

Executive summary

What is HANCI?

Following a first phase of research that focused on developing countries, this second phase of the Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index (HANCI) scrutinises donor government commitment to reducing hunger and undernutrition in developing countries.

The HANCI Donor Index has been created to:

- Rank donor governments on their political commitment to tackling hunger and undernutrition in developing countries;
- Measure what donors achieve and where they fail in addressing hunger and undernutrition – providing greater transparency and public accountability;
- Praise donor governments where due, and highlight areas for improvement;
- Support civil society to reinforce and stimulate additional commitment towards reducing hunger and undernutrition;
- Assess whether improving donor commitment levels leads to a reduction in hunger and undernutrition.

Why measure political commitment to reduce hunger and undernutrition?

- **Globally, levels of hunger and undernutrition remain unacceptably high.**

Hunger and undernutrition are among the most persistent global development challenges. At the global level, insufficient progress has been made towards achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1. Globally, the number of undernourished people has been static, at 870 million, for the past five years, and the prevalence of stunting has remained high in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa at around 40 per cent (FAO 2012b). One in eight people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. Undernutrition contributes to the deaths of 3.1 million children under five each year – 45 per cent of the global total (Black *et al.* 2013).

- **Progress towards reducing hunger and undernutrition has been highly variable.**

Many developing countries have benefited from substantial economic growth during the past two decades. For growth to have maximum impact, the poor must benefit from the growth process, enabling them to use additional income for improving the quantity and quality of their diet, and for accessing health and sanitation services, whereas governments need to use additional resources for public goods and services to benefit the poor and hungry. Thus, **economic growth is necessary but not sufficient to rapidly accelerate reduction of hunger and malnutrition unless it is equitable** (FAO 2012b).

- **A high level of donor commitment is essential to prioritise the fight against hunger and malnutrition** (FAO 2012b).

This is because donor countries can have a substantial impact on how the prevalence of hunger and undernutrition in poorer countries develops. This influence manifests itself not just through overseas aid but also through the consequences of international cooperation and domestic trade and environmental policies.

- **HANCI has been created with the view that transparency and accessible data are key to holding governments to account.**

Monitoring government action empowers people to demand more from their governments. With millions of lives at stake, greater public accountability on this key development issue is essential.

