

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: The UK Government's work on achieving SDG2: Zero Hunger, HC 515

Tuesday 10 December 2024

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 10 December 2024.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Sarah Champion (Chair); Laura Kyrke-Smith; Noah Law; Alice Macdonald; Brian Mathew; Gordon McKee; David Mundell; Sam Rushworth; David Taylor.

Questions 114 - 164

Witnesses

I: Massiye Nyang'wa, Smallholder farmer, Malawi; and Violet Natembeya, Smallholder farmer, Kenya.

II: Melina Mtonga, Executive Director, Find Your Feet Malawi; and Dr Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed, Chief Executive, HANDS Foundation.

III: Mr Briec Pont, Special Envoy on Nutrition and Secretary General of the "Nutrition for Growth" Summit, Government of France.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Massiye Nyang'wa and Violet Natembeya.

[This evidence was taken by video conference]

Q114 **Chair:** I would like to start this session on the International Development Committee's inquiry into zero hunger, which is Sustainable Development Goal 2, and one that we are quite a way off meeting and tends not to get that much attention. We are really fortunate that we are joined by two smallholder farmers, one in Kenya and one in Malawi. Violet, could you tell us a little bit about yourself, about how you got into farming and about the situation that you farm in right now, please?

Violet Natembeya: I am Violet Natembeya from western Kenya, from Goma. I am married. I have four children. I stay with three orphans. I have four acres, and in the farm I have so many ideas, for example, bananas, a dairy cow, vegetables, poultry, cassava, potato, maize, avocado, hash, potato and pawpaw.

Q115 **Chair:** Violet, that is a very diverse range of crops. I think when you started you only had maize, and that was not enough to even properly feed your family.

Violet Natembeya: In the beginning I was just struggling to get food for my family, and then I got an NGO, Ripple Effect, from 2017. They trained me and then I implemented it on my farm. I have a vision, a farm plan, a resource map, and my vision is for 2030. My vision was to have a child who has graduated, to have a self-contained house, to have a vehicle, and to have a supermarket.

Q116 **Chair:** Violet, I love a woman with a vision. Do you think that you will make it happen?

Violet Natembeya: From there my life started changing. I got a heifer from Ripple Effect and I have used that dairy cow to get compost. I took that compost and used it for planting maize. That is zero from when I joined Ripple Effect. I was getting seven bags, but right now, as I started using composting, I am getting that and above. I took 12 bags to use to feed my family and the others I sell for school fees.

Chair: That is incredible.

Violet Natembeya: I normally use foods from my land. When I take tea, I take milky tea, and I use yams for my lunch, or I use cassava for my lunch or potato. I cannot afford to shop and buy.

Q117 **Chair:** Violet, the change in the yield that you have, that is just down to compost?



Violet Natembeya: I have compost, so I normally use that compost for planting. If I use the compost I normally have more bags.

Q118 **Chair:** That is amazing. Let me bring Massiye in now. Massiye, could you tell us a little bit about your farm? I know that you started out in healthcare and now you have ended up in poultry. That is an interesting journey. Tell us how that happened.

Massiye Nyang'wa: Yes, it is very interesting. I am just hearing my friend Violet. I think she has diversified a lot. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity. My name is Massiye Nyang'wa. I am 49 years old. I am married. I have three children. I have my own extended family, so I think in total I stay with about 15 people, but that is a story for another day.

My background is I am a registered nurse. I was working as a nurse and I realised that in Malawi we have a lot of malnourished children, not only children, even pregnant mothers. It starts from pregnancy up to childbearing up to the under-5s. So, I said, "What can I do to improve this? What can I do to contribute to improve malnutrition in my society?"

I retired in 2018. I decided to do poultry farming. I started with broiler chickens, those that give us meat, the ones that are short term. By six weeks you are selling them because I was also looking at the profit margin of it. But my main goal is to have laying chickens—the ones that give us eggs, because my slogan is "an egg a day" for a pregnant mum and for an under-5.

I realised that the broiler chicken was selling, of course, but not much because there is a lot of competition in Malawi, until I started doing laying chickens. When they started laying eggs, yes, I started selling my chickens mainly to my community around me. I stay in Lilongwe, in Area 12, which is within the city, but next to me is—

Q119 **Chair:** I think the line has gone down. Violet, could I come back to you? I think your farm was a family farm. Have you found that the weather or climate has changed over your lifetime and has affected your farm?

Violet Natembeya: Yes. In my farm I normally do practices, for example, terracing, mulching, intercropping, crop rotation and agro-forestry. It has helped me so much.

Q120 **Gordon McKee:** Thank you very much for joining us. It is good to see you got back okay, Massiye.

My name is Gordon. I am an MP in Scotland, but obviously part of the UK. Could you tell us a little bit about the challenges that you have as a smallholder farmer in your country? You are obviously in different countries. Violet, if you start first and tell us some of the challenges that you face in Kenya.



Violet Natembeya: The challenge we normally face is marketing. We can plant on our farm but capturing the market or selling, where we sell is a challenge. We have vegetables, bananas, cassava, but the market is a challenge.

Q121 **Gordon McKee:** Massiye, Scotland and Malawi have a long-standing partnership, so I am particularly interested in the challenges that you face as a smallholder farmer.

Violet Natembeya: Another challenge is rain.

Gordon McKee: The rain, yes.

Massiye Nyang'wa: In Malawi, of the challenges that we are facing, of course marketing is the biggest challenge. We have small-scale farmers and large-scale farmers. For the small-scale farmers, once they know that there is a farmer that is doing this business, the large-scale farmers will come and they destroy the market.

I will give you an example. As I said, I started with the broiler chickens. In my area I was selling. The people loved the chickens that are produced locally rather than chickens that are produced on big, big farms. But once they know that this person is selling in this area, they bring in vehicles full of chickens and they sell them at a very low price. We are not able to compete. If you are trying to compete with them, you are just giving your chickens away for free and not making any profit.

Chair: Massiye, I am sorry; we have just got a vote now, so we are going to have to suspend the session. I will leave you with Leo and hopefully we will be back in 10 minutes.

Massiye Nyang'wa: Okay.

Chair: I will let Leo talk to you about what is going to happen now, but let us suspend the session.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Q122 **Chair:** We are about to start the session again, and I am going to ask Gordon to continue with his question.

Gordon McKee: Massiye, just to go back to what you were saying, you were talking specifically about the challenges that you face as a smallholder farmer in Malawi.

Massiye Nyang'wa: For smallholder farmers, what happens is that we buy our stuff from the big farmers, starting from the chicks, the feed, the vaccines and everything. You hope you are going to make a profit out of it, and you make your calculations. At the end of the day you find that the big farmer is also selling the very same products within your area for a cheaper price, which causes a small-scale farmer not to make a profit.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

[Inaudible.] So yes, we are still struggling because of the competition between the small-scale farmers and the big farmers. I find that usually most of these small farmers either stop doing the poultry farming or they close down.

