

International Development Committee

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# The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger

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Third Report of Session 2024–25

HC 515

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# International Development Committee

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## Publication

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# Summary

There are concerning indications that the world is off-track in achieving the second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) on eradicating hunger. This is not simply a failure of funding, or unforeseen international events, it is also a failure of policy in terms of donor countries harmonising the various efforts that have an impact on this goal. Evidence showed an estimated 735 million people globally were undernourished in 2023, a 29% increase on 2017. In 2022, an estimated 45 million children under the age of five suffered from wasting,<sup>1</sup> 148 million had stunted growth and 37 million were overweight.

Making progress toward the eradicating hunger goal will require an integrated approach to addressing malnutrition and to strengthening food systems—food systems that are sustainable, resilient to conflict and climate shocks, and that are accessible to all.

Integrating SDG2 into broader development policy, and measuring progress towards it, is a challenge. Success requires a two-pronged approach: mainstreaming nutrition and food security as cross-cutting themes across programming and diplomatic action on the one hand; and delivery of highly focussed programming to address particular nutrition and food security-related issues on the other. It is especially important that the interactions between climate, gender, youth and disability with hunger are understood and reflected in programme design. There is evidence that the last Government understood these challenges, demonstrating an intention to harmonise the activities of the FCDO and other departments—an intention clearly shared by the new Government. However, the evidence suggests that there is still significant room for improvement when it comes to implementation.

With the department taking stock after a review of international development, and a new Government that has expressed a commitment to rebuilding the UK's international development credentials, this is an opportune time to harmonise the Government's offering across the multiple components of SDG2 and continue international leadership toward the goal.

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1 Wasting is defined as low weight-for-height. It often indicates recent and severe weight loss, although it can also persist for a long time. It usually occurs when a person has not had food of adequate quality and quantity and/or they have had frequent or prolonged illnesses. (WHO, [Malnutrition](#), accessed 14 February 2025)

There is also an opportunity to ensure that there are adequate safeguards in place to ensure funding toward this goal is predictable and long term—avoiding the damage caused by sudden funding cuts.

We therefore recommend a holistic, cross-Government, **Zero Hunger strategic delivery framework** that will: enable a locally led approach to policy and programming; prioritise learning across Government to ensure complementarity of policy and that ODA is prioritised toward what works; restore and consolidate the UK's international leadership role in pursuing this goal; and draw on the UK's innovation and expertise, including agricultural research. Innovative and proven approaches, such as cash transfers and the provision of nutritional supplements, should be part of these specific interventions. This integrated approach, which makes the most of every pound spent and every tool available, is even more important since the announcement of the reduction in ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI. By concentrating on the contribution each of these priorities brings, while being adequately supported with appropriate funding and staffing, the Government can ensure it is doing all it can to have achieved SDG2 by 2030.

The FCDO, under this Government, has multiple opportunities to build on the leadership it demonstrated under the last. The last Government was a bold, influential and innovative leader on the international stage. It reached the target of 0.7% of GNI to Official Development Assistance, as well as championing initiatives such as Nutrition for Growth and the Action Review Panel on Child Wasting. However, much of this leadership was undermined by cuts to funding in 2021, and the failure to adequately resource FCDO specialist teams post the merger of Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development. This Government can continue to wield its convening capacity in support of the goal of eradicating hunger. It can also continue to lead by example with generous pledges toward addressing acute malnutrition as well as tackling the underlying causes.

The Government has an excellent opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to leadership on SDG2 by doing everything it can to ensure that the Nutrition for Growth summit is a success. We wait with anticipation for the announcements the Government intends to make at the summit regarding the integration of programming around this goal. Beyond this, there is scope for the Government to use its convening power to coordinate a series of international actions and milestones to harmonise the work of the various fora working on aspects of the Goal.

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# Glossary of key terms

**Agroecology** - Agroecology is a holistic and integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems. It seeks to optimise the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment while also addressing the need for socially equitable food systems within which people can exercise choice over what they eat and how and where it is produced.<sup>2</sup>

**Nutrition-specific actions** - interventions, programmes or policies intended to have a direct impact on immediate determinants of nutrition. Nutrition-sensitive actions include: promotion of adequate food and nutrient intake, feeding, caregiving and parenting practices; and prevention of infectious diseases. Examples are breastfeeding promotion, disease management and treatment of acute malnutrition in emergencies.<sup>3</sup>

**Nutrition-sensitive actions** - interventions, programmes or policies in sectors other than nutrition that address the underlying determinants of foetal and child nutrition and development, and incorporate specific nutrition goals and actions. Sectors include agriculture, health, social protection, early child development, education, and water and sanitation. The social determinants that nutrition-sensitive actions can address include poverty, food insecurity, scarcity of access to adequate care resources, inadequate services for health or water and sanitation.<sup>4</sup>

**Food systems** - Food systems are the networks needed to produce and transform food, and to ensure it reaches consumers.<sup>5</sup>

**RUTF** - RUTF is ready-to-use therapeutic food. It's an energy dense, micronutrient paste made using peanuts, sugar, milk powder, oil, vitamins and minerals that has helped treat millions of children threatened by severe wasting—the most dangerous form of malnutrition.

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2    [FAO, Agroecology Knowledge Hub, accessed 29 January 2025](#)

3    [Global Nutrition Report 2020, Glossary, accessed 30 January 2025](#)

4    [Global Nutrition Report 2020, Glossary, accessed 30 January 2025](#)

5    [World Food Programme, Food Systems, accessed 13 February 2025](#)



**MMS** - Multiple micronutrient supplements (MMS) containing 15 essential vitamins and minerals are used to improve the diets and nutritional status of pregnant women.<sup>6</sup>

**Cash transfer** - refers to programmes that involve the direct transfer of money in terms of hard cash, pre-paid cards, or bank transfer to the end beneficiary. This is used in humanitarian crises to allow recipients to buy their own resources (whether food or other materials). It is also used as part of longer-term development interventions giving recipients more control over how they spend development assistance.

**Localisation** - Locally led development means initiatives are owned and led by people in their own context, and allows people who will be impacted by programming to be involved in the design of a programme.<sup>7</sup> It is a term that can sometimes be applied to the increased delegation of decision making to local or national government structures and delivery by local organisations.

**OECD-DAC nutrition marker** - The nutrition policy marker is designed to improve the identification, reporting and monitoring of multisectoral and cross-cutting nutrition activities in the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) of the OECD-DAC.<sup>8</sup>

**Wasting** - Wasting is defined as low weight-for-height. It often indicates recent and severe weight loss, although it can also persist for a long time. It usually occurs when a person has not had food of adequate quality and quantity and/or they have had frequent or prolonged illnesses.<sup>9</sup>

**Stunting** - Stunting is defined as low height-for-age. It is the result of chronic or recurrent undernutrition, usually associated with poverty, poor maternal health and nutrition, frequent illness and/or inappropriate feeding and care in early life. Stunting prevents children from reaching their physical and cognitive potential. Underweight is defined as low weight-for-age. A child who is underweight may be stunted, wasted or both.<sup>10</sup>

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6 UNICEF, [MULTIPLE MICRONUTRIENT SUPPLEMENTATION An approach to improving the quality of nutrition care for mothers and preventing low birthweight](#), accessed 13 February 2025

7 BOND, [Setting a new Course: Principles and recommendations for the UK's international development strategy](#), accessed 3 February 2025

8 OECD, [The OECD-DAC policy marker on nutrition: Handbook for data reporters and users, Scaling up Nutrition](#), accessed 13 February 2025

9 WHO, [Malnutrition](#), accessed 14 February 2025

10 WHO, [Malnutrition](#), accessed 14 February 2025

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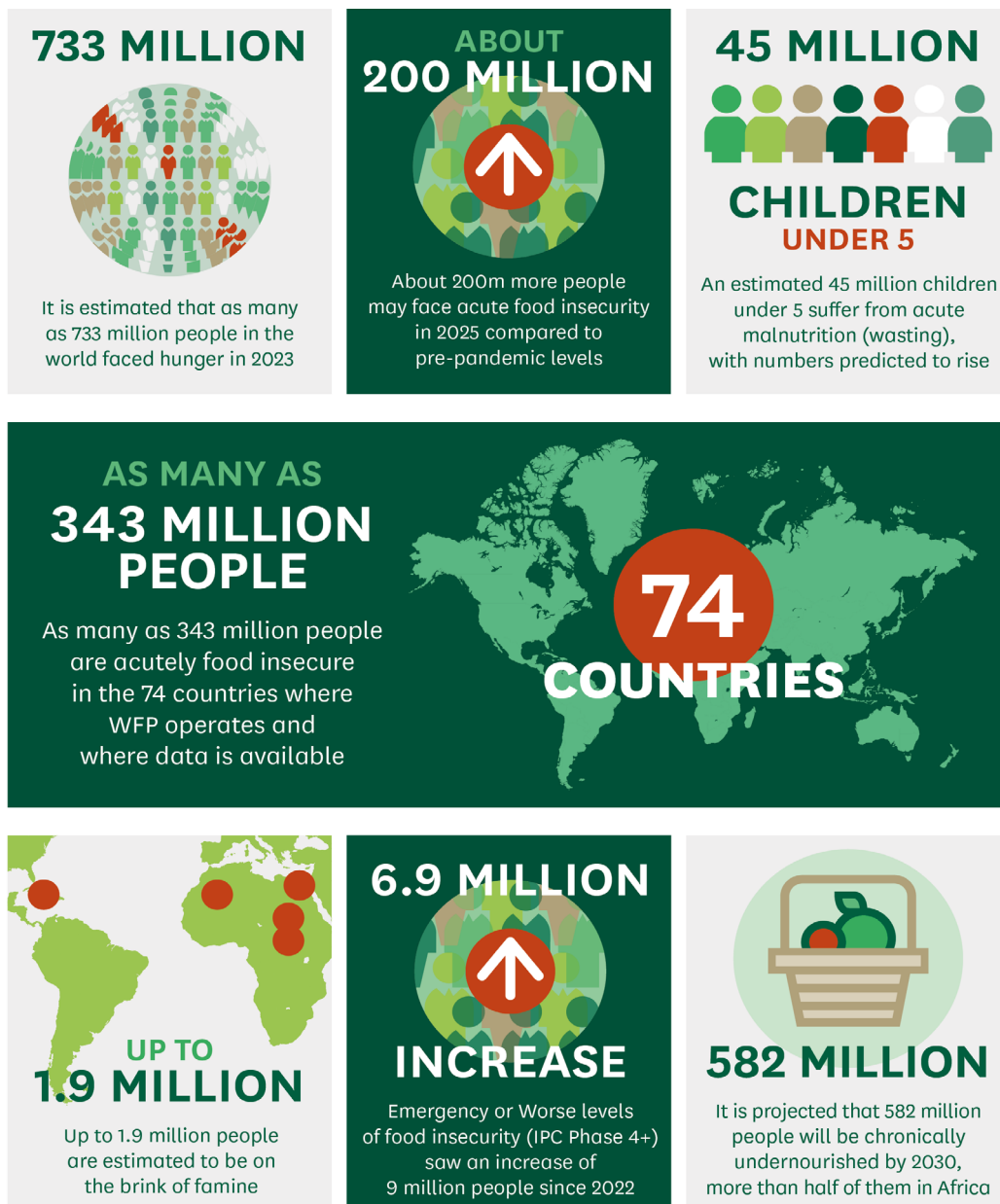
# Introduction

1. In October 2023 the previous International Development Committee launched its inquiry into The UK Government's work on achieving SDG2: Zero Hunger. The inquiry set out to scrutinise the then Government's record on delivering across the range of policy and programme areas that can contribute to achieving the goal. To inform this work the Committee took oral evidence from local and international organisations as well as written evidence from a range of sources including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Two members of that Committee visited UK-funded projects related to SDG2 being implemented in Malawi.
2. Upon its appointment in October 2024, the new Committee decided to re-open this inquiry and make use of evidence submitted during the previous parliament. This Committee has subsequently taken additional evidence on this topic with an oral evidence session in November 2024 and hearing directly from the new Minister for International Development at the FCDO (the Minister) at the time, Anneliese Dodds, in February 2025.
3. The Committee recognises that much of the evidence gathered was under the administration of the previous Government. Despite this, there are lessons to be learnt by the new administration and precedents that are important to inform future policy.
4. This report starts by outlining some of the key components to achieving SDG2 and the relationships between them, making the case for a holistic delivery framework. It seeks to highlight lessons the new Government can learn from the policies and programmes of the previous one. Chapter 2 looks at current UK programme priorities and the extent to which certain aspects of programming and policy are integrated in a way to address hunger. In chapters 3 to 5, the report looks at what must be the three pillars of any successful UK Government Zero Hunger delivery framework: localisation, leadership and learning. Finally, the report outlines our key recommendation to bring direction and coordination across the Government's combined efforts.

# 1 Progress toward SDG2– Zero Hunger

5. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), there is limited progress toward the goal and in some circumstances the situation is getting worse.

Figure 1: World hunger



Source:WFP

# Background to the Goal

## Box 1: Sustainable Development Goal 2 - Zero Hunger

United Nations Member States unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration at the Millennium Summit in September 2000 at UN Headquarters in New York. The Summit led to the elaboration of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce extreme poverty by 2015. The first MDG was to “Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty.”<sup>11</sup>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth—all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. SDG2 has 5 targets which are summarised below in Appendix one.

