

Highlights from Madrid, March 2013, Experts Meeting

Jointly Addressing Food and Nutrition Security

Sharing the practical findings from
the MDG-F



This document follows the conclusions of the discussions held during the workshop organized by the MDG-F in Madrid, on the 7th and 8th of March, on “**Jointly addressing Food and Nutrition Security**”¹. This workshop gathered more than 40 experts from various international organizations, national government, academia and civil society.

Regarding gender, environment and climate change issues, further research has been undertaken by the MDG-F Secretariat to complement the highlights of the workshop discussions. Midterm and final evaluations of the Joint Programs, as well as thematic studies and lessons learned have been used for this purpose (available at www.mdgfund.org).

In order to contribute to future work on Food Security and Nutrition and to the attainment of the Zero Hunger Challenge, the key findings of the MDG-F experience presented in this document have been structured taking into account the work of the ongoing thematic consultation process.

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¹ Workshop report is available per request to the MDG-F

Summary

The MDG-F Secretariat, within its Knowledge Management Strategy, organized a two-day Workshop on 7th- 8th March 2013, in Madrid, named “**Addressing Jointly Food and Nutrition Security**”. It gathered more than forty high level experts from governments, UN Agencies, academia and civil society, with the purpose of analyzing and reflecting on the main lessons learned from the MDG-F experiences.

Inspired by the main ideas and proposals that are being discussed within the framework of the thematic consultations on Food Security², the MDG-F wanted to take another step forward in the analysis on how to implement the integrated approach, claimed in international discussions as being the way to go in the achievement of the “**Zero Hunger Challenge**”.

The evidence coming from the MDG-F programs was used as a basis for discussion on how and when this approach works, and what key issues must be taken into account when designing multi-sectorial approaches with a basis on human rights.

As a result of the workshop, key findings from the experience of the MDG-F programs were identified. We believe these findings constitute a valuable reference for future development interventions which can help illuminate the way towards an efficient implementation of the approaches being proposed to be part of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

The present document analyzes the MDG-F’s key findings of this event, whose main highlights can be organized around in the following four main points:

- **A link between Food Security and Nutrition needs to be ensured in order to help realize the “Zero Hunger Challenge”.** To ensure that people not only have enough food, but also sufficiently nutritious food, it is necessary to acknowledge the inextricable link between food security and nutrition security. In other words, not just the quantity of the food must be considered, but also other aspects such as its nutritious value and accessibility as well as the health status, socio-economic status and level of knowledge of the population.
- **The experience of the MDG-F has proved that multi-sectorial interventions, when applied in a coordinated manner are more efficient in achieving results.** The key for success in this approach is to customize the design of the multi-sectorial interventions by selecting the most relevant sectors, taking into account the specific conditions of the targeted population (cultural realities, political interests, and involved stakeholders). The combination package might include sectors such as health, education, agriculture, water, sanitation or energy sectors, among others.

² FAO and WFP are co-chairing the thematic consultation on Hunger, Food and Nutrition Security, together with the other Rome-based agencies, IFAD and Bioversity International, and with support of Special Representative of the SG for Food Security and Nutrition. Contributing partners include UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNIDO, and UNDESA.

- **Rights-based Food and Nutrition Security interventions are more efficient in achieving the “ Zero Hunger Challenge”.** Interventions implemented on this basis will give place to the optimal conditions for populations to become self-feeding. They will also allow for the establishment of political priorities directed at protecting the poor and hungry.
- **Ensuring the sustainability of short and medium term development interventions is crucial to tackle the drivers of recurrent food security and nutritional crises.** In a context of limited resources, governments and donors are faced with critical decisions when designing nutrition strategies to achieve the MDGs: immediate efforts are critical to address the urgent needs of hungry and under-nourished populations, especially pregnant women and young children in periods of food crisis; but long-term strategies that focus on the underlying factors of under-nutrition are also necessary for the sustainable improvement of the status of food security of the most vulnerable populations and the eradication of hunger.

Background: MDG-F and the Zero Hunger Challenge

The MDG Achievement Fund supports national efforts to reduce poverty and inequality and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) worldwide. Established in 2007 through a landmark agreement signed between the Government of Spain and the UN system, it sums up a total contribution of approximately \$US 900M.

