Thirteen-year-old Elma and her friends learn to grow vegetables as part of a school garden project in Bovaname, Mozambique.
As a young doctor beginning my career in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh, I saw first-hand the crushing effects of hunger and malnutrition on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable. Hunger and malnutrition undermined people’s health, often leading to the needless grief of a child’s preventable death or the catastrophic loss of a mother in childbirth. The communities I worked with carried forward the burden of undernutrition from generation to generation, as stunting compromised the ability of individuals and communities to reach their full potential. Why then did responding to undernutrition not receive the attention it deserved?

By listening to the women and their families, those of us working with these communities began to understand the complex interlinkages between the challenges they faced and how these contributed to malnutrition. Optimum infant and young child feeding takes time and is a luxury for most poor people; breastfeeding requires space and privacy, which are often not available; and good feeding means access to nutritious foodstuffs and is often undermined by illness. It became clear that people do not live in compartments, but rather in complicated spaces where the challenges—in food, in health, in sanitation, and in livelihoods—all come together. It was also clear that in responding there must be more integrated approaches—a new way of doing business that puts the individual at the center.

The year 2015 heralded a major shift in the dimensions of international development. In an unprecedented, inclusive, transparent, and open process, the 193 member states of the United Nations adopted, by consensus, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This contains the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 targets that relate to them. Together with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Accord, and the Paris Climate Agreement, the 2030 Agenda constitutes a truly transformative plan for people, planet, prosperity, partnership, and peace.

The 2030 Agenda represents a political manifesto for the world over the next 14 years. It sets a clear objective for all people, nations, institutions, organizations, and enterprises: Transform our world to ensure that people and our planet thrive by ending poverty and hunger, reaching the most vulnerable first; by prioritizing human rights, addressing injustice and empowering women; and by building resilience and tackling the impacts of adverse climate events. It addresses the interconnected root causes of poverty, hunger, pandemics, inequalities, environmental degradation, climate change, forced migration, violence, and extremism. The 17 SDGs oblige developed and developing countries alike. They are truly a blueprint for action across all three pillars of the United Nations’ work—peace and security, development, and human rights—integrating the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Moreover, at a time when conflicts rage and divisions are pronounced, the series of agreements reached in 2015 demonstrate that inclusive multilateralism can work. Inclusivity has been at the heart of the process to develop the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs were agreed on through negotiations among all member states with an unprecedented level of engagement from civil society, the business community, and other stakeholders. This was the most open and participatory multilateral process in history, with direct engagement of more than 7 million people from all over the world. They represented a wide range of interests, each bringing his or her unique perspective and contribution to solving the challenges facing humanity.

### How Does the 2030 Agenda Differ from What Came Before?

The 2030 Agenda is grounded in a number of principles that set it apart from what came before. The Agenda is universal—it applies to all countries, regardless of their level of development and irrespective of their political or socioeconomic status. This sets it apart from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which principally applied to developing countries. The 2030 Agenda sees every country as a developing country, in that every country needs to change the way it operates, considering the wider impact of its policies and actions beyond its own national borders, to contribute toward a sustainable future for the world.

The Agenda is transformative, seeking to end poverty and hunger once and for all, while safeguarding the planet. In its determination to leave no one behind, the Agenda is people-centered, putting human rights and social justice at its core. It emphasizes that the needs of people who are missed out because they are hard to reach or displaced or because they cannot easily participate in development activities must be specifically targeted. The persistence of armed conflict and its impact on the fight against hunger, and on those who flee and those who are left behind were brought into sharp relief in the 2015 Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, which asserted that the needs and rights of both visible and invisible victims of violent conflict must be addressed.

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**Note:** The views expressed in this chapter are those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect the views of IFPRI, Welthungerhilfe, or Concern Worldwide.
By realizing the rights that underpin the 2030 Agenda, we can ensure peace and prosperity for individuals, communities, countries, and the world.

The Agenda is also integrated and indivisible, as it recognizes that people do not live in discrete silos or sectors but in a continuum of interrelated communities and ecosystems. It therefore demands a complete revolution in the way we organize ourselves and in the way we work. It is not acceptable that one or other of the SDGs is treated in isolation. Without addressing all of the goals in an integrated manner, we will not be able to achieve the transformation foreseen by the member states.