Source: Adapted from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture](#), (accessed 29 January 2025)

6. The second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” by 2030 is an ambitious one. Implicit in the wording of the goal, and supported by the evidence we have received, is the importance of synergy and complementarity between the various programmes and policies designed to address the goal. This is necessary because of the inter-relationship between various causes and effects of hunger—some of which are illustrated in figure two. Tackling poor nutrition head-on with **nutrition-specific** approaches is as important as ensuring all other development activities are **nutrition-sensitive**. Such interventions have huge potential to break the recurring cycle of crises experienced by many communities.<sup>12</sup>

11 For MDG details, see United Nations, [Millennium Development Goals](#), accessed 29 January 2025

12 See, for example, World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 17; Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) p1; Eleanor Crook Foundation ([SZH0009](#)); UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) 8.1.6

7. The impact of progress toward SDG2 is likely to have a positive impact on other SDGs. Citing research by the World Bank that the return on investment of development through nutrition is a factor of \$23,<sup>13</sup> Briec Pont, the envoy to the Nutrition for Growth summit for the Government of France observed 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.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these apparent benefits, the priority of reaching the goal itself is under threat from defunding and changing political priorities. On 25 February 2025 the Prime Minister announced a reduction in ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI to support a rise in defence spending. The United States' recent suspension of funding has called into question the future of multiple initiatives to eradicate hunger.<sup>15</sup> On 4 March, at a debate in the UN General Assembly around an international day for peaceful coexistence, the US representative told the assembly that: "US rejects and denounces the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the SDGs."<sup>16</sup>

8. Another key aspect of the SDG is the focus on a systems-based approach to food security. Ensuring a sustainable supply to nutritious food relies on having resilient food production and distribution systems as well as the economic environments in which they operate.<sup>17</sup> As will be explored in this chapter, whether looking at their resilience to climatic shock and trends or to conflict, or the accessibility of the system to marginalised groups, global efforts need to be building this resilience. Moreover, these efforts to improve food systems need to be sensitive to the impact they are having on the sustainability of producing and distributing food in the future whether that be through their environmental or economic impact. UNICEF described the current health of food systems globally:

Food systems are not working to deliver healthy and sustainable diets, with 1 in 3 people malnourished, and malnourishment present in nearly all countries. The changing climate is adversely affecting the quantity as well as quality of food produced, food access, affordability, and as a result the consumption of healthy diets.<sup>18</sup>

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13 For every \$1 invested, a return of \$23 is expected (Human Development Perspectives, [Investment Framework for Nutrition](#), World Bank, accessed 14 February 2025)

14 [Q146](#)

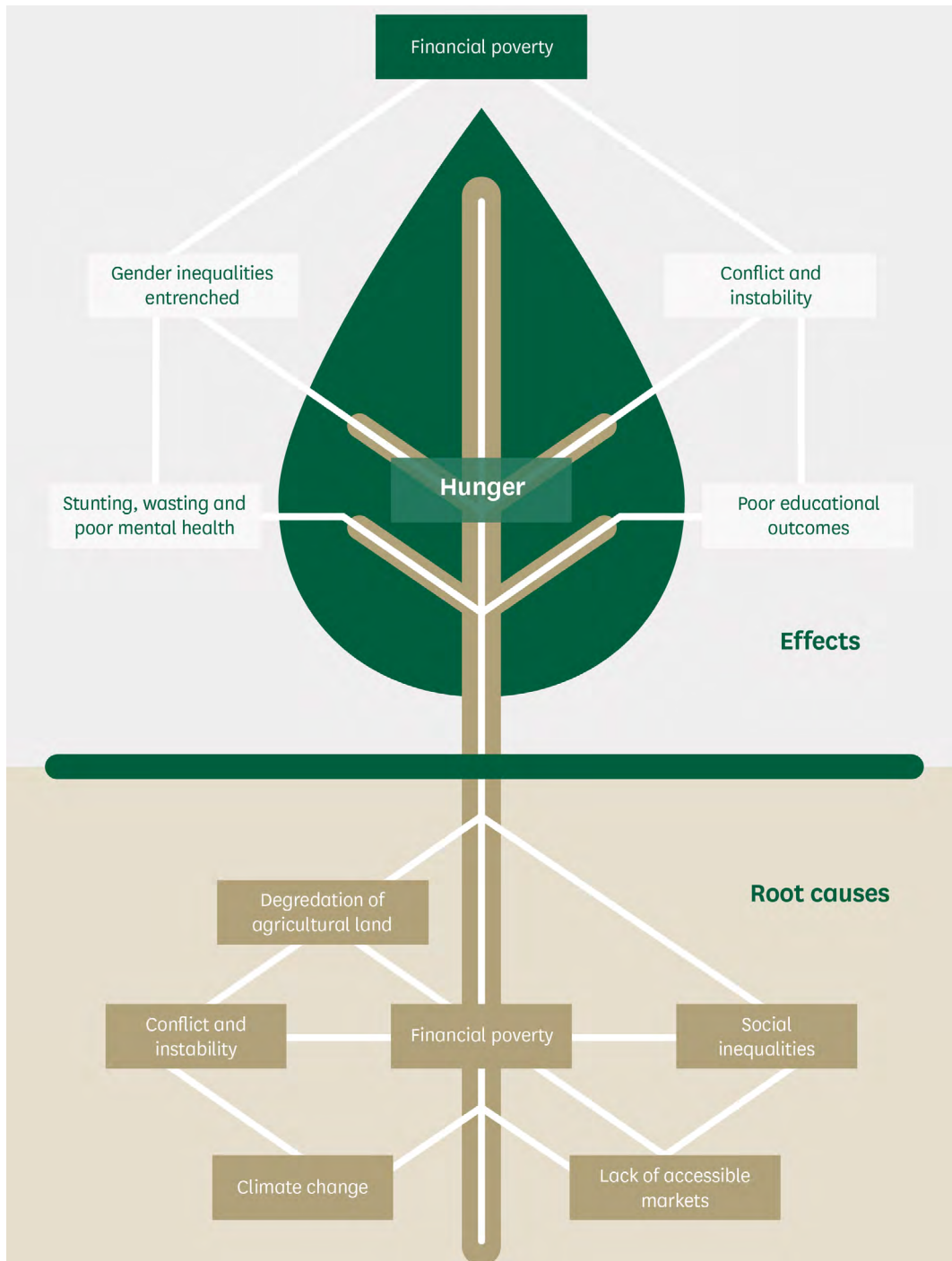
15 See, for example, Tom Bateman, [How a US freeze upended global aid in a matter of days](#), BBC News [online], 29 January 2025, accessed 12 March 2025

16 Unites States Mission to the United Nations, [Remarks at the UN meeting entitled 58th Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly](#), 4 March 2025, accessed 12 March 2025

17 See, for example, [Q71](#) [Dr Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy & Knowledge at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)]

18 UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) para 11.3

**Figure 2:<sup>19</sup> Some of the causes and effects of hunger**



Source: Written evidence

19 See, for example, World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) paras 34 and 42; VSO ([SZH0011](#)); MAG (Mines Advisory Group) ([SZH0012](#)); [Q68](#) [Dr Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy & Knowledge at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)]; [Q14](#) [Florian Monnerie, Action Against Hunger]; Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#)); Dr Jasmine Fledderjohann (Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University); Dr Charumita Vasudev (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Ankita Rathi (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Swayamshree Mishra (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Thomas Argaw (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University) ([SZH0015](#)); UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#))

## 9. CONCLUSION

The world is off target to achieve SDG2 and shows signs of waning in its resolve. An urgent and concerted effort at local, national and international levels is required to not only tackle the effects of poor nutrition and food insecurity, but also the underlying causes. All activities need to prioritise the inclusion and strengthening of food systems.

## Climate and its interrelationship with hunger

*... we are essentially closing our eyes and saying, “Yes, we are going to believe that every dollar going in is probably going to make a big difference because it is climate-tagged,” but we do not know.<sup>20</sup>*

10. When it comes to the consideration of the synergies between climate change and Zero Hunger there are two key areas any government needs to consider.
11. Firstly, the impact climate is likely to have on food systems, political stability, migration and land-use practices.<sup>21</sup> The World Food Programme (WFP) described how over 40% of the global population lives in areas that are highly vulnerable to climate extremes. It explained that in 2022, “climate extremes were the primary driver of acute food insecurity in areas for 56.8 million people in 12 countries”.<sup>22</sup> Our inquiry heard multiple accounts, from development workers on the ground, of how climate extremes had impacted the food security of the populations they served. Victor Mughogho, of Eagles Malawi, described increasingly frequent droughts as well as cyclones (a new phenomenon to Malawi).<sup>23</sup> Melina Mtonga of Find Your Feet Malawi supported this, describing the extensive relief effort her organisation was having to undertake to respond to climate extremes.<sup>24</sup> Tariro Washaya of the Methodist Relief and Development Agency (MeDRA) in Zimbabwe described how climate change was impacting communities and families:

With climate change, there is poor adaptation by the communities and a lack of knowledge of these changes in the climate seasons. [...]

They are no longer able to produce the food that they used to. With that, they are surviving on sometimes one meal a day. Sometimes there is not dietary diversity in the type of food consumption, which is

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20 [Q71](#) [Dr Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy & Knowledge at International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)]

21 See, for example, Save the Children ([SZH0014](#)) para 6.1

22 WFP ([SZH0008](#)) para 39

23 [Q4](#)

24 [Q145](#)



now causing malnutrition, affecting the little children, the pregnant and lactating mothers, and in general the poor and elderly in the communities.<sup>25</sup>

The crisis in the Lake Chad basin is an example of where climate extremes, economic deprivation and conflict have a compounding impact both on each other, and the resilience of food systems. Dr Mairo Mandara, of United Against Malnutrition and Hunger, described how Lake Chad has reduced to 10% of its original size, which has an impact on an already climate-vulnerable population. The lake used to give employment to around 4 million people, now down to between 250,000 and 500,000. Such breakdowns in livelihoods, she claimed, “breed” militant groups such as Boko Haram.<sup>26</sup> The ability, therefore, for communities to adapt to the changing climate and for local knowledge to be built into any policy or programme approaches to building resilience is key to overcoming the challenges faced.

12. Secondly, food systems can have a contributing effect on climate change through the release of greenhouse gases. Agricultural practices, such as overgrazing and over-reliance on agro-chemicals, may also increase the vulnerability of food systems to climate change and undermine progress towards achieving SDG2.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, attempts to raise food production that do not consider the impact those systems have on climate change, and their vulnerability to its effects, could make communities more, not less, vulnerable.
13. There are lessons to be learnt for the current Government around climate and Zero Hunger. We heard praise of the previous Government’s explicit linking of climate with food security in its “ambitious approach” to raising climate finance.<sup>28</sup> For example, WFP described the important role Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance (CDRFI) can play in building financial resilience to shocks and allowing communities to recover more quickly, and was complimentary about the UK’s leadership on this issue.<sup>29</sup> Despite successes, when it comes to nutrition in climate finance initiatives, we heard that in 2021 only 5% of the FCDO’s International Climate Financing included nutrition objectives, a reduction from 6% in 2020.<sup>30</sup> In terms of ensuring that those most in need of support for mitigation and resilience costs are receiving access to the finance being allocated, Rory Stewart

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25 [Q5](#)

26 [Q51](#)

27 Results UK ([SZH0010](#))

28 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 39

29 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 40

30 Development Initiatives, [FCDO’s aid spending for nutrition: 2021](#), accessed 19 February 2025; Save the Children ([SZH0014](#)) para 6.3; Results UK ([SZH0010](#)) para 5



(of the charity Give Directly) and Dr Puri (of the International Fund for Agricultural Development), indicated that there is a long way to go. Dr Puri said:

... as an international community, we need to be far more credible on what we are calling climate finance. A lot of washing goes on, and we know currently we are just looking at what gets tagged as climate [...] you really want to see what is happening on the ground and what is the outcome. No institution takes it far enough.

While the Minister told the Committee that the Government were aware of the challenge of ensuring that climate finance was accessible where it was needed, beyond providing individual examples she was not clear on how the Government was seeking to ensure it.<sup>31</sup>

14. There is some innovative work underway. The collaboration between the FCDO and the Met Office, for example, provides an important source of early warning information to support food security and relief goals. The Committee heard of initiatives including the Forecast Based Financing pilot and the Future Climate for Africa research and development programme, both of which aim to forecast climatic conditions enabling appropriate allocation of resources.<sup>32</sup> However, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) claimed that, at the time of writing, there were no UK climate finance programmes “targeting sustainable agriculture.”<sup>33</sup>

15. **CONCLUSION**

Climate change and hunger are intrinsically linked. We recognise the emphasis the Government is putting on improving the impact of climate finance as it relates to food systems.

16. **RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend the Government conduct an assessment of UK climate finance to ensure it addresses the impact of climate change on nutrition and food systems. The UK’s agricultural investments need to be assessed more rigorously for the adaption and mitigation challenges posed by climate change.

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31 [Q177 and Q180](#)

32 Met Office ([SZH0020](#))

33 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 5

## Gender and age dimensions and their interrelationship with hunger (Target 2.1)

*We did not even target nutrition; we just targeted women because we wanted to see the empowerment indicators and the goals to be reached. Magically we got our nutrition goals as well, primarily because we were going through women and going through the overall empowerment pathway, which is really important.*<sup>34</sup>

- 17.** Progress in achieving the nutrition and food security of women and girls has not only been slow, but is in danger of going backwards. For example, WFP told us that there is no region currently on track to meet targets on anaemia and low birth weight. The results on this are particularly concerning given the strong relationship between hunger and gender inequality. Despite holding responsibility for 50% of food production globally, women and girls account for 60% of those acutely food insecure (totalling over 1 billion, 151 million more than men).<sup>35</sup> This is important due to the inter-relationship between gender equality and hunger. Plan International told us that their analysis of data from 109 countries has shown that “the higher the levels of gender inequality in a country, the hungrier people are”.<sup>36</sup> VSO highlighted that the covid-19 pandemic may have exacerbated the problem with the “prevalence of moderate or severe food security being 10% higher amongst women than men in 2020 compared with 6% in 2019”.<sup>37</sup> In some contexts, for example, forced marriage rates have gone up as families seek to secure food supplies, violence and sexual exploitation are linked to the acquisition of food and water, and school enrolment drops with the presence of drought.<sup>38</sup>
- 18.** Support for childhood nutrition is vital for the achievement of multiple SDGs. The Eleanor Crook Foundation explained these linkages:
- Good nutrition improves birth outcomes, reduces maternal mortality, reduces the risk of obesity, cancer, and other noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease (SDG3).
  - Good nutrition is crucial for mental and physical development, subsequently affecting learning capacity and in turn earning potential (SDG1, 4 and 8).<sup>39</sup>

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34 [Q83](#) [Dr Puri]

35 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 7

36 Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#)) para 1.1

37 VSO ([SZH0011](#))

38 Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#)) para 1.1

39 According to UNICEF, half of stunting in children under two develops during pregnancy and in the first six months of life. ([Q46](#) [Grainne Moloney])

- Good nutrition makes vaccines more effective, and a well-nourished child is 11 times less likely to die from common infectious diseases such as pneumonia than a severely undernourished one.
- Reducing malnutrition can raise per capita gross domestic product (GDP) by up to 11% and break the cycle of poverty, inequality, and food insecurity (SDG1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10).
- Good nutrition can help foster peace (SDG 10).<sup>40</sup>

Experiencing severe and persistent food insecurity may cause lower self-esteem, self-efficacy, educational aspirations, and life satisfaction for children and adolescents.<sup>41</sup> Monitoring of food insecurity of older children (over 5 years old) and adolescents is often missed and should be considered during project scoping, design, monitoring or evaluation phases.<sup>42</sup>

- 19.** Support for the development of women and girls remains a key priority for this Government as it did for the last.<sup>43</sup> As explored in more detail in Chapter 2, the previous Government was criticised for not going far enough in the integration of gender equality across programming.<sup>44</sup> Plan International described gender equality as a “key factor that will determine the success of the SDG and should be viewed as such [...]”.<sup>45</sup> The submission from the previous Government highlighted that 59% of its programmes had a gender focus and reiterated its commitment to reaching 80% by 2030.<sup>46</sup> Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness’ (CASA) 2022 review of the FCDO’s Commercial Agricultural Portfolio found that “newer programmes are less responsive to gender considerations and some programmes have not maintained a deliberate strategy to promote

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40 Eleanor Crook Foundation ([SZH0009](#))

41 Dr Jasmine Fledderjohann (Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University); Dr Charumita Vasudev (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Ankita Rathi (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Swayamshree Mishra (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Thomas Argaw (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University) ([SZH0015](#)); see also UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) para 8.1.6

42 Dr Jasmine Fledderjohann (Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University); Dr Charumita Vasudev (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Ankita Rathi (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Swayamshree Mishra (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University); Dr Thomas Argaw (Postdoctoral Research Associate at Lancaster University) ([SZH0015](#))

43 See, for example, Foreign Secretary David Lammy’s speech at the UN in September 2024 (FCDO, [Foreign Secretary speech at UN Summit of the Future](#), accessed 30 January 2025); Minister Anneliese Dodds at Chatham House in October 2024 (FCDO, [Minister for Development speech at Chatham House](#), gov.uk, accessed 30 January 2025); and Anneliese Dodds on X in July 2024 (X, [@AnnelieseDodds](#), accessed 30 January 2025)

44 See, for example, Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#)); VSO ([SZH0011](#))

45 Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#))

46 Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office ([SZH0022](#)) paras 94–94

women’s participation once they start[...]”. It encouraged a greater focus on quality and availability of data.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN) identified a “significant gap” for nutrition-specific programme funding that was gender-sensitive:

In 2021, 83% of FCDO’s nutrition-sensitive spending was gender relevant, but only 42% of nutrition-specific spending was gender-relevant, compared to 64% in 2020.