The MDG-F's work builds on the expertise of over 25 UN agencies, bringing them together to build on their comparative advantage and devise multi-sectorial joint programs that tackle complex development issues.

Each joint program involves an average of five UN Agencies. This coordinated approach is often mirrored by governments with various ministries and local governments that take part in the implementation of the programs. Strong national ownership and leadership of development programs is one of the cornerstones of the MDG-F approach.

Further information at: www.mdgfund.org



The MDG-Fund, with 130 joint programs in 50 countries around the world and more than 700 million dollars, constitutes a vast laboratory for development strategies. By bringing together several stakeholders (UN Agencies, Governmental Institutions at the national and local level, Civil Society), Joint Programs are designed to implement a high number of diverse strategies that combat food insecurity and under-nutrition.

The 130 programs supported by the Fund are divided in eight program areas, (see box 1).

Allocation of Funds by Programme Area	<i>US\$ Millions</i>
Culture and Development	95.9
Environment and Climate Change	89.5
Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding	94.2
Children, Nutrition and Food Security	134.5
Democratic Economic Governance	59.9
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	89.5
Private Sector and Development	63.1
Youth, Employment and Migration	73.2
Total	\$699.7

24 Joint Programs have been specifically designed to address the challenges related to Children, Food Security and Nutrition Issues, but many others have also greatly contributed to the fight against hunger and food insecurity through the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, the development of effective strategies for climate change adaptation, as well as access to water and sanitation or promotion of rural development and gender equality.

The thematic window on Children, Food Security and Nutrition (CFSN) was launched in 2008, with the overarching objective of accelerating progress towards the achievement of MDG 1: Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and of MDG 4: reducing child mortality. US\$134.5 million were allocated to 24 Joint Programs (JPs): 8 in Sub-Saharan Africa; 7 in Asia; 8 in Latin America; and 1 in Europe and the CIS, representing the largest thematic area intervention of the Fund.

By addressing Food and Nutrition Security with a human rights approach and with a strong focus on the strengthening of governance and political commitment, the MDG-F programs have opened doors to the participation of the most vulnerable populations, have delivered comprehensive care systems to the poorest families, and have experimented with different sustainable production systems that help build more sustainable and resilient agricultural systems.

Through multi-sectorial interventions, and with “eyes set on the sky, but feet firmly planted on the ground”, the MDG-F Joint Programs have offered direct support to people in need, while simultaneously contributing to the generation of the necessary political and institutional frameworks for achieving long-term progress in both the MDGs and the “Zero Hunger Challenge”.

The “Zero Hunger Challenge” is an initiative launched by the UN Secretary General in 2012 during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20. Its ultimate purpose is to eradicate hunger through the attainment of 5 main goals shown in the table below.

Zero Hunger Challenge				
100%	Zero	All	100%	Zero
access to adequate food all year round	stunted children less than 2 years	food systems are sustainable	increase in smallholder productivity and income	loss or waste of food

MDG-F KEY FINDINGS

1. A link between Food Security and Nutrition needs to be ensured in order to help realize the “Zero Hunger Challenge”.

Informal Consultation with CFS Stakeholders, Rome, 11 February 2013

There was support for the broad thrust and ambition of the “Zero Hunger Challenge”, as a basis for mobilizing action on food security and nutrition, while covering much of the breadth of action needed.

The need for nutrition-sensitive approaches and food systems was highlighted as key.

In November 2012, global thought leaders gathered in South Africa to discuss the challenge of boosting crop yields and nutrition at the “Feeding the World: Africa’s Role in Solving the Global Food Crisis” Economists Conference. The most important takeaway was that nutrition has an impact on all sectors and needs to be addressed across the whole agro-food value chain.

Expanded food production has done little to address the fact that malnutrition contributes to one-third of all under-five year old child deaths in developing countries. Improvements in nutrition are not necessarily achieved by increasing crop yields and satiating hungry populations with staple foods. Some two billion people live with a chronic shortage of vital vitamins and minerals—a condition known as hidden hunger—that prevents them from reaching their potential health and productivity. The inextricable link between food security and nutrition security needs to be acknowledged in order to ensure that people are sufficiently fed and nourished. In other words, not only the quantity of the available food needs to be considered, but also its quality.³

MDG-F Key Findings

- **The integration of nutritional goals into agricultural interventions is key.** Production projections and moderation patterns must take nutritional goals into account in order to ensure the link between nutrition and agriculture.

