



Employing Evidence in Policy Advocacy to Mobilise Parliamentarians on Nutrition in Tanzania: Some Lessons from the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI)

Hunger and undernutrition remain formidable global development challenges. Sustainable Development Goal 2, agreed in September 2015, explicitly promises to 'end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture'. To achieve this, the routine measurement of levels of hunger and undernutrition, which has failed to promote adequate public accountability, must be complemented with systematic monitoring of government efforts addressing hunger and malnutrition.

This case study shares experiences from a collaboration between Partnership for Action on Nutrition in Tanzania (PANITA) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS, UK), using HANCI evidence to support policy advocacy with the Tanzanian Parliamentary

Group for Nutrition, Food Security and Child Rights (PG-NFSCR). The lessons are intended to help other CSOs think through the ways in which they can utilise and apply HANCI data in their own in-country advocacy work.

↑ A lady holds a basket of unripe maize, Chiwerere village.

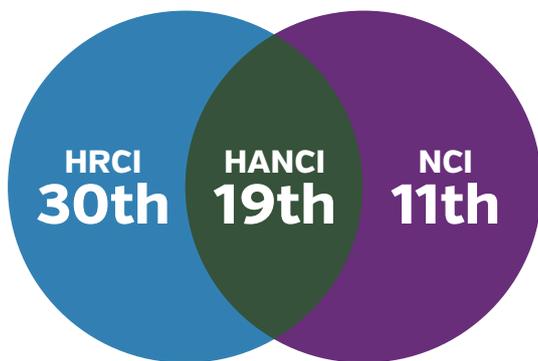
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The Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI)

The Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI) uses 22 indicators of political commitment to tackling hunger and undernutrition to rank the performance of 45 high-burden countries. HANCI separately analyses commitment to hunger reduction (10 indicators) and commitment to addressing undernutrition (12 indicators). The index provides civil society organisations (CSOs) with a comparable international ranking and individual country scorecards, and is backed up by expert survey data and audio-visual documentation of community perspectives in five countries (Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Bangladesh and Nepal).

Hunger, nutrition and political commitment in Tanzania

Although Tanzania has been classed as food self-sufficient since 2005 (PG-NFSCR 2013), seasonal food shortages and emergency hunger interventions regularly occur in rural areas. According to a nationally representative Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) 2014 survey, chronic malnutrition is endemic with 34 per cent of children aged less than five years old in Tanzania stunted, or too short for their age. Tanzania is one of the 14 countries in the world which, together account for 80 per cent of all stunted children (UNICEF 2013). Additionally, micronutrient deficiencies remain a challenge: 40 per cent of women of reproductive age are anaemic and one quarter of young children are vitamin A deficient (Global Nutrition Report Tanzania Profile 2014).



Tanzania ranks 19th in the HANCI 2014 index (down from 8th in 2012 and 7th in 2013). Although President Kikwete has championed nutrition, perception surveys with 42 Tanzania-based experts conducted in 2013 indicate that political commitment to action on nutrition is weaker than political commitment to hunger. The survey also highlighted that:

- Budget lines for nutrition are small and financing mechanisms are weak;
- Policy is not well implemented and there is poor coordination between district and national authorities;
- Implementers have weak incentives to deliver better nutrition outcomes;

- Despite strong top-level political leadership, the majority of politicians do not fully understand underlying causes and potential solutions to address hunger and undernutrition;
- Political party manifestos give insufficient attention to hunger and nutrition.

Meet the key players



The Partnership for Nutrition in Tanzania (PANITA)

An independent civil society platform with over 300 non-governmental organisation (NGO) and CSO members. PANITA is a credible, respected and well networked partner representing civil society in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement and member of the Government of Tanzania's High Level Steering Committee for Nutrition (HLSCN).

PANITA aims to advance advocacy efforts for:

- Increased prioritisation of nutrition in development plans;
- Improved coordination for nutrition;
- Strengthened nutrition outcomes.