For example, I started with 500 chickens laying eggs. I got up to 4,000 to 5,000 chickens, but the moment the big farmers came into my area with their eggs, it became more difficult for me to sell. I could produce 500 to 600 trays of eggs per day, which I was able to sell before they came into my area. But when they came around here, not easy to sell. So, yes, those are the biggest challenges that the small-scale farmers in Malawi are facing.

Gordon McKee: Thank you very much. I am conscious of time.

Q123 **David Taylor:** I am David Taylor. There are multiple Davids on this panel. I am the MP for Hemel Hempstead and prior to joining as a Member of Parliament, I worked for the Fairtrade Foundation, which works with a lot of smallholder farmers in Africa. You talked about the challenges of getting your produce to market. Do you both sell internationally or is it just within Kenya and Malawi?

Massiye Nyang'wa: It is within. For example, in Malawi, we have had opportunities to sell in Mozambique, a neighbouring country, but it has not been easy because you need to package and transport. On the border there are also some challenges that we face with the exchange rates and the tax, the revenues. We find that most of the Malawians are now saying no, it is not even worth it to sell in Mozambique because actually it is more costly than selling within the country. The very big farmers can afford to sell internationally more than the small-scale farmers. Even if we ganged up together to say, "Okay, let's put our eggs together. Let's produce together," it still did not work.

Q124 **David Taylor:** Violet, you are part of a farmer co-operative, is that right? Could you talk to us about that a bit, and the benefits that being part of a co-operative brings?

Violet Natembeya: We have Kimiti Farmers' Co-operative—

Chair: How does that work and how does that benefit you?

Violet Natembeya: —where we send our milk.

David Taylor: Could you tell us more about the co-operative? Is the co-operative good?

Violet Natembeya: In the co-operative we receive a dairy cow from Ripple. We milk and we sell the milk to the co-operative, so it is good.

Q125 **David Mundell:** Can I just ask you both, perhaps starting with you, Violet, what help or support have you had from outside—from other people or other bodies—that has most helped you?



Violet Natembeya: One support that I have received from people is a dairy cow, which I received from Ripple. It has helped me a lot. Secondly, I have received training. This training has helped me a lot because they helped me to have a farm plan. They have helped me to have resources on my farm. Thirdly, they have helped me to have a vision. Without a vision, you cannot move that far, so they have helped me a lot.

Q126 **David Mundell:** That is good to hear. Massiye, what help and support have you had that has been most beneficial?

Massiye Nyang'wa: We did training on leadership. I am on the board for small-scale farmers. We did the training in leadership. We developed a strategic plan. We also did training on assertiveness, where we connected with the Government. We connected with other players that are looking at farming, to bring the issues on to the table, to discuss our issues as small-scale farmers regarding the challenges that we are facing, especially this challenge I am talking about of big farmers selling everywhere.

Yes, we had that interface. That was the support that we got. We had that interface. We talked about it. We discussed it. We agreed that these things will stop, but we are seeing that they are not stopping. We are also planning—as we already have had the training—to say, “Okay, let’s meet again. Let’s interface with them. Let’s show them what is happening”. Let the Government also know that, even though they have put this in place as the law that they should not be selling like this, it is still happening. Then what will be their plan B? What is next?

That is the greatest support that we have received. If I see that there is a vehicle in my area that is selling, I report it. Even though there is no action taken, I know that I have reported that this is happening within my area, and this is not what we agreed. So, we are putting that on paper to say, “Okay, we reported this. Nothing happened. We reported this. Nothing happened. What next?” That was the greatest support that we received because we are looking at permanent solutions to our problems as small-scale farmers.

Our goal is to see them selling in big shops. They should slaughter their chickens, put them in big shops and sell them there. Here, within our local area, we should also be able to sell. That was the agreement. So, yes, that was the greatest support that we received.

Q127 **David Mundell:** What else do you think would make a difference to you, if there was anything? Is there anything else you think that if that was done it would make a big difference?

Massiye Nyang'wa: Probably the use of media because we have not used a lot of media. We have not had that support. We need at least to advertise, to let people know what is right and what is not right, so that even the community, when they see that things are not happening the way they are supposed to happen, they should also be able to report it. It



HOUSE OF COMMONS

should not only be a few people complaining; it has to be everyone's responsibility if they see big farmers in their area, with their big trucks selling their chickens.

We are saying that even if you bring these chickens, actually they are live chickens and we do not know if they are well immunised or not. We do not know what diseases they are carrying. They may bring diseases from their houses into our area, which is also very bad for all the chickens, not only for my chickens but even for the local chickens. I think what we need now is some space with the communities. We need to use the media if possible, so that people know what the responsibilities are of the big farmers and the small farmers.

Q128 **David Mundell:** Violet, is there anything else that you think could be done to help you that would make a difference to you?

Violet Natembeya: The other thing is that they have helped me or us to have knowledge.

Q129 **Chair:** Thank you both very much. I know how busy farmers always are, and you have taken a lot of time out. I really appreciate it. I have one last question. Massiye, your aim was as a health worker to get pregnant mothers and under-5s an egg, so are you meeting that aim and are you seeing that it does really make a health difference?

Massiye Nyang'wa: It is making a difference. Like I said, since there were no eggs around my area, when I started doing the eggs people realised that there is a market around this place. They also bring their eggs, and they are cheaper. I believe even if they are not buying from me, they are still buying the eggs. They are still eating the eggs. The slogan remains, "An egg a day for a pregnant mum and an egg a day for the under-5s". It is good on one side, but on the other side I am also looking for money, cash. I am doing business. Yes, I believe we have achieved.

Chair: Ladies, I hope business continues to be good for both of you. It is amazing what you are doing for your families and for your community, and I really appreciate you sharing your stories with us. Good luck with your business and meeting your vision and plans. Thank you very much.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Melina Mtonga and Dr Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed.

[This evidence was taken by video conference]

Q130 **Chair:** In our second panel, we are looking at the challenges and



HOUSE OF COMMONS

opportunities of localisation. Localisation is one of those words that we bandy about, but not all of us really know quite what it means. We have two people who, we hope, can explain to us what localisation actually means. We have Dr Tanveer Ahmed. Can you hear us there?

Dr Ahmed: I can hear you. Thank you.

Chair: Perfect. We can hear and see you. We have Mrs Melina Mtonga. Can you hear and see us?

Melina Mtonga: Yes, I am able to hear you very well.

Q131 **Chair:** Lovely. Let's hope it continues like that. We all have different questions for you around the theme of localisation, so we would be really keen to hear your understanding and experiences of that.

Melina—if you do not mind me calling you Melina—may I start with you? Could you briefly tell us about you and your organisation, what it actually does and where you work?