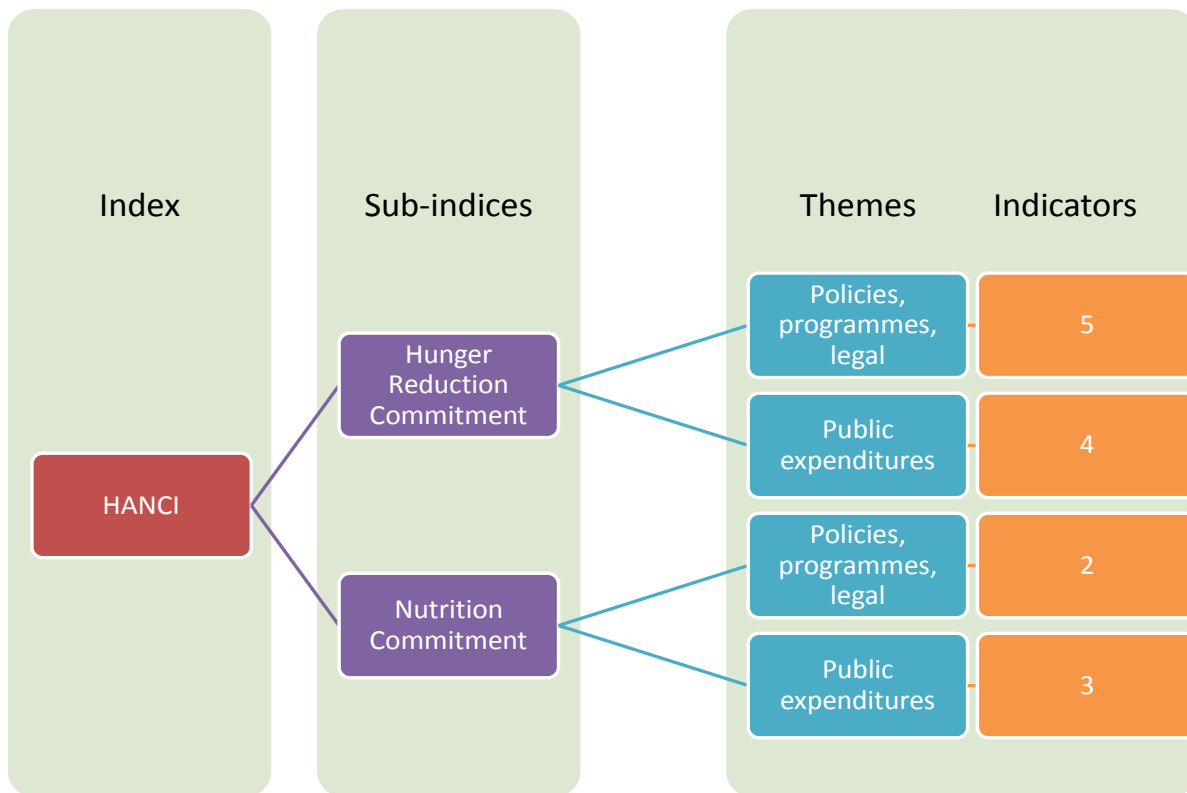
The research methodology

Indicators

We compared **23 donor countries** for their performance on **14 indicators of political commitment to reduce hunger and undernutrition**. We looked at two areas of donor government action:

- Policies, programmes and legal frameworks;
- Public expenditures.

Figure 1: Structure of HANCI for donor countries



3

The HANCI Donor Index rankings compare countries against one another, using 14 indicators spanning the dimensions of agriculture and food security, nutrition, climate change, gender, and social protection. These broadly assess whether countries:

- Commit to and disburse financial assistance, do so enduringly, and keep in mind their capacity to give support and the estimated funds needed to tackle the problems;
- Establish domestic policy action that is coherent with anti-hunger and undernutrition objectives of its foreign aid policy (especially in relation to climate change and agricultural sector protection);
- Engage in international agreements and treaties that help address hunger and undernutrition.

Critically, the HANCI Donor Index assesses countries' performance in the light of their ability to contribute to reducing hunger and undernutrition in the developing world. The index hence puts the absolute size of aid volumes and performance on policy pledges within context: those countries with bigger shoulders need to carry a heavier burden.

Spending indicators include the amount of aid given to agriculture and food security, nutrition, social protection and climate change relative to a country's wealth and to the required need. Aid spending is further assessed for its endurance and consistency over the past decade, in order to determine which donors 'stay the course'. Policy, programme and legal indicators assess donors' domestic policy action on climate change, biofuels, and unfair protection of the agricultural sector, and assess international collaboration to protect biodiversity and to support the international Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.

HANCI measures commitment to reduce hunger and commitment to reduce undernutrition separately, because **hunger and undernutrition are not the same thing**. Hunger is the result of an empty stomach, and caused by people having insufficient income or social and economic entitlements to access food. Hunger makes people more susceptible to disease and thus leads to increased illness and death. Hunger strongly undermines development. To 'cope' with hunger, families can be forced to sell vital assets such as farming tools, often perpetuating their vulnerability to hunger. Hunger can mean that children (particularly girls) are taken out of school so they can work; it causes communities to migrate away from their homes; and, at worst, it leads to permanent destitution, prostitution, and child trafficking. Hunger also contributes to the onset of armed conflict (Foresight Project 2011: 3).

Undernutrition is related to, though subtly different from, hunger. Undernutrition is not only a consequence of hunger, but can also exist in the absence of hunger, and can be caused by non-food factors. Undernutrition results from both a critical lack of nutrients in people's diets and a weakened immune system. In a vicious cycle, poor nutritional intake can make people more susceptible to infectious diseases while exposure to disease can lower people's appetite and nutrient absorption. Undernutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life (from conception until the age of two) has lifelong and largely irreversible impacts because it impairs a child's physical and mental development. Undernutrition increases the risk of chronic diseases and premature death in adulthood, and negatively affects people's lifelong ability to learn, be economically productive, earn income and sustain their livelihoods, and thus perpetuates poverty. In short, undernutrition undermines all aspects of development.

Because hunger and nutrition are not the same thing, we investigate both hunger reduction commitment and undernutrition reduction commitment using distinct measures.

For instance, donor governments can financially support childcare and child feeding programmes and invest in sanitation: such measures are critical for improving nutrition, though less clearly related to hunger. Conversely, emergency food aid or agricultural development programmes can help to reduce hunger by increasing food availability, but are often not aimed at achieving a balanced diet. By separately analysing nutrition commitment and hunger reduction commitment, we identify how donors prioritise action on hunger and/or undernutrition.

Key findings

The UK is among the leading countries in the fight against hunger and undernutrition

The United Kingdom (UK) has achieved the highest score out of 23 countries associated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for spending, policies and treaty commitments that could help to reduce hunger and undernutrition in developing countries. Just beating Denmark, the UK owes its high score in particular to its strong performance on policy, programme and legal indicators. It does well on supporting the SUN movement and biodiversity protecting agreements, and has relatively low levels of protection of domestic agricultural markets. In terms of spending, the UK has a strong record delivering on its commitments for nutrition; while its Official Development Assistance (ODA) for nutrition has not been the highest, it has been stable and enduring over the past decade. However, the UK scores poorly when compared to other countries on several spending indicators: its levels of aid funding for agricultural development, food security and climate change are comparatively low.