The Parliamentary Group for Nutrition, Food Security and Child Rights (PG-NFSCR)

Formed in 2011 by Members of Parliament (MPs) from across party political groups, PANITA and Save the Children International have been working with the PG-NFSCR to advocate for prioritisation of nutrition in development plans and budgets at national, district and community levels. The PG-NFSCR has published a Strategic Plan (2013–17) to coordinate its efforts.

Key objectives of the PG-NFSCR include:

- Raising public awareness and education;
- Strengthening parliamentary oversight on nutrition, food security and child rights;
- Influencing budgets for nutrition in councils and ministries;
- Mainstreaming and coordinating issues across sectors.



How it all began: co-constructing evidence- informed policy advocacy messages

In June 2013 researchers from IDS met with members of PANITA's CSO network to share the HANCI 2012 data and emerging lessons from the documentation of community perspectives. The objective was to identify if and how HANCI findings could offer useful evidence for ongoing advocacy (see page 6). CSO representatives stressed the importance of nurturing key strategic relationships with government officers as well as Members of Parliament (MPs), and suggested a need for a one-page Tanzania-specific overview of the index, as well as the development of bespoke targeted messages in Swahili.

In preparation for a follow-up outreach and dialogue event with members of the PG-NFSCR and PANITA, IDS and PANITA worked together to identify which aspects, out of a rich set of HANCI evidence, could best support national policy advocacy. A joint review of PANITA's advocacy strategy (2012–14) revealed two key areas. PANITA then shared the objectives of the current

PG-NFSCR strategic plan and the 2013 Presidential Call to Action on Nutrition with the group and mapped these key objectives and issues onto the two key areas. The partners then interrogated the HANCI secondary data (outlined in the HANCI 2013 Tanzania scorecard) and primary data from expert perception surveys to identify key pieces of supporting evidence. Emergent messages were further cross-referenced with the Tanzanian Nutrition Landscape Analysis (WHO 2012) and a Policy Mapping exercise PANITA had commissioned. The process of starting from PANITA's position and cross-referencing with other locally grounded agendas and research allowed PANITA and IDS to craft four policy advocacy messages that aimed to appeal to the PG-NFSCR agenda, and that was sensitive to the political context.

The four advocacy messages were devised in Swahili and English which highlighted nutrition problems, why they matter, and solid evidence for these. Critically, the messages did not propose any specific solutions or 'asks' as PANITA considered that this would trigger self-directed action and result in the members of the PG-NFSCR taking ownership of the 'next steps'.

↑ Sorghum ready for selling at Chiwerere village.
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Three advocacy messages tackled the topics of Budgets for Action; Policy Coordination for Mainstreaming; and Evidence for Policy. The fourth policy advocacy message

“Hunger spending is [...] strongly sensitive to electoral cycles, in contrast to nutrition spending. This suggests that politicians anticipate that people vote on the basis of having their stomach filled, but limited knowledge and active physical experience of chronic undernutrition makes it harder to translate this into political currency.”

[HANCI 2013 report]

particularly highlighted the issue of political commitment in relation to the Tanzanian political and policy agenda-setting process. It was based on the 2013 HANCI survey of 42 Tanzania-based experts which had revealed that while political party manifestos were recognised as influential shapers of future policy direction, these manifestos weakly referenced

hunger and nutrition as goals. With elections on the horizon [in October 2015] this message highlighted the need for party-political manifestos to more strongly declare the importance of acting on hunger and undernutrition.

↓ **Preparing fish ready for selling, Kijiwani village.**

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Using evidence-informed advocacy messages to generate new commitments

In November 2013 the outreach event with the PG-NFSCR, which included two deputy ministers, and members of the PANITA network took place. PANITA members were able to show their support for the parliamentary nutrition champions and challenge the MPs to take action that counts. In turn MPs were supported to debate the key research findings and advocacy messages, and propose their own set of actions. Set outside the formal parliamentary spaces and in the spirit of tackling a common agenda, both parliamentarians and CSO representatives were able to join forces to work towards shared solutions. This approach generated clear commitments to action which provided a basis for PANITA to target their continued support to the PG-NFSCR and upon which PANITA can hold them to account. PANITA’s media partners, members of the Tanzanian Association of Journalists



for Children (TAJOC), assisted in this process by reporting on the event and putting the commitments into the public domain.