We also heard that tackling malnutrition for women and girls is key in supporting the commitments of the FCDO’s Ending Preventable Death approach paper and the Women and Girls Strategy.<sup>48</sup>

**20. CONCLUSION**

The inclusion of women in the design of Zero Hunger policy and programming is vital for equitable and cost-effective progress toward SDG2. Moreover, programming that does not use carefully disaggregated data to ensure it is sensitive to both gender and age dimensions of hunger is unlikely to achieve sustainable results.

**21. RECOMMENDATION**

We call on the Government to renew its focus on improving both the gender relevance of nutrition-specific funding as well as the sensitivity of gender-specific programming to food systems and nutrition.

## Smallholder farmers and sustainable food systems (Target 2.3 and 2.4)

- 22.** Smallholder farmers are vital actors in the effort to eliminate hunger, producing around 35% of global food production on 12% of the land.<sup>49</sup> They also usually produce a wider diversity of crops than larger (bigger than two hectares) farms, contributing both to environmental and nutritional diversity and resilience.<sup>50</sup> At the beginning of 2024, FCDO’s programmes were reaching over 24.5 million smallholder farmers (83% of the target total, 40% women), working with almost 17,500 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and stimulating half the target amount of investment of £1 billion.<sup>51</sup> We heard of innovative approaches to engaging smallholder farmers in more sustainable agricultural practices including radio shows,

47 CASA, [Commercial Agriculture Portfolio Review 2022](#), accessed 29 January 2025

48 International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN UK) ([SZH0019](#)) para 18

49 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 30

50 VSO ([SZH0011](#))

51 FCDO ([SZH0022](#))

farmer demonstration programmes, cash transfers, and micro-credit.<sup>52</sup> We also heard from smallholder farmers themselves who described the challenges they face scaling up their businesses in the face of larger companies as well as economic and climatic shocks.

- 23.** Those we spoke to made it clear that smallholder farmers remain eager to acquire new knowledge and to share their own knowledge in the pursuit of developing solutions to challenges and improving resilience.<sup>53</sup> Market access and investment capital are key components to enable smallholder farmers to make the jump from being subsistence households who sell only their excess production, to becoming serious agri-businesses who sell the bulk of their produce.<sup>54</sup> Supporting a food system that is conducive to such business development involves a web of investments across the finance and value chains. Part of this requires the capital needed to invest in the business.
- 24.** A compelling case was made for cash transfers in providing the capital needed to scale-up investment. Rory Stewart argued that cash transfers were considerably more costs-effective than other approaches (such as training programmes) and told the Committee that

(with) less money, this is the time for FCDO to be much bolder about cash because cash is very effective, efficient and transparent, and using direct cash is a very good way of getting results when you are short of (ODA) cash.<sup>55</sup>

He suggested that there is a “slightly patronising” attitude to the process of development in presuming that people require knowledge transfer and training when they really require cash. He reported on the results of controlled trials that demonstrate the potential advantages of direct cash transfers.<sup>56</sup> We saw the FCDO taking these approaches into consideration seriously, partnering with cash transfer organisations on randomised control trials and pilots.<sup>57</sup>

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52 See for example, the agroecological kitchen gardens in schools, Ruchi Tripathi of VSO ([Q107](#)); the FCDO support of CASA in Malawi and the Ecobusiness fund in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America ([SZH0022](#)) para 12.

53 Violet Natembeya and Massiye Nyang’wa, smallholder farmers in Kenya and Malawi respectively, told us of the impact training on areas such as leadership and assertiveness, as well as business planning and agroecology had made to their businesses. [Q126](#) [Massiye Nyang’wa] and [Q125](#) [Violet Natembeya]

54 [Q120](#) [Violet Natembeya] and [Q121](#) [Massiye Nyang’wa]

55 [Q61](#)

56 See, for example, [Q63](#) and Give Directly ([SZH0025](#))

57 See examples in FCDO’s written evidence ([SZH0022](#)). When members of the previous Committee visited Malawi, they experienced first-hand the randomised control trials being implemented with Give Directly.

25. Target 2.4 of SDG2 involves the promotion of “sustainable agriculture”, and the need for investment in this area has never been more pressing. By 2050, global food demand is set to increase by 50%, yet crop yields are predicted to fall by between 20% and 80% by 2050 due to a combination of climate events and soil degradation.<sup>58</sup> The Committee heard from organisations and farmers of the impact agroecology principles can have on yields and sustainability.<sup>59</sup> For example, Violet Natembeya, a smallholder farmer from Kenya described how her yield of maize had gone from seven to 12 bags per harvest since she started incorporating compost and farmyard manure into her practices. Her diet has also become more diverse.<sup>60</sup> Dr Onyango (of Farm Africa) suggested that a systems-based approach to agroecology would give the FCDO opportunities to support programmes that go beyond agriculture, to sustainable land and forest management as a whole.<sup>61</sup>
26. There are opportunities for the current Government to improve the FCDO’s level of support to sustainable agriculture and smallholder farmers. The department’s record under the previous Government on SDG targets 2.3 and 2.4 target was mixed. CASA’s 2023 Commercial Agriculture Portfolio Review found a “marked improvement in the reporting and results in greenhouse gas emissions reductions and removals (between 2020 and 2022).” However, CASA also notes that it is difficult to assess the results across the portfolio as only one programme reported a target for reductions and removals.<sup>62</sup> CAFOD highlighted that, under the last Government, only 4% of the UK’s aid budget went toward supporting agriculture and of that “only a fraction” supported sustainable approaches.<sup>63</sup> It continued:

... the majority of UK spending is currently being directed into projects that show little or no consideration of their potential impacts on nature or climate, or their effect on land rights and participation in the decision-making of local communities.<sup>64</sup>

With the recently announced £25.5 million uplift to the UK Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness programme (CASA) announced by the Government, there is an opportunity to address some of these challenges.<sup>65</sup>

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58 United Against Malnutrition and Hunger ([SZH0018](#)); [Q100](#) [Dr McDonnell]

59 See, for example, [Q91](#) [Dr McDonnell]

60 [Q116](#)

61 [Q95](#)

62 CASA, [Commercial Agriculture Portfolio Review 2022](#), accessed 29 January 2025

63 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 5

64 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 25

65 Letter from the Minister for International Development regarding the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, [13 December 2024](#)

27. There are cases where ODA spent through development finance institutions and the World Bank at best failed to address the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, and at worst may undermine the efforts toward SDG2.<sup>66</sup> An analysis carried out by CAFOD and the RSPB found that between 2013 and 2019, UK-based private investment institutions invested £125.5 million of UK aid in Indorama Eleme Fertiliser, a fossil gas-based fertiliser producer based in Nigeria, in contrast to £26.3 million provided bilaterally to Nigeria for agriculture and rural development.<sup>67</sup> Dr Puri described as “indefensible” the fact that only 0.7% of the previous Government’s new and additional climate finance was targeted toward small-scale farmers. Despite these criticisms, the Independent Commission on Aid Impact’s (ICAI) 2023 review of “UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change” scored the FCDO’s performance green/amber on relevance, amber/red on coherence, and green/amber on effectiveness. The review praised the “clear approach” of the 2015 “Conceptual framework on agriculture” but found that this had been eroded through “reorganisations, leadership churn and successive crises.” ICAI criticised British Investment International (BII), the UK’s development finance institution, for weak analysis of development impact in the agricultural sector, particularly on smallholder farmers.<sup>68</sup> The current Government will need to ensure that such threats to success do not impact the important commitments made at COP28 by the previous Government.<sup>69</sup> Contributors to our inquiry called for an update to the 2015 Conceptual Framework on Agriculture (CFA) set out by DFID. Specifically,

We need to look at agriculture and food systems together as a lot has changed since the last strategy. [...] The agricultural policy should take into account all the areas that need to be addressed, not just production or consumption, but employment, resilience efforts as well as nutrition and the impact on the most marginalised.<sup>70</sup>

The Government confirmed that ensuring climate finance has the flexibility to target small agri-businesses and smallholder farmers was “critical”. However, when asked directly whether there were targets for spending in this area, the Minister failed to answer the question.<sup>71</sup>

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66 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 19

67 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 20

68 ICAI, [UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change](#), accessed 29 January 2025

69 See Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office ([SZH0022](#)) para 10; and FCDO, [UK backs work to protect global water and food supplies at COP28](#), accessed 30 January 2025)

70 [Q96](#) [Ruchi Tripathi, VSO]

71 [Q180](#)



## Box 2: Seeds and fertilisers (SDG2 Target 2.5)

Previous government policy, and the approaches of multilateral development banks (such as the World Bank) supported through UK ODA may perpetuate a situation which can disadvantage smallholder farmers—primarily through the stifling of informal seed networks.<sup>72</sup> The alternative to such networks is to buy commercial seeds, often at high prices, which can lead to indebtedness, crops vulnerable to pests, diseases and climate shocks, as well as the problems associated with the increased use of agro-chemicals.<sup>73</sup> CAFOD gave examples of where policies of the World Bank that require governments to use public money to subsidise industrialised seeds and chemical inputs, have resulted in large agri-businesses capturing loans that were originally designed to improve farm productivity, which they used instead to promote the use of chemical inputs and in turn undermined local seed improvement initiatives.<sup>74</sup> It also drew attention to the seed regulations that the World Bank insist on as a condition for financing. It claimed these undermined SDG2.5 and contradicted the UN’s International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to which the UK is a signatory.

### 28. CONCLUSION

Smallholder farmers in low-income countries are vital players in sustainable food systems. We welcome some of the steps taken to assess the impact of new trade deals on low-income countries. Currently, though, there is more to be done to ensure that the range of tools the UK has to alleviate poverty are sensitive to the role smallholders have to play, and the factors that determine their success or failure.

### 29. RECOMMENDATION

We recommend the Government assess its trade, agriculture, climate and gender programmes against the impact they have on smallholder farmers. Where necessary, these programmes should be adjusted to mitigate harm against smallholder farmers and to enhance their place within sustainable food systems.

## Disability and food insecurity

30. There are linkages between the prevalence of disability and inadequate nutrition. Moreover, people with certain disabilities may be more vulnerable in terms of securing access to food, and the resulting severe

72 Transform Trade ([SZH0007](#)) para 13

73 See, for example, VSO ([SZH0011](#))

74 See also [Q82](#) [Rory Stewart]



impacts of poor nutrition on their health.<sup>75</sup> Recognising these linkages, the previous Committee’s report *FCDO and disability inclusive development*, recommended the FCDO:

review all humanitarian response and climate change adaption policies, ensuring that each includes stronger commitments on ensuring that disability inclusion is properly considered and funded.<sup>76</sup>

Responding to the recommendation, this Government partially agreed but acknowledged a lack of capacity to implement the recommendation in full.<sup>77</sup> Attention to inclusive nutrition and food security services and approaches in wider inclusion work could be improved. For example, WFP observed that the FCDO’s disability inclusion strategy (published under the previous Government) “lacks a focus on the link between nutrition and disability and the importance of disability-inclusive programming for persons with disabilities.”<sup>78</sup> The Minister confirmed that a refresh of the strategy was underway. We were encouraged by her commitment before the Committee to ensure disabled people are not left behind, and the Government’s intention to work with multilateral organisations, ensuring that progress is measured.<sup>79</sup> She also gave clarification of the work ongoing across Government to discuss the impact of policies on disabled people.<sup>80</sup>

**31. CONCLUSION**

Disabled people are particularly vulnerable to hunger and their needs must be incorporated into all Zero Hunger focussed programming. The Government have made important steps in this direction.

**32. RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend the Government specifically address the linkages between nutrition and disability in the refresh of the Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy. We request the relevant section of the updated strategy is shared with the Committee.

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75 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 28

76 International Development Committee, Third Report of Session 2023–24, [FCDO and disability inclusive development](#), HC107, paras 75–84

77 International Development Committee, First Special Report of Session 2024–25, [FCDO and disability inclusive development: Government Response](#), HC568, Recommendation 8, p7–8

78 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 28

79 [Q181](#)

80 [Q181](#)

## Conflict and fragile states

- 33.** Conflict, and the lack of a stable government, not only exacerbates food insecurity but (passively and sometimes actively) prevents an effective response to hunger. Disruption to food systems extending to trade routes, agricultural production, limits on access to humanitarian goods and threats to aid workers, drive crises in fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>81</sup> Conflict-driven food insecurity forces the sale of productive assets by families, the loss of income, the collapse of family and community safety nets, and the movement of adolescents to join armed groups.<sup>82</sup> WFP observed that, in 2024, 65% of acutely food-insecure people lived in “fragile or conflict-affected” situations.<sup>83</sup> There is also a correlation between climate vulnerability and fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>84</sup> Despite this, it notes, only 1/80th of climate finance per capita goes to fragile states.
- 34.** Conflicts have an enduring impact on food security. The Mines Advisory Group told the Committee that, on average, landmines or unexploded ordnance kill or maim 13 people each day. A significant proportion of these devices are on agricultural land. They stifle productive potential by preventing both access to the land and the development of agricultural techniques.<sup>85</sup>
- 35.** UNSC resolution 2417 was designed to end the use of hunger as weapon of war and the UK, WFP argue, is “uniquely” placed to lead ongoing collective action on implementation at a time where progress has been mixed.<sup>86</sup> Despite the opportunities and rhetoric, we heard criticism that the previous Government’s 65% cuts between 2019 and 2021 to Sub-Saharan Africa removed essential support to those in fragile and conflict-affected states in acute need of assistance.<sup>87</sup> VSO criticised the lack of policy interventions on social protection measures that support food security in conflict settings.<sup>88</sup> It also highlighted the opportunities that agroecology projects can have in bringing community unity and promoting peace.<sup>89</sup> We, therefore, welcome

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81 See, for example, VSO ([SZH0011](#)) and World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#))

82 See, for example, VSO ([SZH0011](#))

83 WFP, [WFP 2025 Global Outlook](#), accessed 29 January 2025

84 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 42

85 MAG (Mines Advisory Group) ([SZH0012](#))

86 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 34: This landmark resolution brought together key aspects of the UNSC’s engagement on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, seen through the lens of food security.