Melina Mtonga: My name is Melina Mtonga. I am the Executive Director for Find Your Feet, and this is a local organisation that is implementing a number of projects in the thematic areas of agriculture and livelihoods. We are into humanitarian, we are into education, we are into advocacy, and we are also into health and nutrition. Find Your Feet was established in 1960, of course in the UK, so this one is Find Your Feet Malawi, and then we have our UK office.

I hold a master's degree in transformative community development, but I am also studying a PhD in transformative community development at Mzuzu University.

Q132 **Chair:** Then you are indeed the right witness for us to talk to, so thank you for sharing your skills and experience. Dr Ahmed, I know you have an awful lot of experience in this field, but could you tell us about the organisation, the HANDS Foundation, that you work with and for?

Dr Ahmed: Yes. My organisation is the HANDS Foundation and it is one of the oldest and largest non-profit organisations in the country. We were established in 1979, and I am one of the founding members. My association with this organisation is about 35 years. We started with a very small room in Karachi, Pakistan, a suburb in Karachi, Pakistan, and now we are across Pakistan. We work through multisectoral interventions, health, education, livelihood, infrastructure, water, sanitation, and when there is a disaster we will respond to disaster.

My background is public health, basically, but I learned NGO management in the last 30 years.

Q133 **David Mundell:** Can I ask you, Dr Tanveer Ahmed, what your understanding of localisation is? It is a phrase that is often used but what is your understanding of it?



Dr Ahmed: Localisation is nowadays an agenda that the international community has initiated, and the international donors and development partners are supposed to work with the local organisations. When I say “local organisation” it means indigenous local organisations of any country. They should have headquarters and a governing board comprised of local people. Many of the organisations have targeted their funding so that 25% of their funding by 2025 or 2030 will go to local partners.

Local partners are very important, and localisation is very important because it will engage the local stakeholders. It is a cost-efficient process for any development project.

Chair: Thank you. Yes, please come in.

Melina Mtonga: I just wanted to say that there is a principle of economic and social localisation to make sure that the locals benefit foremost. When it comes to the Government, it simply means that the Government are supposed to use resources especially on activities that are supposed to be prioritised, very important activities, and in the case of foreign aid or assistance it is just supposed to support that particular Government.

When we are looking at local organisations, what it means is that the organisations are supposed to be transparent and accountable. When it comes to the locals down there, their capacity is supposed to be built to make sure that they make their own decisions. They also use local resources rather than waiting for donor funding. In that way, we will ensure sustainability, even at local levels, so that is my understanding of localisation.

Q134 **Sam Rushworth:** First, to Dr Ahmed, in your experience, what difference does localisation make to the effectiveness of development projects?

Dr Ahmed: It makes a lot of effectiveness. It is going to be very cost-efficient, as we have seen in our case as well, as compared to two other international organisations. When FCDO funded us the same amount of money to three partners, two were international NGOs and we were the local. It was rehabilitation of schools after the flood in 2010. We did rehabilitation with the same quality of rehabilitation to 1,000 schools. The other two partners, one did 350 schools, and the other one did 250 schools for the same amount of money and the same quality consideration. So cost efficiency is first.

Secondly, when you do localisation practices, the local partners, as Melina rightly said, are capacity built. Right now, the international development partner considers that the local organisation cannot manage. For example, they cannot do the grant management of millions of pounds or millions of dollars. Since they will not get it, their capacity is not going to build it.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The capacity, if it is initiated with any partner—like HANDS has developed this capacity because many of the international donors have supported HANDS as far as the grant management and financial funding is concerned, so our capacity is built. Still there is room for improvement, but it all depends on the international partners, whether they support directly or indirectly. Capacity building, both financial and project management, depends on receiving the grants through the international partners.

Thirdly, because the local partners know the best of the community engagement and the local government engagement, in a very short period of time the project management is best because they know the people around them in the community, the needy people, and the community leaders. Because we as a local partner already engaged with them in the previous two to three decades, we know the needs of the people as well. For example, the distribution, whether it is food distribution or tonnage of the food distribution, it is easy for us as a local organisation because community engagement is going on there all the time, but it is difficult for the other international partner. The international partner, as I said, is very expensive in terms of the management.

Q135 **Sam Rushworth:** When it is spent at such a local level then—I appreciate I am asking you for an estimate here—how much is overheads as opposed to funds reaching people on the ground?

Dr Ahmed: Yes, if I talk about our organisation, it is about 15% to 17% of the overhead cost only, because we have only one head office and then the district offices, branches, the city level branches. It is very cost-efficient. We can manage the operation of any project.

Q136 **Sam Rushworth:** I can see Mrs Mtonga there and I will bring you in in a moment.

What has been your experience of accountability from larger NGOs and institutions in terms of reporting? Obviously, that is often quite a cumbersome part of being a small NGO or a grassroots organisation in receipt of aid. What has been your experience?

Dr Ahmed: The international partners usually do not invest in institutionalisation of any local NGO. Usually, they don't. They are targeted towards the target and achievements of the projects. All the funds go to the project implementation. It does not develop usually the implementing partner, the local partner especially. I must say that the international partners should really invest in the institutionalisation of any local organisation so that they can develop their capacity. This will strengthen the local partners' capacity not only in financial management, HR management, but then the logistics management for any project implementation.

Sam Rushworth: Thank you. I can see that Ms Mtonga wants to come in



as well.

Melina Mtonga: I just want to say that localisation is going to empower the Government, the civil society organisations, as well as the local communities to generate their own resources. Currently, Malawi, the Government, civil society organisations and the locals, rely on donor funding. The organisations will assist us to generate our own resources, and then the ones who are going to receive from the international community will just support whatever we are doing.

Q137 **Sam Rushworth:** Could I just quickly ask about grassroots decision making? Obviously, a community is not entirely homogenous. There are still power dynamics at play in a community, so when you are using aid locally what is being done in your experience, for example, to ensure that women and youth are included in decision making about the spend?

Melina Mtonga: At Find Your Feet, at a local level we have a number of structures. We are talking about area development committees, we are talking about village development committees, and we will make sure that in such types of structures women and youth are appointed in local-level decision-making processes. That is one reason.

Another one is the liberating reason. Even in project activities we have certain percentages. For example, we are implementing the World Food Programme, which is a funded project where there is a target of about 70% of women and above actively and meaningfully participating in the project implementation activities on the ground.

Just appointing young women in a decision-making position is not enough. For them to occupy those local-level decision-making processes, we offer some orientation sensitisation. At the same time, we also offer training in leadership. Sometimes we also engage them in exchange visits so that they are able to go to other groups that comprise a ratio of women and youth, to learn from whatever activities they are implementing and how they are implementing the governance issues within their groups.

Q138 **Sam Rushworth:** Do you feel that local needs are always taken into account, or is it sometimes the case that those who are giving the funds from above still have a particular agenda that they expect you to work towards?