Commitments made by the MPs included:

- Taking the lead in ensuring that nutrition is included as a key development issue in the next set of party-political manifestos (2015–20);
- Championing nutrition in their regions and districts by embedding nutrition as a permanent agenda item in sub-national political committees and council meetings;
- One MP committing to preparing a private motion for Parliament to demand regular and improved collection, reporting and use of data on nutrition interventions from the district level to enable MPs to hold policy implementers better to account and to incentivise them to perform better.

Mobilising action for change: embedding nutrition in the party political manifestos for the 2015 general elections

With elections due to take place in October 2015 PANITA was able to secure funding from Irish Aid and the United Nations Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (UN REACH) to support the PG-NFSCR to take forward the pledge on inclusion of nutrition in the next set of political manifestos – a time-bound action with a clear and defined target. Consultants were hired to carry out a series of interviews with key stakeholders to develop a set of politically neutral ‘nutrition recommendations’, which were then presented to and approved by the PG-NFSCR. The recommendations detailed the type of actions for nutrition that should be included in all parties’ political manifestos.

The recommendations, produced as a booklet in English and Swahili, were formally launched in February 2015 on behalf of the PG-NFSCR by the deputy minister for Community Development, Gender and Children – an event covered by the TAJOC journalists. Following the formal launch,



↑ Unripe maize after harvesting, Chiwerere village. PANITA/SAVE THE CHILDREN TANZANIA

the chair of the PG-NFSCR, a member of the current ruling party in Tanzania, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), championed the recommendations in personal interactions with MPs leading parliamentary committees, secretaries to political parties, as well as with the drafting committee for CCM’s manifesto. In addition she ensured that it was shared with the registrar for political parties who would ensure that those parties who do not have an MP also received the nutrition recommendations. Having a committed parliamentary champion was critical in disseminating the nutrition recommendations across Parliament.

Alongside this, PANITA continued its own efforts to engage with political parties, inviting opposition parties to a regional nutrition event in May 2015: the East Africa launch of the Global Nutrition Report 2014. The aim was twofold: to sensitise them to the issue of nutrition and the role of PANITA, and specifically to share with them the process of working with the cross-party PG-NFSCR on the nutrition recommendations. The chair of the PG-NFSCR presented and debated the nutrition recommendations, and highlighted these as a good practice example of CSO and parliamentary partnership.

Reflections from practice

At the national level HANCI’s relative global ranking provided a clear comparison of Tanzania’s political commitment with other countries. The MPs were motivated by the global ranking and the Tanzanian scorecard, wanting to know what other countries who ranked higher had achieved that Tanzania could potentially emulate.

While scorecard indicators revealed strengths as well as areas that can and should be improved on, HANCI overall underpinned the notion that hunger and nutrition need greater attention in political agendas, notably in Tanzania in the political party manifestos. The key message on political commitment was a wake-up call to the parliamentarians in the room – and critically it was something that they were able to engage with directly. The goal was tangible and the timescale was realistic. This focused the energy from the event into a shared forward-looking agenda.

Examples of how HANCI evidence can be utilised for national policy advocacy

HANCI data can be used by civil society to hold governments to account on their commitment to addressing hunger and undernutrition (or lack of) by:

- Providing a credible index built from a rigorous research methodology to underpin partners' existing policy advocacy messages;
- Highlighting gaps in commitment between policy and programmes, public expenditure and law;
- Highlighting commitment indicators where governments do well, and challenging governments to improve their performance on indicators where they perform less well;
- Demanding the development of strategies and plans and the allocation of resources to policies, programmes and laws;
- Adding weight to specific sector issues domestically e.g. on sanitation or agricultural extension.