87 UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) para 8.3.3

88 VSO ([SZH0011](#))

89 [Q112](#) [Ruchi Tripathi]

the Government’s announcement of a flexible Resilience and Adaption fund which will be available for FCDO diplomatic posts to support hunger-related challenges in fragile environments.<sup>90</sup>

**36.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Conflict breeds hunger and hunger breeds conflict. We recommend that stabilisation and peace building at both the programme and diplomatic level is made a priority for the Government as it seeks to end hunger by 2030.

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90 [Q183](#) [Anneliese Dodds]; see also Letter from the Minister for International Development regarding the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, [13 December 2024](#)

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## 2 UK Government spending and programme integration

*There is a very big opportunity for the Government to be able to tie together their ambitions, investments and focus in a much more coherent way by looking at who will benefit and ensuring that those who have been left furthest behind are the primary focus, but also ensuring that some of these more difficult outcomes to ensure people can access nutritious diets can be achieved.<sup>91</sup>*

### UK Government spending patterns and the impact of reductions in funding

*[The cuts] came at the wrong time, if I may say so. It meant that the house was on fire but you are told that the fire engine is not coming to your house; it is going to prioritise another house in another location.<sup>92</sup>*

37. This Committee understands that while this Government cannot be held responsible for the spending decisions of the last Government, there are important lessons it can learn to avoid repeating mistakes in future. The previous Government's drastic and sudden reductions in development spending in 2021/22 (see figures 3, 4 and 5) had a negative impact on the nutritional outcomes, enterprises, and food security of communities being supported by UK ODA.<sup>93</sup> Plan International highlighted that emergency response in general experienced an 81% decrease. It described the UK Government at the time as "not playing its part" and noted that gender and adolescent targeted funding was cut disproportionately to the overall reductions (33% compared to 22.1% overall).<sup>94</sup> The Eleanor Crook Foundation noted the cut in nutrition-specific funding from £150 million (2017) to £41 million (2021). The number of nutrition programmes decreased

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91 [Q16 \[Abigail Perry, WFP\]](#)

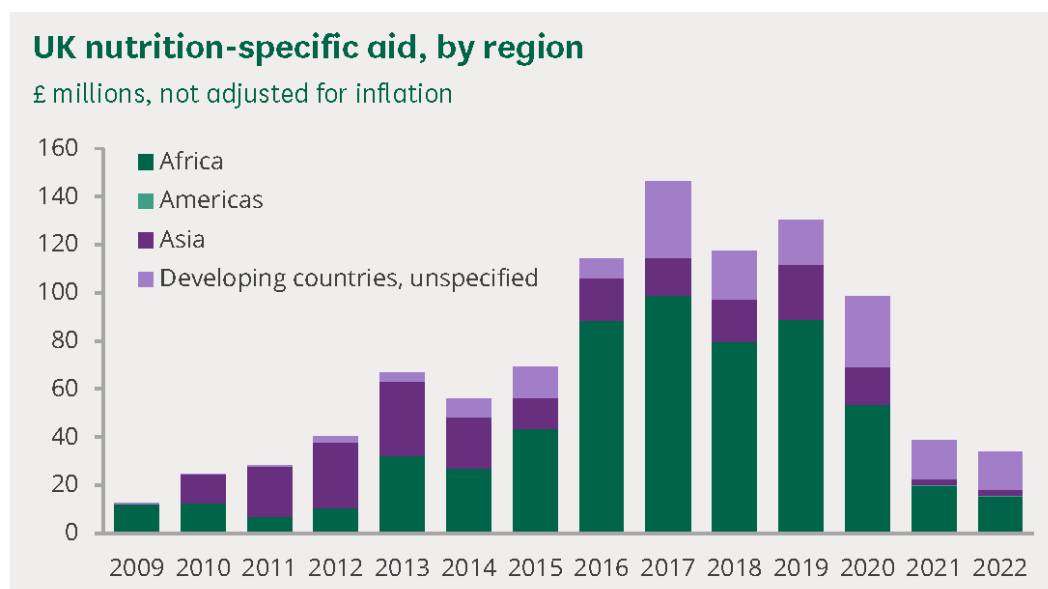
92 [Q9 \[Victor Mughogho, Eagles Malawi\]](#)

93 See for specific example [Q110 \[Dr Onyango\]](#), Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 1.1.2, Results UK ([SZH0010](#)), Save the Children ([SZH0014](#)) para 1.1; UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) paras 8.1.3–4

94 Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#)) para 1.2 ii.

to “86 programmes in 2021 from 100 in 2020, with only five of these being classed as nutrition-specific and another 24 having nutrition-specific and sensitive components.”<sup>95</sup>

**Figure 3: Source: FCDO, [Data Underlying Statistics on International Development: final UK aid spend 2022, 14 September 2023](#)<sup>96</sup>**



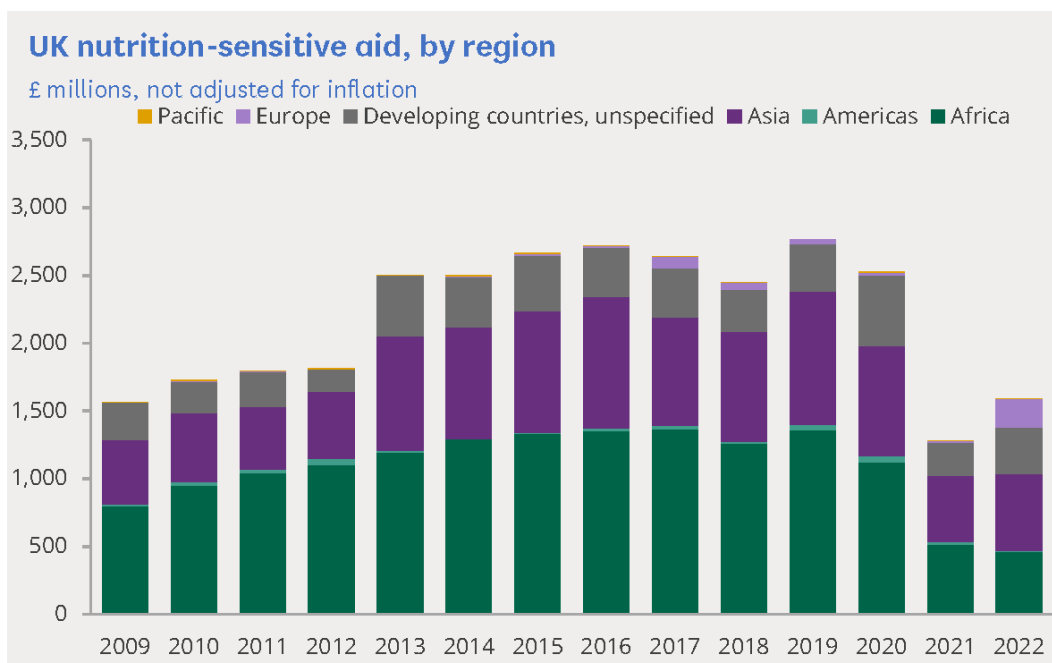
- 38.** The UK has bucked global trends in humanitarian funding: in 2022, the proportion of funding on the humanitarian food sector reached a five-year high—meanwhile the UK was starting the process of what would become a 39% decrease.<sup>97</sup> As demonstrated in figure 4 and 5, there were cuts to both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive spending with ODA to Africa taking a dramatic hit despite the global food crisis sparked by Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

95 Eleanor Crook Foundation ([SZH0009](#))

96 Nutrition specific and sensitive spending has been collated by identifying all UK aid spending within the OECD-DAC purpose codes identified by [Scaling Up Nutrition](#) as nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive project codes. No further filtering by keyword or intensity has been applied.

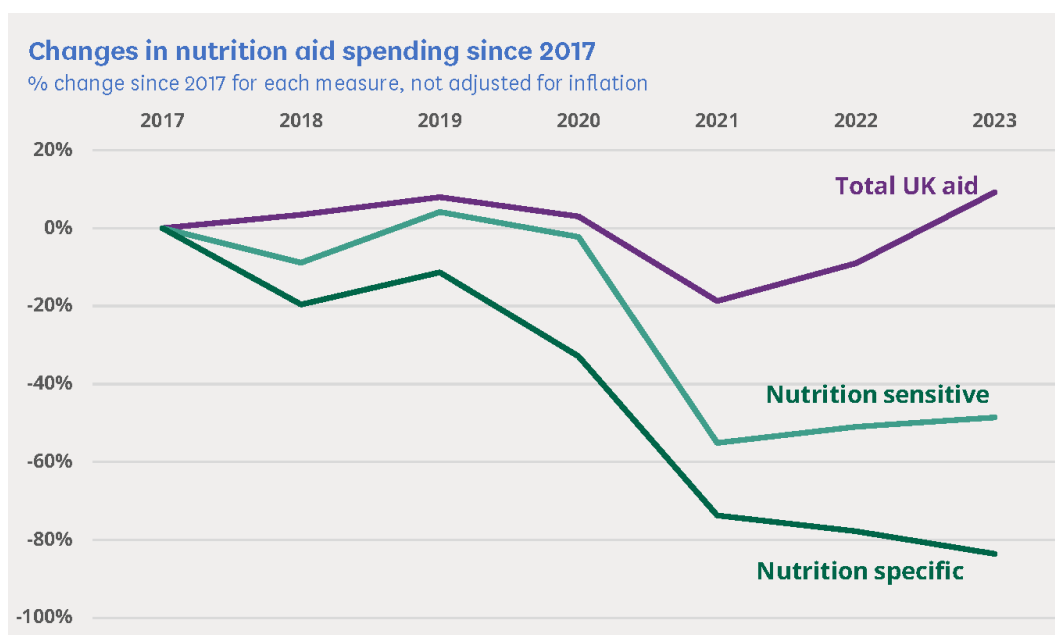
97 Development Initiatives, [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023](#), accessed 14 February 2025

**Figure 4: Source: FCDO, [Data Underlying Statistics on International Development: final UK aid spend 2022](#), 14 September 2023**



When we examine the percentage change in nutrition-specific funding, primarily impacting programmes relating to the availability of food, the impact on the UK’s contribution to targeted nutrition interventions is stark.

**Figure 5: Source: FCDO, [Data Underlying Statistics on International Development: final UK ODA spend 2023](#), 26 September 2024**



39. There are important lessons to be learnt from the effects of the reductions in ODA in 2020/2021. The 60% cuts to core contributions of UN agencies in 2021 had significant impact at a crucial time for UN leadership in “preventing a reversal of progress on the SDGs, young people and women”.<sup>98</sup> One specific example UNICEF shared was of cuts by the UK (its main contributor) to programmes in Syria supporting “nutrition screenings of over 2.7 million children and pregnant women, reaching 1.6 million children and pregnant and lactating women with micro-nutrients and providing life-saving treatment to 17,768 children with severe acute malnutrition[...]”.<sup>99</sup> The loss of this funding, UNICEF assessed, is likely to result in fewer women and children being reached by the programme. However, the cuts also impacted the UK’s influence. We heard evidence of a decline in the UK’s visibility as a humanitarian response actor. We heard that there is a “poorer and more fragmented donor response to crises” and this was blamed specifically on a vacuum left by the UK at the initial response phase.<sup>100</sup> The Minister reiterated to the Committee her commitment to avoiding such a situation in future. On the sudden cuts of the previous Government, the Minister told the Committee:

98 UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) para 8.1.4

99 UNICEF UK ([SZH0023](#)) para 8.1.4

100 Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 1.2.2; see also Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#)) para 2.1

I do not want us to ever end up in that situation again. That means that we are determined to have a longer-term approach where we are clear about what we are certain that we will be able to fund into the future.<sup>101</sup>

On 25 February 2025, the Prime Minister announced a reduction in ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI to support a rise in defence spending.

This Government has inherited pledges on nutrition and food security but is also making its own. Some of the more explicit and detailed pledges are:

- a.** Following the Nutrition for Growth summit in 2021, the previous Government pledged to “Spend at least £1.5 billion on nutrition objectives from 2022 up to 2030, specifically addressing the nutrition needs of mothers, babies and children, tackling malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies and ensuring nutrition is central to FCDO’s wider work.” Recent analysis by the FCDO funded Nutrition Action for Systemic Change (NASC) programme deemed that the FCDO is on track to meet the pledge.<sup>102</sup>
- b.** At the Global Food Security Summit in November 2023, the previous Government announced:
  - i.** Up to £100 million to respond to food security crises and their impacts in the world’s hunger and malnutrition hotspots.
  - ii.** Up to £100 million to build resilience to climate shocks and provide food security for the most vulnerable families in Somalia to avert future humanitarian crises.
  - iii.** A new Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) UK Science centre.
  - iv.** An extra £16 million for the Child Nutrition Fund.<sup>103</sup>
- c.** At the Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty launch in Brazil in 2024 the current Government announced:
  - i.** more climate finance to build the resilience of vulnerable and food-insecure households to extreme weather and other shocks - with an initial investment of up to £50 million across 8 countries through a Resilience and Adaptation Fund;
  - ii.** a £25.5 million uplift to the UK Commercial Agriculture for Smallholders and Agribusiness programme;

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101 Oral evidence taken on 7 January 2025, [Q96](#)

102 NASC, [Accounting FCDO’s Progress, accessed 29 January 2025](#), p10

103 [Global Food Security Summit](#)



- iii. a £3 million contribution to the World Bank Rapid Social Response Trust Fund Fragility Window.<sup>104</sup>

These pledges need to continue to be tracked, monitored and, where possible, independently verified.

**40. CONCLUSION**

The handling of the merger of DFID with the FCO, and that of the subsequent sudden and drastic cuts in programme spending, was very damaging for the UK's efforts toward SDG2. Not only did it damage the UK's reputation as a leader and innovator toward the goal of ending hunger and malnutrition but reduced the support to millions of people around the world who depended on these programmes.

**41. RECOMMENDATION**

The reduction of ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI in February 2025 could not have come at a worse time, with cuts in donor spending across Europe and in the United States of America and ever-increasing need. If the Government fails to learn the lessons from the handling of the cuts in 2020, the misery inflicted on millions will be incalculable, the progress that has been made will stall, and the damage to the UK's reputation will be all but impossible to reverse. We urge the Government to reconsider the reduction in Official Development Assistance.