From Ambition to Action: Implementation of the Agenda

The 2030 Agenda will only have meaning for our world and its people if it is fully implemented by all. The level of ambition agreed upon by national leaders and reflected internationally needs to be matched by a level of investment sufficient to deliver this agenda—a scale-up in finances that has been described as a move “from billions to trillions.” The ambition also needs to be nurtured in local communities so that it takes root everywhere. Just as in the development of the Agenda, member states will take the lead in its implementation by making it relevant to their national contexts, making sure that this Agenda really is the center of all thinking, and trying to build in the capability necessary for whole-of-society support for development action. They will do this by putting in place ambitious, locally owned national development plans that are aligned with the Agenda and support implementation at all levels. This work is already happening: 22 countries presented updates of their progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July 2016.

Tackling climate change and delivering on the 2030 Agenda are two sides of the same coin. The actions needed to reduce emissions and build climate resilience are the very same actions that are needed to set the world on a sustainable footing for generations to come. These agendas must be linked in national planning processes.

The interconnected nature of the SDGs requires new thinking when it comes to implementation. Long-term planning for sustainable development that forgoes short-term political gain is the basis of the new political consensus reflected in the 2030 Agenda. Policy coherence will be an essential requirement in planning at all levels and for all countries. This will sometimes be uncomfortable, as institutions and individuals are challenged to work beyond their silos, to share information and pool or share funds. It may even call for new arrangements at the cabinet level in countries. However, success will lie in having the courage and vision to do things differently.

Adjusting to the new agenda will also have implications for the way the United Nations system works. The 2030 Agenda has increased the demand from member states for the United Nations to provide integrated and coordinated policy support. This support must be brought closer to countries and communities, providing tailored responses and policy coherence across the United Nations’ work on peace and security, human rights, and development. Those working in humanitarian contexts must also recognize the relevance of the Agenda, particularly its focus on human rights, resilience, and leaving no one behind. The United Nations’ ability to work at the interfaces between sectors and disciplines is critical—the 2030 Agenda demands it.

The 2030 Agenda will have to be owned by citizens, communities, local and national governments, civil society organizations at all levels, and enterprises of all sizes. Experience with the MDGs shows that strong proactive leadership is needed across all strata to ensure that the goals form a key component of national strategies and budgets.

The Global Hunger Index initiative can support these efforts and help ensure that hunger remains part of the discussion. This project acts as an effective interface between researchers and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and produces an evidence-based measurement of hunger to inform sound policymaking. The GHI reports can focus media attention on the effects of hunger on the individual and society, driving both public and political debate.

Hunger in the 2030 Agenda

With the 2030 Agenda, member states have shown their commitment to a comprehensive, integrated, and universal transformation that includes ending hunger and malnutrition. This ambition is captured in Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2), which includes the achievement of food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture as part of a comprehensive set of interwoven actions that will contribute to social justice, an end to rural poverty, and improvements in people’s health and well-being.

The MDG target of halving the percentage of the population experiencing chronic hunger was met by 73 of 129 countries, and the number of the chronically hungry has fallen by 210 million. However, almost 800 million people still do not have enough food to eat to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the pathways to reach those who have so far been left behind. Through its goal of “Zero Hunger,” the Agenda commits to ending hunger and malnutrition for all by 2030.
While this target is ambitious, it is also essential for delivering on the vision of the 2030 Agenda. The cost of hunger is measured not only in lost lives but also in unrealized potential for individuals. It affects the ability of communities, countries, and regions to meet their own social development goals, and it stunts their economic prosperity. How we choose to grow, process, distribute, and consume the food we eat will have a profound effect on people, planet, prosperity, and peace.

Delivering on the promise of the 2030 Agenda, therefore, will not be possible without rapid progress toward ending hunger and malnutrition; at the same time, a lasting end to hunger and undernutrition cannot be achieved in isolation. Without ending rural poverty and empowering women, without transforming agriculture (including smallholder farmers, fishers, pastoralists, forest collectors, and traditional and indigenous communities) and food systems in a way that makes them inclusive, resilient, and sustainable, and without preserving ecosystems and natural resources, we cannot achieve Zero Hunger. This also means addressing the underlying structural maintainers of poverty and hunger.

The Paris Climate Change Agreement underlines the links between safeguarding food security and ending hunger and the impacts of climate change. Poor nations and poor people across all nations will suffer first—and suffer most—from adverse changes in climate. The rural population, particularly women, children, small-scale producers, and laborers, are the worst affected. It is imperative that we factor the impact of climate into our thinking and actions as we work to implement the 2030 Agenda and deliver Zero Hunger. New approaches to agriculture and food systems that are people-centered, economically viable, and sustainable will be essential. Innovative approaches that make farming part of the solution to climate change, through adaptation and mitigation, can increase smallholder productivity and income while helping to meet countries’ climate commitments.