HANCI shows how government performance varies between the multiple sectors that influence hunger and nutrition outcomes. By doing so, it can connect stakeholders from different sectors such as agriculture, sanitation, social protection, gender, and nutrition, to encourage a holistic understanding of the challenge. It further includes a diversity of indicators that illustrate how both prevention and 'cure' approaches are needed; i.e. it scores both direct interventions such as vitamin A supplements, and interventions that address the underlying causes of hunger and undernutrition such as access to land.

HANCI offered a robust set of evidence that enabled PANITA to open up dialogue, build relationships and target activities with their own network of parliamentary champions. Within the PG-NFSCR, the chair took a leadership role in liaising with PANITA and mobilising other parliamentarians around the nutrition recommendations. HANCI evidence spanned a range of sectors, and provided in-depth insights on political commitment in Tanzania. Critically, it could be broken down into manageable pieces of evidence that could be tailored to provide supporting evidence for PANITA's own policy advocacy priorities, keeping in view the specific nature of Tanzania's political economy.

A rapid review of manifestos from two of the popular parties in Tanzania namely "Chama cha Mapinduzi" – (CCM) and "Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo" – (CHADEMA) has shown that both parties have included nutrition as one of their manifesto components. For CCM, its manifesto has put emphasis on increasing access to food and better nutrition for each household in order to reduce malnutrition. The manifesto also highlights the need to foster research on seed varieties that are nutrient dense and with higher productivity so as to have enough yield that will lead to food sufficiency and diversity. The CHADEMA manifesto has focused on reducing malnutrition in the under-fives, by designing a special feeding program for nursery school children, which in turn is expected to improve their nutrition status as well as school performance.



↑ Carrying the basket of maize, Chiwerere village.
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How to use HANCI evidence in CSO policy advocacy

Lessons from Tanzania

Start from where you are: use the research findings as an evidence base to support and further *your* agenda. Research evidence adds credibility and legitimacy to existing CSO demands for political commitment to tackle hunger and undernutrition



PANITA reviewed its advocacy strategy, the strategic objectives of its audience, and the Presidential Call for Action on Nutrition. The review identified two strategic areas for which policy advocacy messages could be devised.

Adapt and contextualise: HANCI evidence can be used on its own, or adapted to underline key policy advocacy messages in a way that meets local user needs



HANCI international rankings and Tanzania-based expert perspectives were assessed for where they could support policy advocacy in the two strategic areas.

Be selective: identify the appropriate material that can provide useful evidence to support key messages; but remember this may change depending on your audience



Sharing the HANCI international ranking provided parliamentarians with an important comparative perspective. Four key policy advocacy messages were devised and presented to MPs.

Integrate with other evidence: drawing on other sources of evidence helps to strengthen and ground the advocacy message, so be sure to review what else is available



PANITA drew on the World Health Organization (WHO) Landscape Analysis and Nutrition Policy Mapping which they commissioned in 2012 and added their own local knowledge into the messages.

Aim to generate dialogue: share key messages in spaces that support and enable your audience to discuss and debate action. Encourage them to use the evidence shared to formulate their own set of 'next steps'.



The event with MPs was held in a neutral venue, which fostered a respectful, cross-party dialogue on the issue of nutrition. Messages were presented without 'asks' so that parliamentarians came up with – and took responsibility for – their own set of actions.

Recognise the multiple pathways to policy influence: select your key champions and advocacy channels carefully, but don't forget to engage a range of actors in pushing forward for political and policy change.



In addition to strong parliamentary champions, PANITA fostered their relationship with journalists supporting them to attend and cover events, as well as hosting an event with government officers to sensitise them to HANCI evidence on political commitment.



← Female participant in the community perspectives work, Chiwerere village, Lindi District.

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Authorship / credits

This case study was written by Fran Seballos, Dolf te Lintelo and Kat Pittore at IDS, and reviewed by Tumaini Mikindo, Executive Director, PANITA.

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Design: Lance Bellers

Institute of Development Studies, Brighton BN1 9RE UK

T+44 [0] 1273 606261 **F**+ 44 [0] 1273 621202 **E** ids@ids.ac.uk **W** www.ids.ac.uk

T [#idspolicy](https://twitter.com/IDS_UK) **f** facebook.com/idsuk