effective. Messages have to be kept simple, clear and to the point, they have to be repeated and repeated, and the impetus for transformation has to be maintained: policies are not changed overnight. Moreover, even when a policy change has been effected, it will not bear fruit without rigorous monitoring. One has to demonstrate whether a changed policy is having the desired results. If it is, it should





“Civilization as it is known today could not have evolved, nor can it survive, without an adequate food supply.”

– Dr Norman Borlaug

Norman Borlaug

Source: <http://whatsthebigga.blogspot.co.uk/2011/02/greendaddy.html>

be further supported. If it is not, it should be adapted or abandoned. Proof of effectiveness is key.

By 2050, we are told the world’s population should reach 9 billion, placing greater pressures than ever on water, land and energy. The key international institutions dealing with food and nutrition security – the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN World Food Program, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Bank, the Committee for Food Security – have a profound responsibility to work together to bring about positive change. They are already collaborating more closely than they used to, but this collaboration needs to be greatly intensified, not only with each other but also with donor governments, civil society organizations and leading non-governmental organizations such as Concern Worldwide, Helen Keller International, Bread for the World and Save the Children. There will be a great work of advocacy to be done in the decades to come, using a robust evidence base, simple messages and persistent effort to bring about the necessary changes to the way we live, look after the planet, and feed ourselves.

An exemplary advocate: Norman Borlaug

Widely remembered as the pioneer of the “Green Revolution,” Nobel Peace Prize-winning American agricultural scientist Norman Borlaug spent his career seeking ways to improve crop production and fight hunger. The Green Revolution, a series of technological advances that enabled developing nations to improve crop production, often establishing agricultural self-sufficiency, owes much to his revolutionary work.

Of Norwegian descent, Borlaug was born in 1914 on a farm in Iowa, USA. He studied forestry and plant pathology at the University of Minnesota, completing his PhD in plant pathology and genetics there in 1942. After two years as a microbiologist, he signed on to lead the Cooperative Mexican Agricultural Program’s wheat improvement efforts with the support of the Mexican government and the Rockefeller Foundation.

It was during his work in Mexico that Borlaug developed new varieties of wheat with special properties. Resistant to disease and high yielding, these were soon introduced in conjunction with cutting-edge agricultural technology not only to Mexico, but also to Pakistan and India, where demand for wheat was reaching alarming highs. In 1967, India imported 18,000 tonnes of improved Mexican wheat seed, with Pakistan following suit. As a result, between 1965 and 1970, the two countries nearly doubled their wheat production, greatly improving food security. Meanwhile, by 1963, Mexico had become a net exporter of wheat.

These remarkable success stories set off what came to be known as the “Green Revolution” – the adoption of improved crop varieties and the integration of new techniques into previous agricultural practice in the developing world. Borlaug himself went on to help apply these methods of increasing food production to other Asian and African nations. The social and economic benefits of this movement were recognized worldwide when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Borlaug in 1970.

Sources:

International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Mexico
<http://www.cimmyt.org/en/about-us/who-we-are>

Rothamstead Research

<http://www.rothamsted.ac.uk/Content.php?Section=AboutUs&Page=Borlaug>

The Borlaug Institute

<http://borlaug.tamu.edu/about/dr-norman-e-borlaug>

135 **An inspiration to advocacy: The Great Irish Famine of the 19th century**

Ireland's Great Famine, or The Great Hunger, as it is more commonly referred to today, ranks among the worst tragedies in human history. Between 1845 and 1850, approximately 1.5 million Irish citizens died of starvation or malnutrition-related diseases.

The cause of the famine was a deadly new fungus, *Phytophthora infestans* – to which there was then no known antidote – which first attacked and partially destroyed the potato crop in Ireland in late summer 1845. The nation's peasants relied on the potato as their primary food source, and as a result, starved. This blight was to continue over the next several years with the partial failure of the potato crop in 1849, and again in 1850, prolonging the crisis and the suffering into the early 1850s.