Melina Mtonga: Yes. Of course, when it comes to receiving funding from the international community, then in terms of the needs of the communities on the ground, we cannot say it is 100% being taken on board, but to some extent. Just because funding is coming from somewhere else, when it comes to proposal writing, sometimes it is like dictating what is supposed to be in the proposal, what the problems are we are supposed to sort out. It is not necessarily coming from the communities.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Of course, as we are working in the communities, Find Your Feet is able to map the challenges that are faced by the communities. If a donor tells us to write a proposal, we make sure that the challenges that are highlighted by the communities are also taken on board. But sometimes it is just to maybe implement such activities and then we implement those without hearing from the communities themselves.

I believe that localisation will not work and sort out such challenges if they are going to make decisions on their own and they are going to tell us the challenges that we are supposed to sort out as the Government or the civil society organisation.

Q139 **Laura Kyrke-Smith:** Hi, this is Laura, and I will just build on my colleagues' questions. It seems to me that for international donors, partners, to do localisation effectively it does require not just this change in systems and processes, but also in the culture and the mindset of these international organisations. I would be interested to hear your reflections on whether you see the cultures and the mindsets of your donors and partners changing to make localisation work from your perspective. Ms Mtonga, perhaps I can come to you first.

Melina Mtonga: I attended a national meeting on localisation about two weeks ago in Lilongwe where we were discussing the same. It was comprised of civil society organisations, the local organisations as well as international organisations that were present. The international community did mention that some of the things we cannot change because we are looking at the proposal writing guidelines, maybe from USAID, for example, just because that one is violating localisation in Find Your Feet. That is why I have specifically mentioned them.

You discover that the proposal applications are robust. You are supposed to read a lot of resources from the internet, and it takes a lot of time for you to write a good proposal. I think that when it comes to local organisations, that one is problematic. When we were trying to highlight such issues in the workshop, it was mentioned that some of these regulations or policies are international. The challenge is if localisation is going to take place, I think definitely the international community is supposed to maybe waive some of their regulations that are very tough, if the funding can be directly channelled into local organisations. Otherwise, it will be problematic and then, by the end of it, it will be the international community getting funding from the international community and then working with the local NGO.

In terms of the Government, the Government are changing some things. I can give you a very good example. They came up with an NGO Act in 2000 whereby section 31(1)—and it was amended in 2022—is seeking to provide regulations for the operation of international non-governmental organisations in Malawi. I think that one is one of the challenges. That is one of the progresses that has been made so far.



The meeting was organised by NGORA. NGORA was established by Act of Parliament. That is a regulatory body, so it is registering the NGOs, but at the same time it is also regulating. The meeting was organised by CONGOMA, which is the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations, and the NGO Regulatory Authority. You can just imagine how the Government are now serious as far as the localisation agenda is concerned, so they will want to implement it by all means.

Q140 Laura Kyrke-Smith: Dr Ahmed, can I ask you the same question?

Dr Ahmed: Yes. Although it is an excellent agenda to devolve the powers and engage the local civil society organisations and communities and make the project implementation more cost-efficient, the acceptability is very slow. It is a slow trickle down at the local level because, as rightly asked by you, mindsets are not changing that fast. Although many of the international donors and the community have developed the strategic framework, international NGOs are taking partners and unfortunately they are trying to hijack the idea of localisation.

International NGOs have started to localise themselves by making a local chapter. They get themselves registered and then get the funding and take the help of their international branches as well in proposal writing. That way they are trying to defeat the local agenda at the grassroots level. National organisations or the local organisation in the country naturally cannot compete with the capacity that the international organisation has or the lobbying that the international organisation can do. This way they are trying to defeat the very right agenda of localisation. They are opening local chapters and getting themselves ready.

This needs to be addressed. If an international NGO has headquarters outside the country it should not be considered as a local NGO and should not be part of the localisation fund. Similarly, international donors who are in the country should follow very strictly because I can still see international NGOs getting most of the funding. Sometimes in the whole consortium with a membership of four to five organisations, not a single national organisation exists. These are the tangible indicators that show whether localisation is really taking place or not. I feel the process has started but it is very slow.

Q141 Laura Kyrke-Smith: Thank you. That is helpful to understand. Are there examples of particularly good practice that you can point to among international donors and INGOs?

Dr Ahmed: Yes. I cannot think of the name, but one of the development partners, an international donor, has developed a very tangible framework that by 2030 they are going to transfer 25% of their annual funds to the local partners. They have kept the target. It is very important to keep the target and the accountability on the basis of these targets. That is an example of good practice.



Laura Kyrke-Smith: That is good. Yes, Ms Mtonga.

Melina Mtonga: I just want to add that USAID is piloting maybe giving funding to three local organisations. We had to go through the partnership better programme for a period of more than six months in different areas, talk about financial management systems, talk about the governance, business development, monitoring and evaluation, and then we were supposed to respond to the proposal so that we receive funding directly from USAID.

On localisation, I know there was resistance at the meeting that I attended. The Government of Malawi is now very committed to make sure that localisation takes place. Apart from the NGO Act of 2000, which was revised in 2022, they will come up with operational as well as partnership regulations between the international NGOs and local NGOs. I mention it to say that they receive funding—quite a lot; for example, maybe 3 billion Malawian kwacha—but when it comes to that funding now being channelled to local NGOs and then to the community, you discover that you only receive just peanuts down there.

Going to the community is problematic, especially for local NGOs. There is no vehicle and then you struggle when it comes to implementation of activities on the ground, and there is no value for money. The Government are aware of that. That is why they will be coming up with regulations to make sure that the partnership between the international NGOs and the civil society organisations is cordial and going on very well for the benefit of local people on the ground.

Q142 **Laura Kyrke-Smith:** A final question from me. Have you had an application for international funding rejected, and if so, what were the reasons given? Perhaps to you, Mrs Mtonga, first.

Melina Mtonga: Can you please repeat that? I have missed it.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: Have you had any applications for international funding rejected and what reasons were given if so?

Melina Mtonga: Yes, for the USAID after we had gone through the partnership programme, they also trained us and the proposal that we wrote was for cash for work. It was about US\$250,000 for Karonga. They took us through the proposal. We had to read the robust guidelines on the internet. We spent some time and then we submitted that proposal. Just because of the robust applications, we are told that it was of poor quality, so it was not funded. One of the reasons was just because we were using the—they did not see the reports for the assessment for disasters. They did mention the report, because it was asked that we should submit that report as well, so after we had submitted that assessment report, we were told that the report was wanting. It did not contain the required data that they wanted, so we failed on that one. Yet, if you look at Find Your Feet, with a lot of experienced staff on the ground, the system is okay. Financial management, we are okay. If that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

particular NGO is failing, then it is very problematic and I could really say that I think most of the NGOs then cannot make it, honestly speaking.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: Thank you. Dr Ahmed, briefly, you wanted to add to that.