**42. RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that the FCDO put measures in place to ensure that all Official Development Assistance committed to nutrition and food security related programming is predictable and long term, with better safeguards against, and warnings of, any changes to funding agreements with delivery partners. We request the Government outline clearly in their response how it intends to ensure future programmes keep to these standards, and to send us an update on the detail of the implementation measures before the summer Parliamentary recess.

**43. RECOMMENDATION**

Where cuts are to be made as part of this spending review, we request the Government informs the Committee of the steps it will take to ensure that there will be a phased transition with clear communication to implementing partners, avoiding some of the damage that was done when budgets were reduced in 2020.

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104 Letter from the Minister for International Development regarding the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, [13 December 2024](#)

## Integrating the UK approach to achieving SDG2

44. Understanding the synergies between the drivers and effects of hunger, and the policies designed to address them is vital—as this report lays out in Chapter 1. We were encouraged by the Minister’s statement that integration is

... critical because there are very few areas that the Department works on where we cannot consider nutrition as part of the picture.<sup>105</sup>

There is evidence of improvement in integration. For example, CASA’s 2023 Commercial Agriculture Portfolio review concluded that “[t]he thematic priorities of gender, climate change and nutrition are increasingly being integrated into programme design, creating the basis for the Portfolio to make important contributions to broader UK government policy objectives.”<sup>106</sup> However, the Government needs to ensure that the linkages explored in Chapter 1 clearly read-across policy and programme areas. For example, Ruchi Tripathi, from VSO, praised the previous Government’s Women and Girl’s Strategy but “would love to see how the women and girls strategy, and the food systems or agricultural strategy, come together to strengthen women’s own agency, their voice, their access, and control over their incomes and resources.”<sup>107</sup>

45. We were encouraged by the Government’s intention to set a target for “integrating nutrition objectives across FCDO’s ODA portfolio”, which was also pledged by the previous Government, but recognise that this is easier said than done.<sup>108</sup> Evidence we heard suggests that there is scope for better integrating nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive components into wider programming.<sup>109</sup> Ivica Petrikova, of Royal Holloway, summarised the situation at the end of the previous Parliament:

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105 [Q174](#)

106 CASA, [Commercial Agriculture Portfolio Review 2022](#), accessed 29 January 2025

107 [Q111](#)

108 [Q171](#) [Anneliese Dodds]

109 See, for example, Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 1.3.2; Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 25; Nutrition Action for Systemic Change (NASC) Technical Assistance Facility calculated that in 2021 11.8% of FCDO programmes has nutrition related objectives. (NASC, [Accounting FCDO’s Progress, accessed 29 January 2025](#), P20)

... development aid might have some positive effects on food and nutrition security but UK food aid and nutrition-related programmes and projects have been plagued with problems of lack of ownership and sustainability and are generally unable to bring about systemic or structural change to the global food and nutrition systems.<sup>110</sup>

46. ICAI’s 2023 review of UK aid to agriculture presented a mixed picture regarding the coherence and integration of approaches. It described programming that made “serious efforts to integrate climate and nutrition in the commercial agricultural portfolio [...]”. It found some good examples of “innovative approaches, with positive impacts on people’s livelihoods and agency and some contributions to gender equity”. However, ICAI questioned the sustainability of results in some of these programmes and claimed that they may even “exacerbate climate vulnerability”.<sup>111</sup> Action Against Hunger was critical of the duration of contracts signed with the FCDO under the last Government, pointing out that since 2021 the average length of its contracts had been 1.5 years and only 33% of contracts had lasted for two years or more.<sup>112</sup> In addition, the organisation questioned the lack of a harmonised approach to procurement, contracts and project design—ultimately the failing suggested “a lack of FCDO capacity and will to timely and effectively channel funds to communities in need[...]”.<sup>113</sup> The organisation also identified a failure of the FCDO to keep to its own deadlines.<sup>114</sup>

## Measurement of impact

47. Measurement across the range of FCDO activity toward the SDG2 goal is important for demonstrating value for money, replicating what works, and understanding the synergies between approaches.<sup>115</sup> The department under the previous Government received praise in the written evidence for their support of the Development Initiatives programme which fostered greater transparency.<sup>116</sup> However, they were criticised for inconsistency of measurement across the various aspects of addressing hunger.<sup>117</sup> The Minister did not clearly answer the question of how progress is measured

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110 Ivica Petrikova (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway University of London) (SZH0006)

111 ICAI, [UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change](#), accessed 29 January 2025

112 Action Against Hunger UK (SZH0005) para 1.3.1

113 Action Against Hunger told the Committee that of the 8 FCDO proposal development processes they have been through in the last 12 months, none have used the same templates or guidance for suppliers. (SZH0005) para 1.3.6

114 Action Against Hunger UK (SZH0005) para 1.3.7.

115 See, for example, ICAI, [UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change](#), accessed 29 January 2025, para 4.21

116 See, for example, Save the Children (SZH0014) ii) 3.

117 See, for example, UK SDG Data and Policy Hub, Newcastle University (SZH0016); Mercy Corps (SZH0017); Action Against Hunger UK (SZH0005) para 2.4;

when posed by Committee members. She instead focused on what appeared to be measurement of nutrition-specific programming.<sup>118</sup> In answer to a question regarding how external organisations might monitor the Government's progress on the Zero Hunger agenda, the Minister suggested DevTracker, the department's aid tracking platform, which has been criticised for its inconsistency and for not always being up to date.<sup>119</sup> She also pointed toward upcoming announcements on integration at the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) summit in March (see Chapter 4).<sup>120</sup>

48. At the N4G summit in 2021, the previous Government committed to embed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) nutrition markers into FCDO systems and some progress has been made. According to the Nutrition Action for Systemic Change (NASC) Technical Assistance Facility, by 2023 60.8% of all live programmes were marked with the Nutrition Policy Marker by FCDO staff, up from 51.5% in 2022.<sup>121</sup> However, this does not cover all ODA spending across Government. Results UK gave the example of the Darwin Initiative (run by DEFRA) which stated its wildlife-friendly rice production in Cambodia contributed toward SDG2, but had no indicators to measure this.<sup>122</sup>
49. On measurement indicators for other aspects of achieving Zero Hunger, there was criticism of the previous Government's record.<sup>123</sup> Across the SDGs, UN Environment Programme found that the UK scored 41/80 for policy coherence on SDG governance.<sup>124</sup> Evidence from CAFOD and Action Against Hunger criticised the lack of consistency in project design formats in use by the FCDO.<sup>125</sup> <sup>126</sup> CAFOD summarised:

Approaches to agriculture and land use programme design, management, performance assessment and reporting varied widely, making it difficult to accurately assess the scale and effectiveness of UK aid to the sector.<sup>127</sup>

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118 [Q179](#)

119 See, for example, ICAI, [Transparency in UK aid A rapid review](#), October 2022, accessed 6 February 2025

120 [Q190](#)

121 NASC, [Accounting FCDO's Progress, accessed 29 January 2025, p23](#)

122 Results UK ([SZH0010](#)) para 2

123 See UK SDG Data and Policy Hub, Newcastle University ([SZH0016](#)), para 62 and 63 for example

124 UK SDG Data and Policy Hub, Newcastle University ([SZH0016](#)), para 63

125 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 25; Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#))

126 See also ICAI, [UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change](#), accessed 29 January 2025, para 4.17

127 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 25

The previous Government pointed toward its Evaluation Strategy (2022–2025), its Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service “which offers a free to use service for FCDO and ODA-spending partners across Government for independent quality assurance of all Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) products.” It also pointed toward the Cross-Government Evaluation Group (CGEG), ODA Research and Innovation Cross Whitehall evaluation and evidence sharing group, and the Cabinet Office’s Evaluation Task Force.<sup>128</sup> Despite these various teams and mechanisms, the previous Government admitted that

FCDO do not have an overarching results framework for SDG2. Results are monitored at programme level through programme logframes and published in annual reviews and programme completion reports.<sup>129</sup>

## UK Trade Policy (Target 2.b)

50. UK trade policy and trading arrangements have an impact on aspects of food security in lower-income countries.<sup>130</sup> If the UK Government is serious about ensuring that its trade policy is contributing toward achieving SDG2, it must take steps to further strengthen the assessment of trade deals for possible impacts on the nutrition and food security of vulnerable populations. The 2023 SDG Index report ranked the UK towards the very worst (142nd of 166 countries) for the global negative impacts of its domestic and trade policies when it comes to SDG2. Transform Trade criticised the previous Government over its design of trade agreements, observing that:

Despite the multitude of ways that UK trade policy could impact food security and levels of hunger and malnutrition in many parts of the Global South, very few impact assessments have been published on the UK’s existing and upcoming trade and investment agreements.<sup>131</sup>

The Minister assured the Committee that there are impact assessments for free trade agreements that are publicly available and that they have been deemed fit for purpose by the non-Parliamentary independent Regulatory Policy Committee.<sup>132 133</sup>

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128 SZH0022 [para 127](#)

129 SZH0022 [para 129](#)

130 See, for example, Transform Trade ([SZH0007](#)); UK SDG Data and Policy Hub, Newcastle University ([SZH0016](#))

131 Transform Trade ([SZH0007](#)) para 6

132 [Q192](#)

133 The FTA between Australia and the UK of 2021 was reportedly the first to include a dedicated development chapter within a bilateral FTA between two advanced economies. This exercise was repeated for the subsequent two free-trade agreements. (See, for example, DIT, [Impact assessment of the free-trade agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Australia](#), accessed 6 February p34)

51. We heard of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) which, it claimed, “impose artificial regional divisions, and cause border friction between LDC<sup>134</sup> and non-LDC countries, hampering regional development.”<sup>135</sup> Public stockholding programmes are currently set up in such a way that lower-income countries, who arguably need the protection they provide, are not currently represented. Transform Trade argues that efforts by the UK in the WTO to reduce the use of these “runs counter to the wishes of developing countries”. We were encouraged that the Minister recognised the need for an integrated approach with the Department of Trade on these issues.<sup>136</sup>

52. **CONCLUSION**

UK trade policy needs to reflect the Government’s aspirations for achieving SDG2 with a continued commitment to comprehensive assessments of the impact of trade deals on food-insecure populations and a focus on reforming trading rules that compound food insecurity.

## FCDO capacity

53. FCDO capacity to deliver nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific programming has been eroded by the merger of FCO with DFID.<sup>137</sup> The Second Permanent Under-Secretary of the FCDO, Nick Dyer, admitted to the Committee that the organisation lost 20% of its professional capability just after the merger. He noted that 60% of all the development advisory roles in 2024 could not be filled through internal recruitment due to lack of staff with appropriate skills.<sup>138</sup> The Minister informed the Committee that there were 45 technical experts working on SDG2 issues in the UK and globally.<sup>139</sup> However, she was unable to confirm whether or not the former Government’s commitment to bolstering staff on these issues had taken place. She instead pointed to a recruitment programme partially focused on fragile and conflict-affected states which may have had overlap with Zero Hunger goals.<sup>140</sup>

54. During the course of the inquiry, the Committee heard concerns regarding the structures that facilitate learning and coordination between locally managed programmes (managed by FCDO missions) and those managed centrally (from the UK). The Minister recognised that “generally there is

134 Less Developed Countries - The terminology used by the OECD

135 Transform Trade ([SZH0007](#)), Para 19

136 [Q192](#)

137 ICAI, [UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change](#), accessed 29 January 2025

138 Oral evidence taken on 7 January 2025, [Q10](#)

139 [Q194](#)

140 [Q199](#)

sharing of knowledge” but that “there is always more that can be done.” However, no further details were shared with us on what was needed or proposed solutions.<sup>141</sup>

55.

**CONCLUSION**

Ensuring the FCDO attracts and retains the highest level of expertise is key for maintaining value for money and delivering effective programming. The Government needs to be ready to invest in both existing and new expertise.

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## 3 Localisation

*[International development] is a crazy world that does not exist in the developed world, where we are far more patronising. We have in our heads that we have to go around the world teaching everybody how to fish when the reality is they already know how to fish but do not have the money for a fishing hook, or they do not want to fish; they want to open a bakery.<sup>142</sup>*

56. A sustainable approach to tackling hunger will carefully consider the role “localisation” of aid delivery should play, but also involve local voices in its very design. We have heard of the multiple benefits that can be achieved through channelling funds through genuinely locally owned organisations both for long-term nutrition-related development programmes and for disaster relief. These include:
- a. **Closer links to the communities** being served through the programmes. This could consequently lead to more opportunities for effective community input in the design, and community ownership of the results, of programmes.<sup>143</sup>
  - b. **The potential for lower administration and transaction costs representing better value for money** as local organisations tend to have lower overheads, local salaries and can have a better understanding of the functioning of local logistic arrangements. For example, Dr Ahmed told us that HANDS Foundation initiated a project for rehabilitation of schools after the flood in 2010: “We did rehabilitation with the same quality of rehabilitation to 1,000 schools. The other two [international] partners, one did 350 schools, and the other one did 250 schools for the same amount of money and the same quality consideration.”<sup>144</sup>
  - c. **Greater ownership by national and regional governments** who regulate the local NGOs.<sup>145</sup> Dr Mandara told the Committee: “You are giving them the value of being human beings, not just being fed. Some

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142 [Q74](#) [Rory Stewart]

143 On agroecological interventions see [Q68](#) [Dr Puri]; on community needs assessment see [Q134](#) [Dr Ahmed], [Q138](#) [Mrs Mtonga]; on community ownership and satisfaction see [Q68](#) [Dr Puri]; on capacity to administer relief programmes see [Q145](#); on effectiveness of research see Chapter 5 and [Q99](#) [Dr Onyang]

144 [Q134](#)

145 See, for example, [Q136](#) [Mrs Mtonga of Find Your Feet, Malawi]



of these nuances can only happen when big donors interact with locals at the concept level, not when the strategy has been made and then we try to find ways of implementation. Then it becomes the reverse.”<sup>146</sup>

Beyond these benefits and any moral imperative of localised decision making, some governments (such as that of Malawi) are taking steps to regulate how incoming foreign aid is dispensed, insisting that more is channelled through local organisations.<sup>147</sup>

- 57.** Despite the apparent benefits of a more localised approach, the FCDO needs to go further to maximise opportunities in this area.<sup>148</sup> For example, Ivica Petrikova and Dr Melita Lazell’s research looking at 144 DFID/FCDO funded projects found that many were undermined by lack of “ownership”. Even in the more stable countries studied, such as Rwanda, there were examples of local government institutions being sidelined.<sup>149</sup> We also heard from local NGOs which had failed to access FCDO or DFID funding, with limited or no feedback as to why they were rejected. They were also not offered support to rectify the issues.<sup>150</sup>
- 58.** A shift to a localised model of aid delivery is one that requires culture and process changes within a large donor such as the FCDO. Formats and processes that may be appropriate for organisations with large and highly skilled administrative departments, may not be appropriate for smaller organisations working in a language other than English.<sup>151</sup> Genuine localisation should not need to rely on an international NGO being an intermediary for the application and reporting processes. Instead, local organisations should be empowered to not only take the lead in the delivery of projects, but also the leadership of consortia. Dr Ahmed highlighted that when local organisations are included in consortia for the delivery of foreign funded programmes, they are rarely the leaders. International NGOs, he claims, are attempting to “hijack the idea of localisation” by creating “local chapters” and retaining their headquarters in the higher-income country.<sup>152</sup> **Failure to pass due diligence should not necessarily result in immediate elimination from the application process. Rather, the FCDO should consider what additional support these organisations need, to have a chance at winning these bids.** Local organisations need to be equipped to handle international funds and the accountability structures that come with those. Moreover, the levels of funding received

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146 [Q49](#)

147 [Q139](#) [Mrs Mtonga]

148 See, for example, [Q67](#) [Rory Stewart]

149 Ivica Petrikova ([SZH0006](#))

150 See [Q9](#) [Victor Mughogho] and [Tariro Washaya]; and [Q12](#) [Tariro Washaya]

151 See [Q139](#) [Mrs Mtonga], Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 3.1

152 [Q140](#)

should be based on an assessment of their ability to manage it.<sup>153</sup> We heard that this is likely to require funding being made available for capacity building and institutional development, including capital items that have application beyond the immediate project being funded, such as vehicles.<sup>154</sup> Dr Ahmed of HANDS Foundation in Pakistan emphasised the importance of recognising that local NGOs are non-profits. Being treated as contractors necessitates arrangements that are likely to come with prohibitively expensive requirements for guarantee deposits, and which re-direct more money away from the intended beneficiary.<sup>155</sup> Action Against Hunger complained that payment by results contracts “do not reflect the needs and reality of humanitarian programming and often fails to meet the needs of communities”.<sup>156</sup>

59. Ministers have expressed a desire for a foreign and development policy that prioritises partnership over paternalism.<sup>157</sup> Localising elements of the Government’s nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches provides a way of doing that.