By 1855, more than two million people fled Ireland to avoid the fate of those who had died. The population of Ireland, which was close to 8.5 million in 1845, had fallen to 6.6 million by 1851. It would continue to fall – due to relentless emigration – for many decades to come. This decimation of Ireland's population makes Ireland's Great Hunger both the worst chapter in the country's history, and arguably, the single worst catastrophe in 19th century Europe.

Source: <http://www.thegreathunger.org/>



Famine memorial statue in present-day Ireland



A 19th century depiction of the Irish famine

Case study

An integrated approach to combatting malnutrition

The RAIN Project in Mumbwa District, Zambia

In Zambia, 45% of children below five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, or stunting. The Government of Zambia recognizes the importance of prioritizing nutrition, but undernutrition has multi-sectoral causes which traditional impact pathways are often unable to address. The links between nutrition, health, agriculture, food security and livelihoods are well recognized, however, and there is increasing agreement on the importance of multi-sectoral approaches to sustainably address undernutrition.

The RAIN project, based in Zambia's Mumbwa District, Central Province, aims to do just this. By integrating agriculture with nutrition and health interventions at all project levels, it aims to improve nutritional status within the critical 1,000 days from conception until a child reaches its second birthday.

Approximately 3,480 households with pregnant women and/or children below two years of age are eligible. With four intervention wards within Mumbwa District, and two adjacent wards selected as comparison sites, the overall intervention area is randomized into smaller areas that will receive either agriculture and nutrition/health interventions, or agriculture interventions only.

Agricultural activities focus on homestead gardening and small-scale animal husbandry; nutrition and health activities focus on behavior change communication for improved child and maternal nutrition, and linkages to the existing health system.

Concern Worldwide Zambia and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) collaborated to design and implement this project together with key line ministries, and local NGOs. Irish Aid and the Kerry Group are both project funders. Concern leads the overall implementation, while IFPRI leads the learning and evaluation component and technically supports the integration component. With local support ensuring ownership and sustainability, this is an example of a feasible project model that can be scaled-up and replicated in other areas of Zambia or within the region.

Project title

Realigning Agriculture to Improve Nutrition (RAIN)

Project objective

To develop a sustainable model that integrates and realigns agricultural and nutrition/health interventions to effectively prevent child and maternal undernutrition among rural poor communities, which can be replicated and brought to scale.

Specific objectives

- 1) To reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition among young children and improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women in Mumbwa District through targeted interventions during the first 1,000 days.
- 2) To realign and integrate activities and mechanisms within the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, especially at District level, to more effectively and efficiently achieve sustainable nutritional outcomes.
- 3) To use and share evidence generated at the District to influence the local, national and international policy agenda to prevent child stunting.

Target group

Households with children under two years of age, lactating and pregnant women; some activities will include men and the wider community. The RAIN project will ensure the inclusion of extremely poor and vulnerable households.

Number of direct beneficiaries

3,480 households or approximately 20,500 people

Project duration

2011 – 2015

Project area

Nalubanda, Shichanzu, Chona and Milandu Wards in Mumbwa District, Central Province, Zambia