Many of those suffering from hunger and malnutrition are trapped in protracted crises, caught up in recurrent natural disasters or conflicts. With almost 130 million hungry people living in countries affected by protracted crises, it is clear that when it comes to Zero Hunger, the promise to “leave no one behind” cannot be realized if the needs of these people are not met. The 2030 Agenda commits to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable first. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction underlines that disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change and increasing in frequency and intensity, significantly impede progress toward sustainable development. Building resilience among individuals (particularly women) and communities will give them the capabilities needed to respond to shocks and stresses in a way that does not undermine their longer-term development and ecosystem sustainability. However, people cannot be resilient if they are hungry and malnourished.

Innovative Approaches

Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld said, “I cannot do everything—but everybody can do something.” The interconnected and transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda is ambitious and also achievable; however, it will not be realized by individual actors working alone. The full potential of the Agenda can only be borne out if the capacities of all segments of society are marshalled through new and innovative approaches that bring multiple actors together to align behind the common goal of ending poverty and hunger for all, and for good. This challenge is most acute in the hardest-to-reach populations and the most difficult contexts, but here too the resolve of all stakeholders must be harnessed. The United Nations system, governments, civil society, and the business community will have to cross traditional institutional boundaries, establish new partnerships, and pioneer new ways of working.

To engage actors at all levels, it is crucial to communicate the potential of the 2030 Agenda to transform the lives of individuals in both developing and developed countries, ensuring that all people understand what their governments have committed to, and allowing them to hold their leaders accountable. Individuals must be the drivers of the Agenda and not its passive subjects.

The experience of those working on food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture can provide examples of the type of innovative approaches needed to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The last decade has witnessed the rise of different platforms, partnerships, and movements aimed at ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, from calorie deficiency and undernutrition to obesity, and at creating sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems. These experiments in partnership, collective impact, and multistakeholder stewardship provide lessons for our broader work in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Zero Hunger Challenge

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Zero Hunger Challenge was launched in 2012 at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Since then, it has galvanized a growing movement of multiple actors committed to making the vision of Zero Hunger and zero malnutrition a reality. The mission of the Zero Hunger Challenge is (1) to bring together all stakeholders to communicate the importance of food security; nutrition; and inclusive, sustainable, and resilient agriculture in fulfilling the promise of the 2030 Agenda; and (2) to encourage, engage, accelerate, and amplify collective action.
to create food systems that deliver for all people. The Zero Hunger Challenge has inspired action at the country level and has ensured that food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture remain high on the global development agenda.

Mirroring the nature of the 2030 Agenda, the Zero Hunger Challenge promotes integrated approaches that respond to the multiple, interconnected causes of hunger and malnutrition. The comprehensiveness of the approach reflects the reality of the challenges people face everywhere as they seek better agriculture and food systems that bring about improved nutrition and sustainable and resilient rural communities. It appreciates the role of food systems in safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity and in minimizing negative impacts on climate. Grounded in the right of everyone to have access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food, the Zero Hunger vision can significantly contribute to the massive transformations needed to achieve this ambitious Agenda.

The Zero Hunger Challenge provides a principle-based platform for all actors—cities; governments; NGOs; businesses; the UN agencies, funds, and programs; research institutions; faith communities; philanthropies; chefs; students; and others—to align behind the common vision of ending hunger and poverty. Those supporting the Zero Hunger Challenge are encouraged to work to become Champions for Zero Hunger: to adopt innovative and visionary approaches at an institutional level to effect the transformative change envisaged.

The Zero Hunger Challenge also seeks to engage citizens in a Global Movement for Zero Hunger—harnessing the power of individuals to drive change and hold their leaders to account for their commitments. The Zero Hunger Challenge, with all its components, illustrates the kind of shift in thinking needed to end hunger and malnutrition and to achieve the transformations at the heart of the 2030 Agenda.

**Compact2025**

Another platform that exemplifies this shift in thinking is Compact2025, led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Compact2025 underlines the importance of research and knowledge to deliver and accelerate development gains. It includes a global knowledge and innovation hub to experiment, learn, and share evidence for pragmatic, action-oriented strategies. The focus is on stimulating innovation, communicating research on what works, synthesizing lessons, collecting data, and monitoring progress. In doing so, the initiative provides a multi-sectoral and multistakeholder space that complements and leverages existing initiatives and networks.