60. **CONCLUSION**

The next frontier for international development programming and policy is the meaningful and mainstreamed inclusion of local decision making. Whether at national or regional government level, or closer to the grassroots at NGO or household level, the Government has some ambitious and worthy intentions. For example, we welcome the Government’s resolve to support the national plans of their Official Development Assistance-eligible partners. However, a concerted effort will be needed across the FCDO for these aspirations to become a reality.

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153 [Q143](#) [Mrs Mtonga]

154 See [Q136](#) [Dr Ahmed], [Q143](#) [Mrs Mtonga], Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 1.3.5

155 [Q144](#)

156 Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 1.3.2

157 See, for example, Foreign Secretary in September 2024 (FCDO, [The Kew Lecture: Foreign Secretary’s speech on the climate crisis, gov.uk, accessed 29 January 2025](#)) ; Minister Dodds in October 2024 (FCDO, [UK Minister for Development to give first major speech at Chatham House](#), accessed 29 January 2025)

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## 4 Leadership on the international stage

61. The early indications are that this Government intends to continue the legacy of the previous one in terms of leading the international effort toward achieving SDG2.<sup>158</sup> However, a failure to lead by example in making a pledge at the Nutrition for Growth summit in March 2025 could undermine this role. The previous Minister (Anneliese Dodds) ruled out such a pledge on the basis of the timing of the UK's Spending Review.<sup>159</sup> Much of the evidence received was highly complimentary of the FCDO's approach—and DFID's before it—to building international consensus and leveraging funding around this issue.<sup>160</sup> Achievements lauded were the convening of the first Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2013; the Global Food Security Summit; the G7 famine prevention and humanitarian access compact in 2021; championing the Agricultural Breakthrough initiative at UK hosted COP26; and leading the agenda on cash transfers in humanitarian response. In 2024, the UK signed up to Brazil's Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, which seeks to enable alignment between national and international support for achieving SDG1 and SDG2.<sup>161</sup> There is no room for complacency though, with Rory Stewart claiming that:

The UK Government are further away from achieving SDG2, Zero Hunger, and further away from being a major driver of the sustainable development goals, simply because they are a much less significant player in the international development space.<sup>162 163</sup>

Despite these efforts, there has not been a sufficient galvanising of a holistic approach to achieving the goal, even in the face of multiple hunger crises. The Minister did not agree that an overarching structure was needed

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158 With the Government's support of the Brazil led Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, and the support of the French hosted Nutrition for Growth summit.

159 See [Q172](#) [Anneliese Dodds]

160 See, for example, World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 12; Eleanor Crook Foundation ([SZH0009](#)); Mercy Corps ([SZH0017](#))

161 Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, [About us, accessed 29 January 2025](#)

162 [Q62](#)

163 Save the Children blamed the damage to the UK's leadership on the 2021 cuts ([SZH0014](#)) para 1.1

to coordinate the various initiatives underway. Instead, she favoured a focussed “policy sprint” by the UK and focusing on opportunities with quick results.<sup>164</sup>

62. The Government is right in wanting to respond to the national and regional plans of international partners but also needs to double-down on diplomatic efforts at securing a clear way forward that will build momentum and urgency of action as 2030 approaches.<sup>165</sup> Brieuc Pont hailed the UK’s convening power and encouraged continued use of its diplomatic resources to “bring initiatives, to make that collective push toward success.”<sup>166</sup> Mr Pont stressed the need for better coordination to avoid competition between different initiatives, however we would contest that a more comprehensive plan is needed to harmonise these various initiatives—something Plan International referred to as a “roadmap on food security and hunger”.<sup>167</sup>
63. The UK has the opportunity to lead on the reform of multilateral organisations and multilateral development banks, something the Minister told us was a priority for the Government.<sup>168</sup> Action Against Hunger put particular emphasis on improving the independent oversight of humanitarian protection through UN agencies. Evidence also stressed the need to support the World Bank with its ability to clarify environmental and social standards with stakeholders from the beginning of financing arrangements, and to champion the rights of smallholder farmers.<sup>169</sup> When looking at the International Development Association’s (IDA) focus areas, we heard that there is scope to strengthen the nutrition indicators of the IDA21 Results Measurement Systems. The Government has recently committed £1.98 billion over three years to the IDA. Yet there was no mention of food security or nutrition in the press statement. There was also no reference to the SDGs nor to reducing extreme poverty.<sup>170</sup>
64. Finally, as an industrialised nation that hosts one of the world’s key financial centres, the UK has an opportunity to lead efforts to secure non-ODA financial benefits in pursuit of SDG2—namely policies to encourage the investment of private finance, and the reform of international trade

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164 [Q188](#)

165 [Q166](#) [Anneliese Dodds]

166 [Q155](#)

167 Plan International UK ([SZH0001](#))

168 [Q166](#)

169 Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 3.2; Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 12

170 FCDO, [New UK investment to unlock billions to tackle root causes of irregular migration, climate change and growth crises](#), accessed 6 February 2025

rules.<sup>171</sup> The Financing for Development conference<sup>172</sup> in Seville in June 2025 will be an opportunity for the Government to lead in the efforts to mobilise greater levels of private finance toward achieving SDG2. Trade Justice suggested that a number of trade rules are considered at an international level to enable regional integration, and provide safeguards for low-income countries' markets. They also suggested reform or domestic support rules, to allow low-income countries the "policy space to support their agricultural sectors", as well as waivers for public stockholding for food security.<sup>173</sup> Save the Children stressed the need to address barriers to the access of climate finance and praised the previous Government's leadership on this. However, other challenges such as reduction of fiscal space due to levels of unsustainable debt in low-income countries contribute to underinvestment in services that contribute to achieving SDG2.<sup>174</sup> The Minister told us that the Government's approach to debt had revolved around climate-resilient debt clauses and had been influenced by the priorities of their partners such as Barbados. She recognised the enduring impact of debt on the ability for low-income countries to invest domestically and confirmed that the Government are "looking carefully" at the problem.<sup>175</sup>

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171 On mobilising private finance, see United Against Malnutrition and Hunger ([SZH0018](#)); on trade, see Ivica Petrikova ([SZH0006](#)) and Transform Trade ([SZH0007](#))

172 According to the UN: The International Conferences on Financing for Development are the only space where leaders from all governments, along with international and regional organizations, financial and trade institutions, businesses, civil society and the UN System unite at the highest levels, fostering stronger international cooperation. (UN, [The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development](#), accessed 4 February 2025)

173 Transform Trade ([SZH0007](#)) para 3

174 Save the Children ([SZH0014](#)) para iv) 9

175 [Q205](#)

### Box 3: Debt crisis

Debt has been identified as a constraining factor in the ability of low-income countries to invest in their food systems.<sup>176</sup> In its report *Debt relief in low-income countries*, the previous Committee identified the link between the supply of both foodstuffs and inputs resulting from the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022. A perfect storm of inflated prices and rising interest rates further compounded the debt crisis for many countries. The report made a number of recommendations to the previous Government to support countries in this position.

The Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, in his Kew lecture (September 2024), highlighted the issue but made no concrete commitment.<sup>177</sup> At the UN Summit of the Future, David Lammy called on “countries like Britain” to drive “faster reform of the global financial system to strengthen the voice of the most vulnerable and tackle unsustainable debt”.<sup>178</sup>

Minister for Development, Anneliese Dodds, made similar comments around “financial innovation” specifically promoting the “Climate Resilient Debt Clauses ... that we are calling on all creditors to offer in their current and future lending”.<sup>179</sup>

## 65. CONCLUSION

Successive UK Governments have been innovative and effective leaders in the efforts to tackle hunger. The UK has the convening power and expertise to be a considerable force for good in tackling the challenges of international fundraising, trade reform, climate and development policy which will be needed. However, the will to continue in this role must come from the top of Government and be undertaken with humility and in the spirit of partnership.

176 See for example, Save the Children (SZH0014); Joyce Banda, [Malawi’s former president: ‘Africa’s food systems are in danger of failing due to high debt and climate change. A new financial pact can reverse this’](#), Fortune, 22 June 2023, accessed 6 February 2025

177 FCDO, [The Kew Lecture: Foreign Secretary’s speech on the climate crisis](#), gov.uk, accessed 6 February 2025

178 FCDO, [A reformed multilateral system for peace and prosperity: Foreign Secretary speech at UN Summit of the Future](#), gov.uk, accessed 6 February 2025

179 FCDO, [Minister for Development speech at Chatham House](#), gov.uk, accessed 30 January 2025

**66. CONCLUSION**

The Government has an excellent opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to leadership on SDG2 by doing everything it can to ensure that the Nutrition for Growth summit is a success. We wait with anticipation for the announcements the Government intends to make at the summit regarding the integration of programming around this goal. Beyond this, there is scope for the Government to use its convening power to coordinate a series of international actions and milestones to harmonise the work of the various fora working on aspects of the Goal.

**67. RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend the Government lead by example at the Nutrition for Growth summit with a commitment to making a generous and well-targeted pledge as well as a new reach commitment on nutrition and food security within the next six months. This would focus efforts and improve accountability.

**68. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should attend the Financing for Development conference in June with new and innovative solutions for the raising of private investment toward addressing malnutrition and building sustainable food systems.

**69. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should lead action on debt relief for countries affected by hunger and malnutrition including exploring the potential of debt suspension clauses for low-income countries at high risk of backsliding on food security and nutrition.

**70. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should work internationally to drive coherence around SDG 2 championing the idea of an international plan to advance efforts to tackle hunger and malnutrition.

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## 5 Learning and application of best practice

*The world is changing. There is not enough evidence today that captures the conditions that the farming communities are having to face. We hear about conflict, but it is the extreme events from climate change that are changing the data we rely on.*<sup>180</sup>

- 71.** The UK has a rich history of agricultural development, innovation in nutrition solutions, social anthropology, climate research, meteorological capacity, and programming that tackles multiple drivers of hunger.<sup>181</sup> Over the course of the inquiry, Members saw first-hand the work on food security and nutrition being undertaken by Kew Gardens during the previous parliament. We also heard from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, of which the FCDO was the third-largest funder.<sup>182</sup> Allowing a Zero Hunger delivery framework (Chapter 6) to guide the development of the research that the Government commissions, and measuring the impact of these, is crucial to investing in what works.
- 72.** We agree with the Government that the leveraging of UK research institutions in the endeavour to eradicate hunger is a highly cost-effective approach, but it requires intentional resourcing and oversight.<sup>183</sup> ICAI’s 2023 review of UK aid to agriculture observed that “increased spending through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) reduced the overall developmental relevance of the UK’s official development assistance (ODA) to agricultural research.” It stated that the involvement of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) improved the GCRF’s development relevance but not in a sufficiently effective and timely manner.<sup>184</sup> CAFOD raised concerns that the majority of research projects “were not relevant to the needs of smallholder

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180 [Q88](#) [Dr McDonnell]

181 See for example, the UK’s relationship with the CGIAR’s work on wheat varieties (Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office ([SZH0022](#)) para 12)

182 [Q108](#) [Dr McDonnell]

183 Then Minister for International Development, Anneliese Dodds, told the Committee of the importance of investments in research institutions in the UK both for innovations that impact hunger in the “global south” but also outlined the benefit for UK farmers. (see [Q204](#) and [Q194](#))

184 ICAI, [UK aid to agriculture in a time of climate change](#), accessed 29 January 2025, para 5.4



farmers and communities[...].<sup>185</sup> Moreover, most of these involved a focus on new technologies but few on facilitating effective participation with the farmers who would ultimately be using the technology.<sup>186</sup> The collaboration with affected communities, particularly the inclusion of women, youth and smallholder farmers, in this research is absolutely vital for success.<sup>187</sup> These groups should be empowered to play a meaningful part in the development of the solutions to the problems they face, and the research they contribute to needs to be shared with them in an accessible way. Use of artificial intelligence has the potential to bring benefits<sup>188</sup> but needs to be equitable, with civil society involved in its design and ethical considerations being applied to the collection and use of data.<sup>189</sup>

- 73.** With limited time remaining until 2030 and development budgets squeezed, the world no longer has the luxury of spending without a solid research base. Despite the commitment by the Foreign Secretary to research, particularly relating to climate and diversity, there is still a lack of clarity over exactly how this will relate to addressing the causes of hunger and malnutrition.<sup>190</sup> It is important that the Government focus on the solutions that have been proven to be effective, and that decision making is data-led.<sup>191</sup> This approach, however, must not be at the expense of the inclusion of the unique environmental, cultural and economic factors at the local level that will be crucial for achieving sustainable results.<sup>192</sup> The Government must also continue to invest in “blended finance”<sup>193</sup> options, as government donors are unlikely to be able to provide all the investment needed.<sup>194</sup>

**74. CONCLUSION**

The UK has a tremendous array of research institutes and a strong history of contributing to the fields of nutrition and food security. There is more the Government could be doing to make use of these resources and to integrate learning into programming.