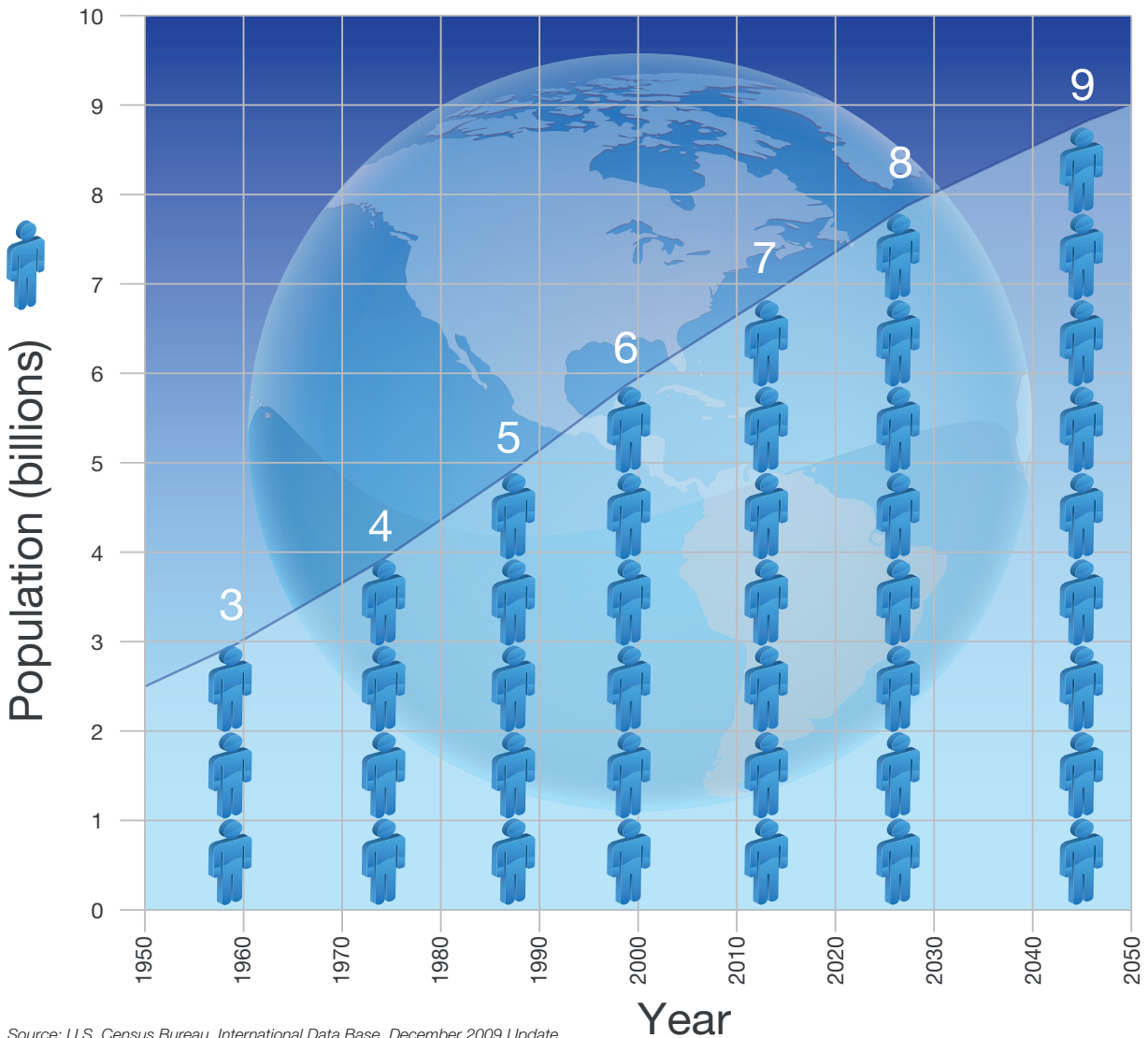
Implementing partners

Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Health, Mumbwa Child Development Agency, Women for Change, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and Concern Worldwide Zambia

Project funding

The overall budget is approximately 3 million euros, which partially is funded by Irish Aid, Kerry Group/Ireland.

Source: RAIN Project Brief no. 1, November 2011

World Population: 1950-2050

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base, December 2009 Update

The growing place of nutrition on the global agenda

1992 – The UN Food and Agricultural Organization's 'World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition'

The World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition arose from the FAO's 1992 International Conference on Nutrition in Rome. Representatives of 159 states declared their determination to eliminate hunger and reduce all forms of malnutrition, stating: "Hunger and malnutrition are unacceptable in a world that has both the knowledge and the resources to end this human catastrophe."

At the conference, delegates came up with a 'Plan of Action for Nutrition' designed to provide guidelines for governments, NGOs, the private sector, local communities and families to help them achieve the outlined objectives. The plan of action contained recommendations on policies, programs and activities resulting from an intensive consultative process.

2000 – The United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations are eight international development goals to be achieved by the target date of 2015, agreed by all 193 United Nations member states, and the world’s leading development institutions.

1. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieving universal primary education
3. Promoting gender equality and empowering women
4. Reducing child mortality rates
5. Improving maternal health
6. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability and
8. Developing a global partnership for development

According to the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), while nutrition is not specifically included within the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, it has a direct impact on at least 7 out of the 8.

2008 – The Copenhagen Consensus

The Copenhagen Consensus is a project that exists to establish priorities for advancing global welfare, applying welfare economics to proposed interventions. It has held regular conferences since 2004.

The 2008 Copenhagen Consensus report identified supplementing vitamins for undernourished children as the world’s best investment.

The 2012 conference ranked bundled micronutrient interventions as the highest priority and committed US\$75 billion over four years to this strategy.

2008 – The Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition

The Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition in 2008 was a wake-up call for the international community. It stated in its Executive Summary:

“Nutrition is a desperately neglected aspect of maternal, newborn, and child health. The reasons for this neglect are understandable but not justifiable.”

The series concluded that a shared approach was needed in order to ensure that nutrition was incorporated into global

health and development agendas. It provided an evidence-based call to action, which showed that the first 1,000 days of a child’s life are a ‘window of opportunity’, where actionable nutritional interventions can make a significant difference. Global advocates were able to cite this important evidence to lobby policy-makers and opinion leaders to prioritize and invest in nutrition – this led to the foundation of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement.

2010 – Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement

The SUN Movement is a response to the evidence-based call to action of the 2008 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition.

In 2010 a diverse coalition including the World Bank, UN agencies and the Centre for Global Development released the ‘Scaling Up Nutrition Framework for Action’, outlining plans to integrate nutrition interventions and policies across sectors. The SUN Movement now includes 40 countries that could in theory reach an estimated 60 million children.

The SUN Movement is a ‘country-led, global effort’, focusing on nutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child’s life. As its 2012-15 Movement Strategy states:

“Good nutrition in the 1,000 days between pregnancy and a child’s second birthday is vital preparation for a healthy adult life with maximum learning and earning potential combined with greatly reduced risk of illnesses like diabetes and heart disease.”



The Scaling Up Nutrition movement brings together governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, business and civil society in a multi-sectoral approach to the problem of malnutrition

The 2012 Copenhagen Consensus

The goal of Copenhagen Consensus 2012 was to set priorities among a series of proposals for confronting ten great global challenges. The ten challenge papers, commissioned from acknowledged authorities in each area of policy, included nearly 40 proposals for the panel's consideration. Based on the costs and benefits of the solutions, the panel ranked the proposals in descending order of desirability.

The Copenhagen Consensus 2012 Expert Panel found that fighting malnourishment should be the top priority for policy-makers and philanthropists. Nobel laureate economist Vernon Smith said: "One of the most compelling investments is to get nutrients to the world's undernourished. The benefits from doing so – in terms of increased health, schooling, and productivity – are tremendous."

New research by John Hoddinott et al. of the International Food Policy Research Institute showed that for just \$100 per child, interventions including micronutrient provision, complementary foods, treatments for worms and diarrheal diseases, and behavior change programs, could reduce chronic undernutrition by 36 percent in developing countries. Research by Peter Orazem of Iowa State University pointed to the educational benefits of this spending, because malnutrition slows learning.

2012 – The UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda

In July 2012, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the 27 members of a High-Level Panel to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015, the target date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Panel was co-chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom. It includes leaders from civil society, private sector and government.

The Panel was part of the Secretary-General's post-2015 initiative mandated by the 2010 MDG Summit. UN Member States had called for open, inclusive consultations involving civil society, the private sector, academia and research institutions from all regions, in addition to the UN system, to advance the development framework beyond 2015. The work of the Panel reflected new development challenges while also drawing on experience gained in implementing the MDGs, both in terms of results achieved and areas for improvement. The Panel's work was closely coordinated with that of the intergovernmental working group tasked to design sustainable development goals, as agreed at the Rio +20 conference.