Dr Ahmed: Yes. Very recently we made a consortium of the local partners, local national organisations, for the same bid. The four or five international organisations also developed their own consortium, so it is a national organisation consortium and international organisation consortium, and they were competing with each other. One of the development partners denied bid approval for the national partners, and those examples are there.

Q143 **Sam Rushworth:** This is to Ms Mtonga. What recommendations would you give to the UK Government as they consider how to approach their support of local organisations?

Melina Mtonga: To begin with, I think the first thing before working with the local organisation is to do due diligence for that particular organisation. We are at different levels. Due diligence is supposed to take place and then that particular NGO is supposed to be supported in the dark or grey areas. Then they are supposed to be given funding, but that funding is supposed to vary from one organisation to the other. Others are very small. For example, for an emerging organisation you cannot give more funding. You just give maybe a little. They implement their project up until we assist them in proposal writing, up until they are up to date. That is when the funding can start to increase.

Then also looking at the possibility of training, that is building the capacity of that particular organisation to generate their own resources. Currently, we are not having our own resources, which is also problematic. In future, if an organisation has their own resources they can also develop a project and then implement on the ground.

Secondly, when it comes to their support, you discover that if you are running a project, for example, and then if we are doing a project, then in the project a vehicle is not provided. Then we are saying that the local organisation is supposed to be contributing vehicles. It is supposed to be contributing cash. It should be contributing even in kind. That is what it means. If a project is for five years, for example, it simply means that by the time the project is phasing out, that particular organisation has spiralled downwards. These projects sometimes are not there to promote the local organisation and assist people on the ground; they are there just to make the local organisation spiral downwards.

Secondly, some international organisations are providing management fees to make sure that an organisation has their funding so that they are able maybe to construct an office or use that particular money for setting up a business or for sustainability. So that one is also required in the first place, why you give that particular organisation maybe a specified period



HOUSE OF COMMONS

of time—for example, five to seven years—to say that after providing this you are supposed to stand on your feet and then you move forward.

Another thing that I have mentioned is that, yes, the international global policies are the ones that we are all using, but they are not a one-size-fits-all. For example, Malawi as a country will experience disasters. There is no need to follow the restricted or maybe complicated regulations and guidelines as far as proposal writing is concerned. That one is supposed to be waived if that is the case at international and lobbying, just to make sure that some of the conditions may be depending on the countries. Those countries that are developed, I think their regulations can remain, but for the developing countries I think that one is just cumbersome and undoable.

Q144 Sam Rushworth: Do you feel we are getting the balance right, though? There is a tension, I think. You are absolutely right: there needs to be due diligence. There needs to be accountability. There needs to be some assurance that whatever is being spent is sustainable. Equally, the due diligence is time-consuming and costly. Do you feel that the balance is right in terms of money that gets lost through quite lengthy bureaucratic processes that are necessary, versus examples maybe of where aid projects have failed because there have been inadequate safeguards?

Melina Mtonga: At Find Your Feet we are okay. We have all the projects. My country programme comprises about four projects and we do not have many problems, just because our systems are built. We are very transparent to our development partners where we are getting resources from, but at the same time we are also very accountable to the people that we serve on the ground.

We have financial management systems and in the case of due diligence, it does not require maybe an international community going there and doing the due diligence. What can happen is that, for example, you can use Find Your Feet to do due diligence on other organisations free of charge. Find Your Feet is currently chair for CONGOMA (*Inaudible*) and we are organising some of the capacity-building initiative without spending. I am building the capacity of my fellow NGOs here in the northern region without spending, so it is just a matter of identifying the NGOs that are doing very well on the ground and then using them to do the due diligence. They produce a report, and they assist fellow organisations to sort out the challenges that are being faced.

Sam Rushworth: I think Dr Ahmed was just trying to come in as well.

Chair: Dr Ahmed, did you want to come in on that point?

Dr Ahmed: Yes. It is similar to this and the output of what the question was. I would say the international donor community should not make local NGOs contractors. There are two or three agreements when they do. One is the grant agreement, which is the most convenient for the non-profit organisation. But when you make a contract agreement, most



HOUSE OF COMMONS

of the time—many times—they are deposit-guaranteed with the amount of the money for the guaranteed deposit, so the non-profits usually do not have one.

When you do the contract signing other taxes are applied—GST gets applied, income tax is applied, so the money that is supposed to go to the poorest goes into the kitty of the country. That facilitation we are expecting for national organisations. Non-profit organisations should be considered as non-profit. They are not business organisations. The context makes it, whether it is a grant for a non-profit or it is a reimbursement-based agreement, which is mostly very expensive and most of the money does not go to the end user, the beneficiary.

Q145 Alice Macdonald: I should probably declare that I used to work for a hunger campaign, Alliance Against Hunger, just for the record.

Ms Mtonga, when a disaster strikes—for example, El Niño and the effect that had in Malawi for droughts—do you see in more of a humanitarian setting that the localisation principles still apply? If a lot of money is coming in, can you scale up quickly for that money to come to you? Just the contrast between development, longer-term funding and then when there is an acute need—do you see localisation working in that context, too?

Melina Mtonga: Yes. Localisation can also work. As I have already said, if the Government and the local NGOs are making their own moneys, definitely they can use such moneys because when disaster strikes, especially in the southern region, we cannot run away from that. We do assist but at the same time we also build their resilience. It is two, you distribute the cash or maybe, like this time around with the World Food Programme, we are responding to 52,804 households that were affected by El Niño in the Baraka district. So with your own, using local resources, generated resources, we can respond while we are building resilience for the communities. Otherwise, we cannot run away from humanitarian assistance. We are experiencing climate change-related disasters still happening and they are there to stay, especially in the southern region.

Chair: Dr Ahmed, did you want to add anything?

Dr Ahmed: Local NGOs have the capacity. A case study in point is a project of housing construction for the rehabilitation phase of the flood of 2022 in Sindh. It is one of the largest projects of housing for the flood-affected population, using Government and World Bank funding to make 2.1 million houses. Five NGOs were selected because they had established credibility and one of them is HANDS. Just one organisation is building 370,000 houses in seven districts of the Sindh province. That is the capacity that we have. This project was handled very transparently and very effectively by the Government. The achievement of the project is amazing and that is the capacity we have.



However, in cases of disaster, the UN agency never considers whether they are international or local. They took most of the funding because the international community feels it is more convenient to go through the UN agencies in response to disasters. So that is one important question—whether UN agencies should be considered as national or local organisations because they are in competition with local organisations.

Alice Macdonald: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you both very much for making the time to be with us. You have both put forward very persuasive arguments on localisation and we hope to reflect that in our forthcoming publication. We do appreciate the experience that you brought to this debate. Thank you very much for your time and I hope that we can keep in touch with you.

Examination of witness

Witness: Mr Briec Pont.