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185 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 16–17

186 Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) ([SZH0013](#)) para 16–17

187 [Q99](#) [Dr Onyano]; [Q68](#) [Dr Puri]

188 See, for example, Q70 [Rory Stewart] and UK SDG Data and Policy Hub, Newcastle University ([SZH0016](#))

189 See CARE International, [AI and the Global South: Exploring the role of Civil Society in AI Decision-Making](#), accessed 29 January 2025

190 (FCDO, [The Kew Lecture: Foreign Secretary’s speech on the climate crisis, gov.uk, accessed 29 January 2025](#))

191 For example, Dr Puri commended the importance of randomised control trials and the importance of identifying what works in any given context. [Q66](#)

192 See Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)) para 1.3.3; [Q68](#) [Dr Puri]

193 Blended finance refers to the combining of public and private funding.

194 [Q109](#) [Dr McDonnell]

**75. CONCLUSION**

The potential of local knowledge and understanding in developing solutions to nutrition and food security challenges, particularly in terms of climate adaption and mitigation, is not always fully realised.

**76. CONCLUSION**

Beyond the OECD Development Assistance Committee nutrition indicators, monitoring of the contribution that the FCDO's programming is making toward the SDG2 goal has been insufficient. In order to know and understand what works, the FCDO needs a common set of indicators that can be measured at multiple levels.

**77.** In terms of focusing on what works, one example is around efforts to tackle childhood stunting and wasting—target 2.2 of the SDG.<sup>195</sup> Grainne Moloney, of UNICEF, described how seed financing for the Child Nutrition Fund had helped national governments “double their investment”, raising an additional \$168 million from private sources since 2021. Global action has helped reduce childhood stunting by one third since 2000 but now it is clear what works. Continued funding which is targeted to those most in need is crucial for success—currently over 75% of children experiencing wasting have “little or no access to Ready-to-use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) [...]”.<sup>196</sup> Dr Mandara agreed but stressed the need for local production of products that work, such as the RUTF and Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation packs, in order to increase sustainability, and there was praise for the former Government on progress made in this respect.<sup>197</sup> The cost-effectiveness of addressing maternal and child malnutrition yields between \$16 and \$23 for every \$1 spent.<sup>198</sup> According to a group of philanthropic organisations who submitted evidence, RUTF costs less than \$1 per child per day, and has recovery rates ranging between 70% and 90% of children treated.<sup>199</sup> The Minister, in what came across as a cautious openness to greater working with philanthropic organisations, emphasised the importance on ensuring that such initiatives are in line with the priorities of the target countries and communities.<sup>200</sup> She has also confirmed that the

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195 See, for example, Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#))

196 Action Against Hunger UK ([SZH0005](#)); Eleanor Crook Foundation ([SZH0009](#)); Eleanor Crook Foundation, Children's Investment Fund Foundation ([SZH0029](#))

197 [Q47](#); and United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) ([SZH0021](#)) para 8.2.5

198 World Food Programme ([SZH0008](#)) para 18

199 Eleanor Crook Foundation, Children's Investment Fund Foundation ([SZH0029](#))

200 [Q169](#)

Government will be supporting the Joint UN Initiative on the Prevention of Wasting's efforts to strengthen its evidence base with regards to effective approaches in this field.<sup>201</sup>

**78. CONCLUSION**

We support the Government's commitment to strengthening the evidence base for the prevention of child wasting.

**79. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should work with governments and organisations to ensure continued long-term, predictable financial support for Ready-to use Therapeutic Foods and Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation packs, to address the needs of children and pregnant women in humanitarian situations. This should support local production, where possible, and partner with national governments in the promotion of their use. In addition, we recommend the Government take advantage of the match-funding mechanism of the Child Nutrition Fund as part of its Nutrition for Growth pledge, to mobilise domestic resources and philanthropic funding to address malnutrition. To take full advantage of this, we recommend the Government pledge at least £50 million to the Child Nutrition Fund, as part of its Nutrition for Growth pledge, to maximise these opportunities.

**80.** As explored in Chapter 1 in more detail, cash transfers are another approach to tackling hunger with a growing body of evidence to support it.

**81. CONCLUSION**

We can see the potential for much wider application of cash transfers as a tool to tackle hunger. However, we also appreciate they need to complement other components of a sustainable food system.

**82. RECOMMENDATION**

We urge the Government to continue to explore the application of cash transfers alongside a locally led process of agricultural and nutritional development.

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201 Letter from then Minister for International Development regarding the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, [13 December 2024](#)

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## 6 Toward solutions— The Zero Hunger strategic delivery framework

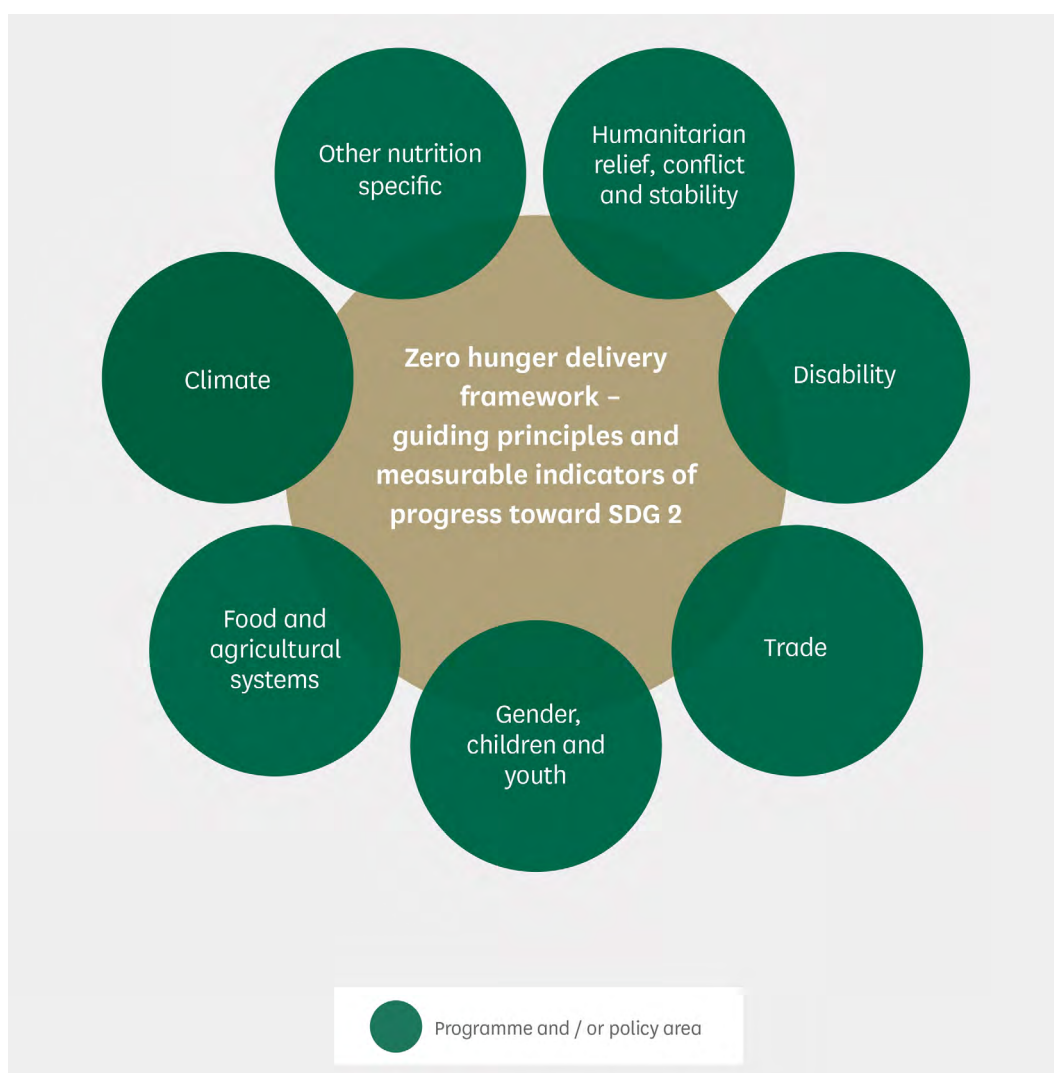
83. A *Zero Hunger delivery framework* could support all Government programming and policy with linkages to SDG2 to consider the goal in their design.<sup>202</sup> Figure 6 shows that the framework would impact on a number of areas and different Government departments. By building in the principles of placing **local action** at the centre of design and implementation, continuing to invest in the UK’s **leadership** on collective action, and a commitment to **learning and application of research**, the delivery framework can enable the rapid scaling up of activity. Such focus will be needed to make significant progress on the goal before 2030 and is explored in more detail in subsequent chapters. The Minister suggested that what was needed was an “integration mindset” rather than a strategy.<sup>203</sup> However, a focused approach with the resources needed to implement it will be key to enabling such a mindset to translate into improved programming—the mindset, on its own, is unlikely to be enough.

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202 Mercy Corps ([SZH0017](#))

203 [Q189](#)

**Figure 6: Policy and programme interactions for a zero hunger delivery framework**



**84. CONCLUSION**

We are encouraged that the department appears to understand the importance of harmonising development programming and the importance of considering issues of age, gender, nutrition and food security across the piece. However, it is important that this Government build on the progress of the last by identifying where there is still room for improvement, adequately focussing on addressing underlying causes of hunger, and addressing any inconsistency in policy. It is also important that this is seen as a whole of Government approach rather than simply one that impacts departments spending Official Development Assistance, and that measurement of progress is vital across the full range of programming.

85.

**RECOMMENDATION**

We recommend that by the end of 2025 a Zero Hunger strategic delivery framework is created that acknowledges the complex interrelationships between climate, gender, disability, conflict, food security and nutrition. The framework should have clear and practical guidance for civil servants and delivery partners as to how programming should take into account aspects of SDG2 in its design and how they can access technical support. Specifically:

- a. It should facilitate impact measurement for how programming contributes to SDG2 using the OECD Development Assistance Committee nutrition indicators, as well as consistent indicators on sustainable food systems. There should also be guidance on disaggregated data collection for women, youth and people with disabilities as well as a designated hub for the processing of the data.
- b. The framework should have inter-departmental applicability ensuring all programming receiving Official Development Assistance is being guided by its principles and objectives.
- c. We recommend all programmes eligible for funding should be required to demonstrate alignment to the strategy and set out how they address or consider the complex dimensions of hunger.
- d. We recommend that the delivery framework provides clear principles to guide UK diplomatic and trade activity as it relates to achieving SDG2 and guidance on how to measure policy impact in this area.
- e. As part of the framework, we recommend that the FCDO implement a standardised approach for lessons learning and information sharing between locally and centrally managed programme staff.

86.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Within the Zero Hunger delivery framework we recommend significant attention is paid to increasing local ownership across the breadth of FCDO programming that impacts on, or is impacted by, nutrition and food security:

- a. As part of the Zero Hunger strategic framework, the Government should set an ambition for the percentage of Zero Hunger related funding to be delivered by local organisations by 2028.
- b. Specific guidance on local ownership should support staff and partners in setting risk thresholds appropriate to this way of working and flexible approaches to processes. Specifically, the

Government needs to consider how it can make its tendering process more accessible for small and medium sized businesses, and local organisations, to apply for and deliver.

- c. Funding mechanisms should be more flexible to the needs of individual local partners and, where necessary, allow for longer project cycles, higher in direct costs, in order to achieve the capacity-building required to close any gaps between accountability requirements and local capacity.
- d. We encourage the Government to take every opportunity to support its Official Development Assistance-eligible partners in their own plans around food systems and nutrition.

**87. RECOMMENDATION**

Beyond the Nutrition for Growth summit, we encourage the Government to see SDG2 as an issue of vital strategic importance to the UK's national and international interests. Consequently, it should be adopted as a cross-cutting issue across diplomatic activity with heads of missions being made aware of its linkages and obliged to report on activity towards this goal as part of their internal reporting processes. Guidance should be given as part of the Zero Hunger delivery framework.

**88. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government needs to re-double its efforts to reform the financial systems which precipitate the strangling unsustainable debt faced by many food-insecure countries. The Government should state clearly what it intends to do regarding the reform of financial systems that stifle investment in low-income countries.

**89. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government needs to ensure that research is coherent with its aspirations to fighting hunger and considers the inter-related factors facing nutrition and food systems. As part of the Zero Hunger delivery framework there should be clear guidance on this to those commissioning research.

**90. RECOMMENDATION**

The Government should review the staffing complement and structure working on SDG2 across departments, and the anticipated need in coming years, hiring new staff where needed.