Illustrative goals and targets post-2015

	1 End Poverty		7 Secure Sustainable Energy
	2 Empower Girls and Women and Achieve Gender Equality		8 Create Jobs, Sustainable Livelihoods and Equitable Growth
	3 Provide Quality Education and Lifelong Learning		9 Manage Natural Resource Assets Sustainably
	4 Ensure Healthy Lives		10 Ensure Good Governance and Effective Institutions
	5 Ensure Food Security and Good Nutrition		11 Ensure Stable and Peaceful Societies
	6 Achieve Universal Access to Water Sanitation		12 Create a Global Enabling Environment & Catalyse Long-Term Finance

The report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent persons on the post-2015 Development agenda. <http://www.post2015hlp.org/>

2013 – The Lancet 2013 Series on Maternal and Child Nutrition

In June 2013, The Lancet published an updated review of the status of maternal and child nutrition worldwide. Five years after the initial series, its authors re-evaluated the problems of maternal and child undernutrition and also examined the growing problems of overweight and obesity for women and children and their consequences in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs). Many of these countries are said to have the double burden of malnutrition— continued stunting of growth and deficiencies of essential nutrients along with the emerging issue of obesity.

The authors also assessed national progress in nutrition programs and international efforts toward previous recommendations. They observed that: “The nutrition landscape has shifted fundamentally since 2008. The 2008 Series showed that the stewardship of the nutrition system was dysfunctional and deeply fragmented in terms of messaging, priorities, and funding. Much progress has been made since then, largely driven by the new evidence introduced in the 2008 Series, which identified the first 1,000 days of life as the window for outcomes, pinpointed a package of highly effective interventions for reduction of undernutrition, and proposed a group of high-burden countries as priorities for increased investment.”

2013 – Global Nutrition for Growth Compact

In June 2013, UK Prime Minister David Cameron, Brazilian Vice President Michel Temer and the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation president Jamie Cooper-Hohn led a high level summit in London of developing and developed nations, businesses, scientific and civil society groups, committing them to supporting a historic reduction in “undernutrition”.

The participants – who signed a Global Nutrition for Growth Compact – committed their countries and organizations by 2020 to:

- improving the nutrition of 500 million pregnant women and young children
- reducing the number of children under five who are stunted by an additional 20 million
- saving the lives of at least 1.7 million children by preventing stunting, increasing breastfeeding and better treatment of severe and acute malnutrition



The 2013 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition builds on the ground-breaking work of the series published five years previously

Source: <http://www.thelancet.com/series/maternal-and-child-nutrition>, June 2013

Donors secured new commitments of up to £2.7 billion (US\$4.15 billion) to tackle undernutrition up to 2020, £1.5 billion (\$2.9 billion) of which is core funding with the remainder secured through matched funding. The UK committed an additional £375 million of core funding and £280 million of matched funding from 2013 to 2020.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-leaders-sign-global-agreement-to-help-beat-hunger-and-malnutrition>

My personal view

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Food and nutrition security has significantly moved up the national and international political agenda in recent years. High food prices in 2007-08 and the political unrest which followed were important factors in this changed prioritization.

But strong evidence that inadequate nutrition, particularly for pregnant women and children up to the age of two years, produces physical and mental stunting of children, with long negative long-term human, economic and social costs, has also been influential in changing policy. Drawing on both the changing geopolitics of food and the powerful evidence, effective advocacy has contributed to political and policy change.

This changed environment provides a major opportunity over the coming 5–10 years to make significant inroads in reducing hunger in the world. The latest figures suggest there are 872 million hungry people and 165 million stunted children. An important political and policy mechanism for achieving progress is the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, which brings together governments, civil society, and the private sector to work in a coordinated way to reduce early childhood undernutrition. As at July 2013, 41 countries have committed to scaling up their nutrition efforts, including developing country plans. These plans should reflect political leadership from a high level, as well as engagement with civil society and business, and they should specify the level of financial and human resources necessary. We need to learn what works best across these 41 countries, and to share that learning. Real progress can be made over the next decade if we deliver on what we know is possible.

Further reading

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