Q146 **Chair:** Could I please ask Monsieur Briec Pont to come forward and take a seat now? Thank you ever so much for coming today. May I start by asking you to introduce yourself and the role that you are here to represent? Could I also ask you the big question: what have been or are the biggest challenges in achieving the goal of net zero hunger? A nice easy question to start.

Briec Pont: Thank you very much. My name is Briec Pont. I am a French Special Envoy on Nutrition and Secretary General of the next Nutrition for Growth Summit, which is to be held in Paris next March—more precisely, 27 and 28 March 2025. First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity of bringing evidence to your Committee. It is a true honour to be here with you today.

Regarding SDG2, to be completely honest, it is very unlikely that we will achieve the goal that has been set in the fight against hunger. However, does that mean we have to stop trying? We do not believe so.

There are, in fact, lots of arguments that would encourage us to continue our efforts. One of them is the initiative that Britain has taken, launching the N4G initiative 12 years ago now, which allows, I believe, the international nutrition community or development community to understand more about the efficiency of development and to develop precisely cost-effective, impactful policy, which is in fact equal to none. According to the World Bank, the return on investment of development through nutrition is a factor of 23, meaning that if you invest £100 million in development in a given country, you will get an average of £2.3 billion in return as wealth or GDP, which makes this an unprecedented policy in terms of efficiency. According to economists, that factor can get to 53 in



HOUSE OF COMMONS

given countries—in Indonesia, for instance, or 35 in South Africa—if the policy is carefully crafted for a country which is indeed in need.

The challenges are many. We are also working in a context of lack of financial resources, which is our main concern. The lack of financial resources is due to many reasons: the food crisis that was unleashed by the invasion by Russia of Ukraine, which induced inflation and hence financial crisis; the need to pay back the debts from covid; and many other reasons are bringing countries to cutting budgets for development, which we regret. As a matter of fact, however, I would argue that if there is one policy that should not be dropped, it is indeed nutrition, which appears to be a magic wand in our hands, or perhaps some nitro-glycerine in the engine to get closer to the 2030 SDG. There is reason to be in despair, but there is also reason to hope.

Q147 Chair: I would put it to you that it is not so much that the money is not there; it is that the political will does not seem to be there, and political choices have been made to invest in other things rather than nutrition. It is such a good multiplier; 23 times is a pretty good return on your investment. Thinking about the fundamental truth that if you are starving you are not productive, you are not learning in school, you are not even getting to school, why do you think that political will has dropped away? Do you see that international interest has dropped away over the last 12 years or has it never been there?

Brieuc Pont: I agree; I certainly agree with the fact. It is quite amazing that the most efficient, cost-effective policy we know for development gets only 1% of the official development assistance, which is hard to understand, and therefore we certainly need to increase our efforts in that regard.

Q148 Chair: What percentage would you like it to be at?

Brieuc Pont: As much as possible.

Chair: Yes, but realistically what do you think it needs to be at if we are to achieve the objective? What should the aim be at any rate?

Brieuc Pont: I could not tell you what level of investment we would need, but given the importance of this policy and its efficiency, and given the fact that it has different impacts on different nations, different Governments, we would certainly need to bring it to at least 10% of the ODA.

Now, in fact, I often say this summit, N4G, is not about nutrition. It goes beyond that. It is wider than that. Nutrition is just an example of what is behind the rationale of N4G. N4G is about how we craft development policy in the post-2030 agenda and how we bring together areas of expertise, and that is the very core philosophy of N4G, crafting policy with different areas of expertise, breaking the silos and designing tailor-made solutions for different countries. That is why it works. This is my personal observation. I am not a nutritionist; I am a diplomat. My job is



to transform technicalities into a political process and take it to the decision-making level. However, we have observed that when we associate the expertise of different development policies, we can make a difference on the climate-nutrition nexus, on the gender-climate-nutrition nexus, and that is where it makes a difference.

Q149 Noah Law: You have talked a lot about effectiveness already, which is helpful, but do you want to reflect on any of the successes of previous N4Gs, whether financial at the high level or more on the ground?

Brieuc Pont: N4G is a highly vulnerable process. It can fall victim to its own success. I was told that N4G was a tradition because Olympic hosts have to organise it. This has only happened since 2012, and France is the fourth to organise it. When you raise US\$42.6 billion in commitments in Tokyo, you run the risk of what we call pledge-flation—a beauty contest, if you like—every four years, and then donor fatigue, and then the very end of the process. Since we are in a context of a lack of financial resource capacity, our advice is to take stock of what was achieved in Tokyo, reflect on policy and reflect also on continuity. To ensure continuity and tie in the N4G initiative as firmly as possible, which is a brilliant idea, we have created a troika with the Japanese and the United States Governments. The Japanese hosted the Olympics, we hosted this summer, and the United States will host in 2028. We will keep this troika rolling—and we know that Australia will host the Olympics in 2032—so that the international development community has Governments to talk to on this matter so that not only continuity but also coherence on policy is established and ensured. This would be our first success.

The success of nutrition, however, has been plateauing since the covid pandemic. Some progress against stunting and wasting has been registered but I am afraid in the other areas the programme did not deliver as expected. So for that to work—because we know it works, we know it is efficient—we would need Governments to take more commitments and involve themselves more and, as you said, with more political will.

Q150 Noah Law: I will dig into that a bit more. You talked about the fatigue that has arisen and the inconsistent effectiveness, which is perhaps leading to the fatigue. Is that the main thing? How would you characterise it? Why is that fatigue coming about?

Brieuc Pont: Fatigue is certainly coming about. We know there is a general lack of financial resources and that therefore Governments want to make choices about which policies they want to prioritise. A number of our funds there need replenishment and a financial effort is requested from Governments, in particular from donor countries. However, if the philosophy of a given development policy is not well identified, that might induce donor fatigue, and for that we need accountability, which is at the core of the N4G process. Accountability does not mean a posteriori a blame game on who has spent and what they had promised. It is also about helping Governments to craft realistic commitments and effective



HOUSE OF COMMONS

policies. This is also part of the accountability process, and we have teamed up with the World Bank, for instance, and IFAD to help them. Expertise is key in this matter.

Q151 **Noah Law:** And measurability on the ground?

Brieuc Pont: Measurability and the OECD methodology is very interesting. We need agreement between nations on how we target things. Development policies that involve nutrition, in particular nutrition-sensitive policies, are sometimes very difficult. It is very difficult to evaluate the part that is nutrition. A number of experts, in particular here in the United Kingdom, are working on this.

Q152 **Noah Law:** Where do you see the opportunities in the future for N4G?

Brieuc Pont: Clearly, in continuity, if we can manage to secure a continuity between organisers, and if we make sure, as Britain did in 2012 and as we are doing now, the organiser teams up with a country that represents the low and middle-income countries group, then I think we can have high expectations for the follow-up.