Denmark scores well for spending indicators. It gives a solid performance in terms of supporting nutrition (second highest of all countries), and this support is stable and enduring. It also invests well in climate change adaptation and mitigation. However, spending support for climate change is not entirely coherent with policy action. Denmark is leading on the development of domestic climate change adaptation strategies and plans and this is needed in order to improve weak delivery on greenhouse gas emission reduction pledges. As a European Union (EU) member state, Denmark's biofuel mandates are high. Denmark is a member of the SUN movement and does fairly well in terms of its relatively low protection of domestic agricultural markets (within the group of 23 countries) and support for biodiversity agreements.

Canada does well on policies, programmes and legal indicators. It supports the SUN movement, does well in terms of low protection of agricultural markets, sets relatively low biofuel blending mandates, and is among the top performers in terms of delivering on its greenhouse gas emission reduction pledges. Its performance on spending indicators is variable. Canada leads in terms of its enduringly stable financial support for agriculture and food security over the past decade. It also does fairly well on this for nutrition. However, Canada also shows weak spending performance on social protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Germany, Sweden and Ireland complete the group of countries leading on commitment. Germany performs strongly on most policy, programme and legal framework indicators, somewhat contrasting with its scores on spending indicators. Sweden gains especially strong scores on ODA to climate change adaptation and mitigation, on disbursing financial assistance to nutrition, on spending with gender policy objectives, and Sweden also endorses SUN. Ireland gains especially strong scores on biodiversity, endorsement of SUN, and is among the top donors investing in social protection. Ireland also shows enduring and stable financial support for agriculture and food security.

Commitment to reducing hunger is not the same as commitment to reducing undernutrition

Several countries score well on commitment to reduce hunger but poorly on commitment to reduce undernutrition, and vice versa. For instance, Australia ranks 4th on the Hunger Reduction Commitment Index (HRCI) but 18th on the Nutrition Commitment Index (NCI); Finland is 1st on the HRCI but 20th on the NCI; while Sweden does much better on the NCI (1st) than on HRCI (14th).

South Korea, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Austria rank lowest on the HANCI Donor Index

South Korea is a relatively new donor. Its spending on hunger and nutrition is relatively low, and it is not a member of the SUN movement. However, it does fairly well in terms of offering stable and enduring financial support for agriculture and food security, it has relatively low biofuel mandates, and is putting policies in place to deal with climate change adaptation.

While Greece and Portugal are in the throes of prolonged economic downturns and extremely vulnerable public finances, Austria is not. Austria invests relatively little in nutrition, agriculture and food security, social protection, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Its investments in agriculture, food security and nutrition are not very stable over time. In terms of policy, Austrian biofuel mandates are among the highest (as an EU member). Austria does, however, do well in terms of relatively low agricultural protection and in putting in place strategies and plans to address climate change adaptation.

Good development partners could do more for hunger and nutrition

Donors championing the cause of hunger and nutrition are not necessarily the biggest spenders. The ten highest HANCI donor rankings are not strongly correlated to the share of the gross national income (GNI) given as aid. This also suggests that countries that have a relatively good track record on international development like Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland, who are not in the top ten HANCI rankings, could do more for hunger and nutrition.

Table 1: The HANCI Donor Index: scores, rankings and country groupings

country	Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index Score	Hunger Reduction Commitment Score	Nutrition Commitment Score	Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index Ranks	Hunger Reduction Commitment Ranks	Nutrition Commitment Ranks
United Kingdom	77	34	43	1	4	2
Denmark	68	32	36	2	6	4
Canada	67	36	31	3	2	9
Germany	66	29	37	4	9	3
Sweden	65	21	44	5	14	1
Ireland	63	31	32	6	7	6
Belgium	59	27	32	7	11	6
France	58	25	33	8	13	5
Luxembourg	56	26	30	9	12	10
Spain	53	35	18	10	3	13
Finland	52	37	15	11	1	20
Netherlands	52	20	32	11	16	6
Australia	50	34	16	13	4	18
Norway	48	28	20	14	10	11
Switzerland	48	30	18	14	8	13
New Zealand	37	21	16	16	14	18
Japan	35	16	19	17	18	12
United States of America	30	12	18	18	20	13

Austria	29	17	12	19	17	22
Italy	27	10	17	20	21	17
Portugal	24	10	14	21	21	21
Greece	23	5	18	22	23	13
South Korea	18	16	2	23	18	23

Green= leading on commitment (top 1/3rd)

Orange= moderate commitment (middle 1/3rd)

Red = relatively low commitment (bottom 1/3rd)