³ Dec 2012, Klaus Kraemer. We can’t address food security without addressing nutrition security. The Economist Group.

What needs to be done to improve the link between Food Security and Nutrition?

- **More research** has to be undertaken to better understand how agricultural policies and nutrition interventions interact, and how agriculture can contribute to improve nutritional outcomes, especially in contexts of extreme poverty and most vulnerable populations.
- **The combination of nutrition and food security issues with agricultural and economic priorities requires strong leadership and political commitment.** Given stakeholders' differences in focus, nutrition and agriculture have been operating in silos, limiting cross overs and synergies. Therefore, the development and scale of the linkages between the two areas has been limited. The MDG-F experience is a good example of inter-institutional and inter-sectorial coordination and well as of convergence of priorities, policies and analysis of both agricultural and health sectors.
- **Much effort still needs to be invested on advocacy and awareness-raising to help prioritize food security and nutrition issues and ensure their inclusion in political agendas.** This is especially important in contexts of inequality, where under-nutrition and food security problems are concentrated in the poorest sections of society, hiding the severity and magnitude of the situation nationwide.

What worked in the experience of the MDG-F to improve the link between Agriculture and Nutrition?

- **Local interventions** promoted by the MDG-F programs, **as for example, "homes and school gardens"**, have proved to be a very effective tool in strengthening the link between nutrition and agriculture at community or household level by adapting the crops to the nutritional needs of the target population. They have also created a very powerful means for women to acquire and transfer knowledge, as well as to become more self-reliant.
- In the specific context of UN interagency operations, the MDG-F experience showed how **a Joint Advocacy strategy has helped to better influence the policy process.** Major coherence and added value are obtained when multiple UN agencies working in a variety of different sectors unite their voices and advocate in favor of a rights-based approach to food and nutrition security. The union of narratives helps strengthen the influence exerted on policy processes and is worth considering for future advocacy and awareness raising campaigns at national or international level.

How does Climate Change threaten the link between Food Security and Nutrition at the micro level?

- **Ecosystems fulfill important functions that underpin food security.** Based on the categories of **ecosystem services** specified within the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005), it could be argued that the two most important are **provisioning services**, which provide a supply of food that is sufficient to meet nutritional and dietary requirements, **and regulating services**, which stabilize food production by regulating extreme conditions, such as by acting as a bio-shield to mitigate the effects of extreme happenings.

- The link between food security and nutrition in a **context of climate change requires emphasizing the need to build resilient ecosystems**. Reducing vulnerability to crises by developing coping mechanisms has resulted in the improvement of the skills and abilities of vulnerable groups to resist shocks and recover from their impact. Some issues have been key in the experience of the MDG-F resilience-building programs.
- **Land access and land planning are key issues to ensure the sustainability and stability of agricultural systems**. The MDGF experience shows positive effects have been reported from the use of alternative options for crop production, agro-forestry and forest enrichment, livestock-raising, soil and water management, as well as small-scale agricultural infrastructure. The promotion of permanent or long-term land access has strengthened the implementation of these practices and further encouraged investment to improve production, innovate or adopt environmentally friendly techniques.
- **Innovation and technical support to small producers is needed to ensure resilience at the local level**. Certain innovative models of direct land intervention have yielded positive results in agricultural production and surpluses, soil management and changes in traditional beliefs such as slash-and-burn practices. Other novel programs have introduced risk management tools that adapt crop insurance to climate change effects, thus linking the risks and pay-outs with climate projections and actual occurrences of climate change events, with positive results in farmers' profits.
- A good governance system that regulates **access to water, is crucial to ensure the agricultural productivity needed for food security in a context of climate change**. Extreme droughts and changing waterfall patterns induced by Climate Change require specific policies that tackle all the factors conditioning water access, including land planning issues.
- Judging from MDG-F experience, **despite progress in the area of advocacy and awareness raising activities, still greater efforts are required** regarding the need to build resilience and adapt to climate change.

2. The experience of the MDG-F has proved that multi-sectorial interventions, when applied in a coordinated manner are more efficient in achieving results.