Working with groups, with platforms such as the Global Nutrition Report, which is widely acknowledged in the nutrition community as the expert on accountability tracking, we know they have a very interesting tool, the NAF tracker, the Nutrition Accountability Framework tracker, which is very useful for those who follow this business. It allows us to see how well the decisions are implemented.

Chair: Monsieur Pont, we are very lucky that we have an expert on our panel today. I am handing over now to Alice Macdonald.

Alice Macdonald: I do not know if I am quite an expert.

Chair: You are very experienced.

Q153 **Alice Macdonald:** It is nice to see you again. Segueing from what Noah Law was saying, you said that there is lots of continuity, which can be a good thing, but unless it delivers actual outcomes, perhaps it does not make much difference if we are not seeing the actual impact on the ground.

Think about waking up on 30 March 2025, after the Nutrition for Growth Summit has concluded. Tell us what good would look like for you, from the perspective of the French Government. What are you hoping to achieve? What would be the headlines the next day, after the summit is over?

Brieuc Pont: Of course, there is a financial target. I like to quote my friend Meera Shekar from the World Bank who said that we do not need more money for nutrition; we need more nutrition for the money. That brings in the accountability point.



I would not argue that we need to beat the figure that Tokyo managed to achieve. This is not our concern. If we are thinking of continuity, we can take stock of what has been achieved in Tokyo and use that to gain impetus. We think we need political progress and that means not an institutionalisation of N4G because we have lots of international organisations already—I think there are 17 UN agencies dealing with nutrition.

Alice Macdonald: Seventeen?

Brieuc Pont: Yes, 17, including a platform that gathers five of them. What we need is for N4G to keep momentum for nutrition, mobilising the international community countries. My parameters, my criteria for success, would be that we manage to establish consensus in the international community on the need for nutrition to be adopted as a universal cause. This is something that affects not only low and middle-income countries; it also affects us. You know that malnutrition has very different forms, from undernutrition to overweight and obesity.

I would like to add this. We often talk of the burden of the three forms of malnutrition. I think there is a fourth burden, which is the fact that some nations are growing very old. Take France, for instance. In France it is said that 75% of those who decide or who need to join homes for the elderly do so because of malnutrition. Beside the fact that that is extremely sad from a human point of view, it is also extremely costly for our finances. I am sure that we do have care policies but I am not sure we are seeing this as a problem of malnutrition. If we did, this could have a lot of benefits for public finances, besides, of course, the main concern, which is the wellbeing of our elders. This is not just about France. I believe that France and the United Kingdom have more or less the same demography and the same concerns are present in other nations, too.

Another key for success is that nutrition becomes popular, that we understand that it goes much beyond food labelling and the cool apps that our kids enjoy playing with on their cellphones when they scan barcodes at the supermarket to see how good or how bad the food we are buying is. It is also about developing policies that address the situation of societies everywhere.

Q154 **Alice Macdonald:** You mentioned the 17 organisations and there are lots of different initiatives. You mentioned the World Bank and the IDA replenishment, and the UK has made some announcements around that. Do you think there is a need to join all these things up? The SDG is a target and a road map, but it does not feel to me that there is a global plan for how all these things come together. Do you think that is something that is lacking?

Brieuc Pont: That should be addressed at the United Nations General Assembly. We know that nutrition has an impact, not just a direct impact on SDGs 2 and 3, but also an indirect impact on 11 out of 17 SDGs, which again makes it a magic wand, very cross-cutting, very transversal.



Another challenge for Governments is to have an integrated business unit, if you like, dedicated to nutrition, which is overarching and has the capacity to give orientation, to be a compass for the interagency process, up front. That needs to be the highest level. We see Governments that are successful in dealing with nutrition—Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador—because they have brought it to a high level.

Q155 Alice Macdonald: Turning to the UK's role, how can the UK Government support the French leadership at this summit? What are you hoping for from the UK Government?

Brieuc Pont: Remaining a leader. We are very grateful to the UK for this great idea, and therefore we have invited the United Kingdom to be part of a group of like-minded Governments that are part of the governance of Nutrition for Growth 2025. We have designed this group as a bee swarm, if you like, that can communicate and engage with other Governments and with financial institutions.

What we need from our friends in that group, including the United Kingdom, is for them to act in co-ordination with us, with the troika, to bring initiatives, to make that collective push towards success, for instance at the World Bank and regional development banks, where the United Kingdom might have board members, or making démarches with other countries, teaming up. That is what we are doing with our colleagues at the FCDO Nutrition Office, working hand in hand and organising joint side events in Rome or elsewhere. Starting in January, I think we will need to press even more and try to achieve success.

Q156 Alice Macdonald: You would like them to turn up with a monetary contribution, too?

Brieuc Pont: We expect every Government to turn up with a monetary contribution. That does not necessarily need to be in a fund, it can be a financial commitment. Certainly, however, we would encourage Parliaments to support the Government's effort in favour of nutrition. We are going to do our homework. It is up to my authorities to announce the level of commitment that France wants to bring in this edition but clearly, as the host nation, we will take our responsibilities. We expect everybody to join this effort. There has been a recent announcement from the Asian Development Bank that it will bring \$3 billion for the 2025 to 2030 period. I think there was nil in 2021 from the Asian Development Bank. We hope that everybody is going to scale up the effort.

Q157 Alice Macdonald: ODA is an important source of funding, but are you hoping to discuss other forms of funding? You touched on the development banks. France had the big finance summit last year, hosted by President Macron, looking at the financial institutions as a whole. Do you see this linking into that in any way in terms of where the money will come from—debt relief and so on?

Brieuc Pont: Absolutely. There will be a number of side events, and one of them will bring together the multilateral and national development



banks. We happen to host a platform called FiC, Finance in Common, which is hosted by the French Development Agency, and that has 330 development banks. We met in Washington in October. We will meet again in Cape Town in late February for the World Summit there. The idea is to have them include nutrition in their portfolio because the bottom line, when we speak of development banks, is that we are speaking of banks and they want a good return on investment and, if possible, on an effective policy and efficient decisions. I think these stones were left unturned in Tokyo and there is, perhaps, I hope, a way forward with them.

Q158 David Mundell: We touched on this in previous questions. You mentioned the 17 UN organisations. We just recently had the announcement of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty by President Lula at the G20. While in principle these initiatives seem worthy of support, are they complementary to what you are doing, or are they competing with what you are doing? Is there a way to co-ordinate effort and good will to have a more productive outcome?

Brieuc Pont: Thank you for this question, which is indeed key. The fact that we are seeing a number of initiatives on the fight against hunger flourishing everywhere indicates that there is concern in the international community, but also consensus that this matter is a real problem. President Macron and President Lula, during President Macron's state visit to Brazil, agreed on the fact that France and Brazil would work together hand in hand in support of N4G and in support of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, which we obviously joined, and Brazil is part of the N4G governance. So, yes, there is coordination, and the last thing we would want is competition because that would mean dispersing the resources that we are struggling for. There is co-ordination, and our understanding is that commitments taken in the framework of the Global Alliance can be also registered as N4G commitments—an airline code share, if you like. We have an agreement with Brazil and it is very encouraging.