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# Conclusions and recommendations

## Progress toward SDG2 – Zero Hunger

1. The world is off target to achieve SDG2 and shows signs of waning in its resolve. An urgent and concerted effort at local, national and international levels is required to not only tackle the effects of poor nutrition and food insecurity, but also the underlying causes. All activities need to prioritise the inclusion and strengthening of food systems. (Conclusion, Paragraph 9)
2. Climate change and hunger are intrinsically linked. We recognise the emphasis the Government is putting on improving the impact of climate finance as it relates to food systems. (Conclusion, Paragraph 15)
3. We recommend the Government conduct an assessment of UK climate finance to ensure it addresses the impact of climate change on nutrition and food systems. The UK's agricultural investments need to be assessed more rigorously for the adaptation and mitigation challenges posed by climate change. (Recommendation, Paragraph 16)
4. The inclusion of women in the design of Zero Hunger policy and programming is vital for equitable and cost-effective progress toward SDG2. Moreover, programming that does not use carefully disaggregated data to ensure it is sensitive to both gender and age dimensions of hunger is unlikely to achieve sustainable results. (Conclusion, Paragraph 20)
5. We call on the Government to renew its focus on improving both the gender relevance of nutrition-specific funding as well as the sensitivity of gender-specific programming to food systems and nutrition. (Recommendation, Paragraph 21)
6. Smallholder farmers in low-income countries are vital players in sustainable food systems. We welcome some of the steps taken to assess the impact of new trade deals on low-income countries. Currently, though, there is more to be done to ensure that the range of tools the UK has to alleviate poverty are sensitive to the role smallholders have to play, and the factors that determine their success or failure. (Conclusion, Paragraph 28)



7. We recommend the Government assess its trade, agriculture, climate and gender programmes against the impact they have on smallholder farmers. Where necessary, these programmes should be adjusted to mitigate harm against smallholder farmers and to enhance their place within sustainable food systems. (Recommendation, Paragraph 29)
8. Disabled people are particularly vulnerable to hunger and their needs must be incorporated into all Zero Hunger focussed programming. The Government have made important steps in this direction. (Conclusion, Paragraph 31)
9. We recommend the Government specifically address the linkages between nutrition and disability in the refresh of the Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy. We request the relevant section of the updated strategy is shared with the Committee. (Recommendation, Paragraph 32)
10. Conflict breeds hunger and hunger breeds conflict. We recommend that stabilisation and peace building at both the programme and diplomatic level is made a priority for the Government as it seeks to end hunger by 2030. (Recommendation, Paragraph 36)

## **UK Government spending and programme integration**

11. The handling of the merger of DFID with the FCO, and that of the subsequent sudden and drastic cuts in programme spending, was very damaging for the UK's efforts toward SDG2. Not only did it damage the UK's reputation as a leader and innovator toward the goal of ending hunger and malnutrition but reduced the support to millions of people around the world who depended on these programmes. (Conclusion, Paragraph 40)
12. The reduction of ODA from 0.5% to 0.3% of GNI in February 2025 could not have come at a worse time, with cuts in donor spending across Europe and in the United States of America and ever-increasing need. If the Government fails to learn the lessons from the handling of the cuts in 2020, the misery inflicted on millions will be incalculable, the progress that has been made will stall, and the damage to the UK's reputation will be all but impossible to reverse. We urge the Government to reconsider the reduction in Official Development Assistance. (Recommendation, Paragraph 41)
13. We recommend that the FCDO put measures in place to ensure that all Official Development Assistance committed to nutrition and food security related programming is predictable and long term, with better safeguards against, and warnings of, any changes to funding agreements with delivery partners. We request the Government outline clearly in their response how

it intends to ensure future programmes keep to these standards, and to send us an update on the detail of the implementation measures before the summer Parliamentary recess. (Recommendation, Paragraph 42)

14. Where cuts are to be made as part of this spending review, we request the Government informs the Committee of the steps it will take to ensure that there will be a phased transition with clear communication to implementing partners, avoiding some of the damage that was done when budgets were reduced in 2020. (Recommendation, Paragraph 43)
15. UK trade policy needs to reflect the Government's aspirations for achieving SDG2 with a continued commitment to comprehensive assessments of the impact of trade deals on food-insecure populations and a focus on reforming trading rules that compound food insecurity. (Conclusion, Paragraph 52)
16. Ensuring the FCDO attracts and retains the highest level of expertise is key for maintaining value for money and delivering effective programming. The Government needs to be ready to invest in both existing and new expertise. (Conclusion, Paragraph 55)

## Localisation

17. The next frontier for international development programming and policy is the meaningful and mainstreamed inclusion of local decision making. Whether at national or regional government level, or closer to the grassroots at NGO or household level, the Government has some ambitious and worthy intentions. For example, we welcome the Government's resolve to support the national plans of their Official Development Assistance-eligible partners. However, a concerted effort will be needed across the FCDO for these aspirations to become a reality. (Conclusion, Paragraph 60)

## Leadership on the international stage

18. Successive UK Governments have been innovative and effective leaders in the efforts to tackle hunger. The UK has the convening power and expertise to be a considerable force for good in tackling the challenges of international fundraising, trade reform, climate and development policy which will be needed. However, the will to continue in this role must come from the top of Government and be undertaken with humility and in the spirit of partnership. (Conclusion, Paragraph 65)

19. The Government has an excellent opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to leadership on SDG2 by doing everything it can to ensure that the Nutrition for Growth summit is a success. We wait with anticipation for the announcements the Government intends to make at the summit regarding the integration of programming around this goal. Beyond this, there is scope for the Government to use its convening power to coordinate a series of international actions and milestones to harmonise the work of the various fora working on aspects of the Goal. (Conclusion, Paragraph 66)
20. We recommend the Government lead by example at the Nutrition for Growth summit with a commitment to making a generous and well-targeted pledge as well as a new reach commitment on nutrition and food security within the next six months. This would focus efforts and improve accountability. (Recommendation, Paragraph 67)
21. The Government should attend the Financing for Development conference in June with new and innovative solutions for the raising of private investment toward addressing malnutrition and building sustainable food systems. (Recommendation, Paragraph 68)
22. The Government should lead action on debt relief for countries affected by hunger and malnutrition including exploring the potential of debt suspension clauses for low-income countries at high risk of backsliding on food security and nutrition. (Recommendation, Paragraph 69)
23. The Government should work internationally to drive coherence around SDG 2 championing the idea of an international plan to advance efforts to tackle hunger and malnutrition. (Recommendation, Paragraph 70)

## Learning and application of best practice

24. The UK has a tremendous array of research institutes and a strong history of contributing to the fields of nutrition and food security. There is more the Government could be doing to make use of these resources and to integrate learning into programming. (Conclusion, Paragraph 74)
25. The potential of local knowledge and understanding in developing solutions to nutrition and food security challenges, particularly in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation, is not always fully realised. (Conclusion, Paragraph 75)
26. Beyond the OECD Development Assistance Committee nutrition indicators, monitoring of the contribution that the FCDO's programming is making toward the SDG2 goal has been insufficient. In order to know and understand what works, the FCDO needs a common set of indicators that can be measured at multiple levels. (Conclusion, Paragraph 76)

27. We support the Government's commitment to strengthening the evidence base for the prevention of child wasting. (Conclusion, Paragraph 78)
28. The Government should work with governments and organisations to ensure continued long-term, predictable financial support for Ready-to-use Therapeutic Foods and Multiple Micronutrient Supplementation packs, to address the needs of children and pregnant women in humanitarian situations. This should support local production, where possible, and partner with national governments in the promotion of their use. In addition, we recommend the Government take advantage of the match-funding mechanism of the Child Nutrition Fund as part of its Nutrition for Growth pledge, to mobilise domestic resources and philanthropic funding to address malnutrition. To take full advantage of this, we recommend the Government pledge at least £50 million to the Child Nutrition Fund, as part of its Nutrition for Growth pledge, to maximise these opportunities. (Recommendation, Paragraph 79)
29. We can see the potential for much wider application of cash transfers as a tool to tackle hunger. However, we also appreciate they need to complement other components of a sustainable food system. (Conclusion, Paragraph 81)
30. We urge the Government to continue to explore the application of cash transfers alongside a locally led process of agricultural and nutritional development. (Recommendation, Paragraph 82)

## **Toward solutions—The Zero Hunger strategic delivery framework**

31. We are encouraged that the department appears to understand the importance of harmonising development programming and the importance of considering issues of age, gender, nutrition and food security across the piece. However, it is important that this Government build on the progress of the last by identifying where there is still room for improvement, adequately focussing on addressing underlying causes of hunger, and addressing any inconsistency in policy. It is also important that this is seen as a whole of Government approach rather than simply one that impacts departments spending Official Development Assistance, and that measurement of progress is vital across the full range of programming. (Conclusion, Paragraph 84)
32. We recommend that by the end of 2025 a Zero Hunger strategic delivery framework is created that acknowledges the complex interrelationships between climate, gender, disability, conflict, food security and nutrition. The framework should have clear and practical guidance for civil servants

and delivery partners as to how programming should take into account aspects of SDG2 in its design and how they can access technical support. Specifically:

- a.** It should facilitate impact measurement for how programming contributes to SDG2 using the OECD Development Assistance Committee nutrition indicators, as well as consistent indicators on sustainable food systems. There should also be guidance on disaggregated data collection for women, youth and people with disabilities as well as a designated hub for the processing of the data.
  - b.** The framework should have inter-departmental applicability ensuring all programming receiving Official Development Assistance is being guided by its principles and objectives.
  - c.** We recommend all programmes eligible for funding should be required to demonstrate alignment to the strategy and set out how they address or consider the complex dimensions of hunger.
  - d.** We recommend that the delivery framework provides clear principles to guide UK diplomatic and trade activity as it relates to achieving SDG2 and guidance on how to measure policy impact in this area.
  - e.** As part of the framework, we recommend that the FCDO implement a standardised approach for lessons learning and information sharing between locally and centrally managed programme staff. (Recommendation, Paragraph 85)
- 33.** Within the Zero Hunger delivery framework we recommend significant attention is paid to increasing local ownership across the breadth of FCDO programming that impacts on, or is impacted by, nutrition and food security:
- a.** As part of the Zero Hunger strategic framework, the Government should set an ambition for the percentage of Zero Hunger related funding to be delivered by local organisations by 2028.
  - b.** Specific guidance on local ownership should support staff and partners in setting risk thresholds appropriate to this way of working and flexible approaches to processes. Specifically, the Government needs to consider how it can make its tendering process more accessible for small and medium sized businesses, and local organisations, to apply for and deliver.

- c.** Funding mechanisms should be more flexible to the needs of individual local partners and, where necessary, allow for longer project cycles, higher in direct costs, in order to achieve the capacity-building required to close any gaps between accountability requirements and local capacity.
  - d.** We encourage the Government to take every opportunity to support its Official Development Assistance-eligible partners in their own plans around food systems and nutrition. (Recommendation, Paragraph 86)
- 34.** Beyond the Nutrition for Growth summit, we encourage the Government to see SDG2 as an issue of vital strategic importance to the UK's national and international interests. Consequently, it should be adopted as a cross-cutting issue across diplomatic activity with heads of missions being made aware of its linkages and obliged to report on activity towards this goal as part of their internal reporting processes. Guidance should be given as part of the Zero Hunger delivery framework. (Recommendation, Paragraph 87)
- 35.** The Government needs to re-double its efforts to reform the financial systems which precipitate the strangling unsustainable debt faced by many food-insecure countries. The Government should state clearly what it intends to do regarding the reform of financial systems that stifle investment in low-income countries. (Recommendation, Paragraph 88)
- 36.** The Government needs to ensure that research is coherent with its aspirations to fighting hunger and considers the inter-related factors facing nutrition and food systems. As part of the Zero Hunger delivery framework there should be clear guidance on this to those commissioning research. (Recommendation, Paragraph 89)
- 37.** The Government should review the staffing complement and structure working on SDG2 across departments, and the anticipated need in coming years, hiring new staff where needed. (Recommendation, Paragraph 90)

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## Annex: Targets of SDG2

2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

2.a Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

2.b Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round.

2.c Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility.<sup>204</sup>

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204 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture](#), (accessed 29 January 2025)



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# Formal minutes

**Tuesday 11 March 2025**

## **Members present:**

Rt Hon David Mundell, in the Chair

Monica Harding

Noah Law

Brian Mathew

David Reed

Sam Rushworth

David Taylor

## **The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger**

Draft Report (*The Government's efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 90 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Third Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

[Adjourned till Tuesday 25 March at 1.30 p.m.]

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# Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee’s website.

## Tuesday 30 January 2024

**Victor Mughogho**, Executive Director, Eagles Malawi; **Tariro Washaya**, Programme Manager, MeDRA (Methodist Relief and Development Agency) Zimbabwe [Q1–12](#)

**Abigail Perry**, Director of Nutrition, World Food Programme; **Florian Monnerie**, Country Director for Action Against Hunger DRC, Action against Hunger [Q13–37](#)

**Dr Mairo Mandara**, Global Leadership Council Member, United Against Malnutrition and Hunger; **Grainne Moloney**, Senior Nutrition Adviser, UNICEF [Q38–54](#)

## Tuesday 12 March 2024

**Rt Hon Rory Stewart**, President, Give Directly; **Jyotsna Puri**, Associate Vice-President, Strategy & Knowledge, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) [Q55–83](#)

**Ruchi Tripathi**, Global Lead on Livelihoods and Resilience, VSO; **Dr Diana Onyango**, Head of Technical Team, Farm Africa; **Dr Rachael McDonnell**, Deputy Director General of IWMI, and Senior Program Director Water Systems, CGIAR [Q84–113](#)

## Tuesday 10 December 2024

**Ms Massiye Nyang’wa**, Smallholder farmer, Malawi; **Violet Natembeya**, Smallholder farmer, Kenya [Q114–129](#)

**Mrs Melina Mtonga**, Executive Director, Find Your Feet Malawi; **Dr. Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed**, Chief Executive, HANDS Foundation [Q130–145](#)

**Mr Briec Pont**, Special Envoy on Nutrition and Secretary General of the “Nutrition for Growth” Summit, Government of France [Q146–164](#)

## Tuesday 4 February 2025

**Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds MP**, Minister for Development, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **Jen Haugen**, Deputy Director, Global Food Security, Agriculture and Land Department, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; **Chris Carter**, Deputy Director, Head of Human Development Department, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

[Q165-210](#)

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# Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

SZH numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1	Action Against Hunger UK	<a href="#">SZH0005</a>
2	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)	<a href="#">SZH0013</a>
3	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research	<a href="#">SZH0027</a>
4	Eleanor Crook Foundation	<a href="#">SZH0009</a>
5	Eleanor Crook Foundation and Children's Investment Fund Foundation	<a href="#">SZH0029</a>
6	Fledderjohann, Dr Jasmine (Senior Lecturer, Lancaster University); Vasudev, Dr Charumita (Postdoctoral Research Associate, Lancaster University); Rathi, Dr Ankita (Postdoctoral Research Associate, Lancaster University); Dr Swayamshree Mishra (Postdoctoral Research Associate, Lancaster University); and Argaw, Dr Thomas (Postdoctoral Research Associate, Lancaster University)	<a href="#">SZH0015</a>
7	Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office	<a href="#">SZH0022</a>
8	Give Directly	<a href="#">SZH0025</a>
9	IFAD	<a href="#">SZH0028</a>
10	International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN UK); and Action Against Hunger UK	<a href="#">SZH0019</a>
11	MAG (Mines Advisory Group)	<a href="#">SZH0012</a>
12	Mercy Corps	<a href="#">SZH0017</a>
13	Met Office	<a href="#">SZH0020</a>
14	Petrikova, Ivica (Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, Royal Holloway University of London)	<a href="#">SZH0006</a>
15	Plan International UK	<a href="#">SZH0001</a>
16	Results UK	<a href="#">SZH0010</a>
17	Ripple Effect International	<a href="#">SZH0024</a>

18	Save the Children	<a href="#"><u>SZH0014</u></a>
19	Scotland's Rural College	<a href="#"><u>SZH0004</u></a>
20	Transform Trade	<a href="#"><u>SZH0007</u></a>
21	UK SDG Data and Policy Hub, Newcastle University	<a href="#"><u>SZH0016</u></a>
22	UNICEF UK	<a href="#"><u>SZH0023</u></a>
23	United Against Malnutrition and Hunger	<a href="#"><u>SZH0018</u></a>
24	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK)	<a href="#"><u>SZH0021</u></a>
25	VSO	<a href="#"><u>SZH0011</u></a>
26	WaterAid	<a href="#"><u>SZH0026</u></a>
27	World Food Programme	<a href="#"><u>SZH0008</u></a>

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# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2024–25

Number	Title	Reference
2nd	Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory	HC 373
1st	Appointment of the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact	HC 448
2nd Special	The UK Small Island Developing States Strategy: Government Response	HC 597
1st Special	FCDO and disability-inclusive development: Government Response	HC 568