Compact2025 can assist countries to refine and implement effective roadmaps for action by creating a network of researchers and policymakers who identify evidence and gaps, with a focus on implementation at the national and subnational levels. Success stories provide a strong base from which to learn. For example, expanding effective social protection programs and nutrition interventions has led to a dramatic drop in poverty, hunger, and undernutrition in Brazil. In China, helping smallholder farmers produce and purchase nutritious foods has boosted the income of the rural population. Such experiences of social protection–led strategies in Brazil or smallholder agriculture–led strategies in China shorten the learning curve and provide us with models that can be adapted and replicated for other countries. Complementing Compact2025, other IFPRI projects, such as *Nourishing Millions: Stories of Change in Nutrition* and the *Global Nutrition Report*, showcase success stories in nutrition, encouraging cross-border learning between countries and regions.

This type of knowledge-sharing provides far-reaching insight and value for the achievement of Zero Hunger and the 2030 Agenda. These projects highlight the potential of innovative approaches that bring together multiple actors in support of country-led action.

These are just two examples, however; many others exist, including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), with its innovative multistakeholder mechanism, which allows all stakeholders to work together to develop and endorse policy recommendations and guidance on a wide range of food security and nutrition topics with a view to ensuring food security and nutrition for all. Additionally, the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement brings together 57 countries, whose leaders are prioritizing efforts to address malnutrition. Since its inception in 2010, the SUN Movement has helped create a space for interaction between SUN countries and an increasingly diverse set of stakeholders, reflecting the multiplicity of tactics needed to fight malnutrition. Strong national movements have emerged that are taking their own country-led approaches and putting the systems in place that will effectively address their own unique challenges.

**Role of Data**

The UN Secretary-General believes that technology underpins the success of sustainable development and is urging the technology industry to help close the digital divide. Accessible, reliable data and information are essential for both decision-making and accountability. The SDGs demand a data revolution that delivers new technologies and innovations in data and data collection, which can complement traditional statistics. Ensuring no one is left behind will require data that are fully disaggregated by, among other things, age, gender, and income group. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data supports data-driven decision-making by initiating more open, new, and usable data to help end extreme poverty, combat climate change, and ensure a healthy life for all.
Mobile technology has already transformed societies around the globe, including the poorest communities and countries. In many instances, it is empowering women, creating jobs, spurring financial independence, improving education, boosting agricultural production, and promoting better health. Mobile phones have enabled people to monitor elections, track and hold governments accountable, and even save lives in natural disasters. Now, through big data collection and analysis, the mobile industry is uniquely placed to help national governments work successfully toward achieving the SDGs.

The UN’s Global Pulse initiative has demonstrated how data produced by mobile phones can help map and curb the spread of hunger and disease, inform crisis response, and understand the impact of climate change. By working with governments and the international community to expand connectivity, lower barriers to access, and ensure that tools and applications are developed with vulnerable communities in mind, the technology industry can significantly help in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This can happen through the responsible use of data for humanitarian and development purposes, while protecting individual privacy.

### Accountability

Data and information are not only important means for implementation of the SDGs, but will also contribute to accountability. Aggregating high-quality, timely, and reliable data at all levels will be crucial for monitoring progress over the next 14 years. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators has agreed on a set of indicators that will enable progress to be monitored across all SDGs, including Zero Hunger. National plans for their implementation need to include indicators relevant to national contexts.

The relationship between citizens and their leaders sits at the heart of SDG accountability. National follow-up and review processes should be comprehensive, participatory, open, and transparent. Civil society will have a central role in supporting citizens to hold governments to account.

For SDG2 and the other goals and targets that fall within its mandate, the Committee on World Food Security, structured to facilitate inclusive multistakeholder dialogue, can play an important role in global follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The CFS is well placed to feed into the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in reviewing global progress, identifying lessons learned, providing recommendations and guidance, and identifying emerging issues and trends.

### Conclusion

It is time to reinvent cooperation for development that builds on the important role of development assistance, while also engaging the whole of society in development work, to make sure that this Agenda really is at the center of all thinking and has the support of citizens that is so necessary for its implementation. Achieving the goal of Zero Hunger will require action that makes human dignity central to the 2030 Agenda. It will require sustainable and resilient climate-compatible agriculture and food systems that deliver for people and planet. It will require a renewed focus on how to respond to crises, while all the time building capabilities and resilience within individuals and communities. The comprehensive and universal nature of the Zero Hunger vision, grounded in the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, can significantly contribute to the massive transformations needed to realize this ambitious Agenda.

Given the complex and interconnected nature of the root causes of poverty and of hunger, delivering on the 2030 Agenda provides the best and surest way of getting to Zero Hunger faster. With collaboration at all levels and by utilizing advances in technology, employing innovative approaches, and ensuring that honesty, fairness, and justice are the underpinning principles of all our actions, we can transform our world and eradicate poverty and hunger for all, and for good. The goals are ambitious but by no means impossible. Together we can see this vision transform into reality.