We certainly need to have co-ordination, better co-ordination and to avoid competition. Perhaps the G20 is an excellent forum to co-ordinate that, to organise that.

Q159 David Mundell: What do you think would or could or should be the structure of a road map to SDG2? The existing structures are not delivering it. Is there a structure or does it just come back down to political will or resources? Is there no silver bullet out there?

Brieuc Pont: This is something that is being reflected upon by the working groups of N4G. We can very often see the summits, but we don't see the mountain below. Right now we are climbing up the mountain with all the participants in the N4G governance, who are not only brainstorming what should be done but also engaging with potential donors and pledgers. We have partnered with the UN agencies so that they work together and I believe that is quite an achievement. Now they



are working together, co-ordinating this working group. The idea is that they will have co-ordinated policies that will become the road maps towards 2030.

If we want something more precise, I think that would go against the spirit of development for nutrition because the idea is to be innovative and to allow thinking out of the box, breaking silos. I would recommend to let it proceed as it is, without creating yet another body, a controlling body inside the United Nations. That would be certainly counterproductive at this stage, I believe. We can perhaps think one day of a reorganisation, a rationalisation of the United Nations nutrition mechanisms. That could be for the next stage, after 2030.

Q160 Chair: Could I push you a little bit on that because David's question is what is also bothering me? You started by saying that you are not a nutritionist, that you are a diplomat. It seems that underlying the political malaise and therefore lack of funds going to this very critical issue, and which I would argue underpin almost everything we are trying to achieve to alleviate poverty, the systems that we have are very heavy, cumbersome and expensive and do not appear to be working. Well, they are not working. I hear what you are saying about waiting until 2030 when the SDGs come to an end. However, if you were tasked now with coming up with a solution, what would it look like? It seems that our diplomats are very happy to fly around the world and talk about pledges, make pledges, but then do not deliver on them in how much actually gets to the ground. It is not working, is it? If I gave you a blank piece of paper now, how would you as a diplomat—because we know what the problem is—create something that was not so cumbersome and actually made a difference? Or is that just impossible?

Brieuc Pont: It is not impossible and I think we are making good progress on accountability. According to the Global Nutrition Report, my understanding is that out of \$42.6 billion that was pledged in Tokyo, about \$39 billion has been effectively engaged or will be, but there is little doubt that it will be.

I think we have to take enormous care about accountability, which is why we have the smart pledging, the fact that the pledges need to comply with a certain number—I think five—of principles, and there needs to be a follow-up mechanism. We are working with the Global Nutrition Report on that, and I think they are quite effective. It is important that pledges are made responsibly.

Q161 Chair: With respect, however, you said that just 1% of the ODA spend is going on nutrition, and when I asked you how much was needed, I think you gave an estimated guess rather than knowing, which puts you in a very weak negotiating position. This is not about you personally. I am incredibly grateful for what you are doing, so please do not take it that way. However, despite the pledges that we are getting in, we are seeing more and more people facing hunger, starvation and even famine. While the current model and pledges and the percentages might have been



HOUSE OF COMMONS

working 10 years ago, have the current challenges become so much more acute that the model that we are working with is no longer fit for purpose?

Brieuc Pont: Absolutely. I think we totally agree on the fact that we need tailor-made policies that are crafted for each country, each problem, and in that context it is extremely complex to define financial goals. That is why I am lukewarm about defining a certain amount or percentage or volume of assistance. When you have an average return on investment of 23, but we know we can get to 53, the range is so wide that I do not think it would mean much to define precise targets. When I say 10% it is because I believe that it should be tenfold.

Chair: Yes, of course.

Brieuc Pont: Yes, indeed, it is a wild guess. The idea is that we need to have a serious, important race in the funding of development policy. Again, this is very wide. It touches upon gender, education, healthcare, and climate change.

Q162 **Chair:** Yes. Is that part of the problem, that we see it as a silo?

Brieuc Pont: Yes, it is part of the problem, which is why N4G will try to unlock and break the silos and will hold policy discussions on the nexus of climate, gender and nutrition, for instance.

Q163 **Alice Macdonald:** We could talk about it for a long time. When we had the food crisis in 2009, the UN came in and set up the high-level group on tackling food crises with David Nabarro, and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme came out of that. Do you think the UN could be playing more of a role?

I also wanted to pick up on business, which we have not spoken about. Obviously, there are big companies making massive profits out of grain, for example. There have been proposals for a windfall tax. I am wondering whether, as part of the summit, you are looking at some big ideas about the role of the private sector. So, two questions: does it take a crisis to provoke change in international systems and where do you see the private sector fitting in with Nutrition for Growth?

Brieuc Pont: I would say that it is rather unfortunate, but indeed the international system tends to change when a crisis appears.

Alice Macdonald: You could argue that we have had that with Ukraine and what happened to food prices.

Brieuc Pont: Indeed, and we are working hard for consensus on the conclusions we must draw from that aggression against Ukraine. However, I am not sure that there is total consensus in the international community on that matter, which we can only regret.

Participation of the private sector is key. This is a sector that creates wealth, which is innovative but it is also part of the problem. I would



HOUSE OF COMMONS

argue that if it is part of the problem, it needs to be part of the solution as well.

On the sidelines of the summit, a forum will be hosted in Paris with companies, regardless of their compliance with N4G principles, which are very strict, because we need to hear from them, but they also need to hear from us. The forum will be called Nutrition is Everyone's Business, and will bring in Governments, civil society organisations and companies. Those who deserve to be applauded because they are examples for everyone will be applauded. Those who deserve credit for trying and making efforts but insufficiently, they too will receive credits and will be encouraged to run the extra kilometre. Those who have not done enough will be told that it pays off to be on the good side of history.

If we don't engage with companies, they will think that the Wild West is there and they can do whatever they want to make profits, and this is exactly what we don't want to happen.

Q164 **Chair:** The bell we can hear is for votes, so some members will need to leave, I am afraid.

One final question from me: do such things as desertification come into your summit, or should they come into your summit?

Brieuc Pont: Yes. I was at the COP16 in Riyadh last week. We had in mind the many conflicts that are becoming an extraordinary, unprecedented problem. The brutalisation of international relations was there, and crisis resilience for us, but human-induced crises and natural causes are also a matter of concern for us. We need to reflect how we can help in particular institutions such as the World Food Programme to react more efficiently to these multiple crises we are facing.

Chair: Thank you. As Alice said, we could talk about this all day, but unfortunately the call for votes has cut us off. Thank you so much for making the time. Committee members, thank you; I appreciate it.