Informal Consultation with CFS Stakeholders, Rome, 11 February 2013

The need for integrated action across sectors was highlighted, with strong synergies to action on health, education, water, energy and natural resource management.

There is broad consensus that the way to approach food security and nutrition issues requires integrated action across sectors combining interventions on health, education, water, energy and natural resource management. Several multi-sectorial initiatives have been launched in the past years, with the idea that multi-sectorial approaches are more likely to sustainably address the underlying causes of hunger and under-nutrition. Some examples of successful UN multi-sectorial initiatives are the “Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger” (REACH) partnership, the “Scaling-Up Nutrition” (SUN) movement, the Pan-American partnership for nutrition and development or the UNSCN - United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition.

However, multi-sectoriality can have many different definitions depending on the categories of sectors we want to consider. The combination of categories will depend on contextual elements, cultural realities, political interests, involved stakeholders amongst many other factors. Thus the multi-sectoriality formula will be subject to customization depending on each problem case.

MDG-F Key Findings

What categories must be considered under a multi-sectorial approach?

- **The combination of sectors of integrated food security and nutrition interventions has to be context specific and culturally relevant.** There is general consensus that the obstacles for food security and nutrition require solutions that tackle the roots of the problem from different angles: education, health, environment, gender issues, etc. However, the categories of sectors to be included in each intervention might vary depending on the cultural, social and political context as well as the unit of resource allocation (macro or micro level).
- **Water Governance has proved to be a key element in the multi-sectorial approach.** Taking this into account, the MDGF has promoted the inclusion of water and sanitation components in numerous interventions in Africa, Asia and Latin America under the thematic window of Food Security and Nutrition. The data obtained from the Joint Program in Panama (July 17 2009- March 31 2013) for

instance, is evidence that when applying a multi-sectorial approach to food security, tackling diseases induced by contaminated water is key to success⁴.

- **Designing interventions in a participatory way at the local level, was critical to ensure ownership and sustainability.** Participation at the local level resulted in customized strategies that were adapted to each particular sociocultural context and addressed the priorities and needs of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, local governance systems are more stable because they are less vulnerable to rotation. Their involvement therefore increases the likeability of project continuity.
- Supporting multi-sectorial interventions with **education, awareness and advocacy activities at the local level allowed for a much stronger program impact.** Empowerment of rural women paired with a good understanding of traditional values and customs were a crucial entry point in ensuring receptivity and strengthening ownership.

Where and how to allocate resources and focus interventions?

- Programs that intervene at a micro-level (household), **are best designed when based on a holistic concept of food, which considers all the elements of the food chain and their cultural connotations.** However, defining households as units for resource allocation or program focus requires taking into account the specific elements of each context and adapting to them. For example, a household could be a production unit where its members work together and produce goods (farm), or a decision-making unit for adopting innovations, or a consumption unit where the members themselves consume goods (shared cooking and feeding arrangements). But it also could be a residential unit where members use a common infrastructure (house, energy, water) or a social unit (family, dowry, inheritance).

Whichever definition is chosen, it must be based on a good understanding of the peculiarities and specific elements of the intervention areas. This will definitely affect planning and decision making processes. Specific research methods and participatory processes could be adequate in understanding the categories that need to be critically included in each case.

What do we need to make a multi-sectorial approach work?

- Joint programs that **addressed target groups have allowed for a better coordination and a more efficient implementation** of multi-sectorial approaches. **Good targeting allows for smoother planning and evaluation** since it provides a common platform for the different stakeholders to operate in and facilitates coordination and identification of potential synergies.

⁴ Access to clean water consistently reduces gastrointestinal diseases. In Kusapín, district of the indigenous county of Ngobe Bugle in North Panama, indicators of the final monitoring evaluation render evidence that the prevalence of diarrhea in children younger than 5 years was reduced from 17% to 6%, from 56% to 20% in Kankintú and from 52% to 27% in Bisira. Similar reductions were also found in skin diseases on children. The implementation of practices that improve hygienic uses of water, personal care and treatment of food are equally important. (Oscar Huertas, 2013. Final Evaluation Economic Democratic Governance Joint Program in Panamá.)

In addition to this, by working with the same target group, accumulative impacts of the different activities result in a more powerful outcome than those that are fragmented. The way to define a specific target group in the MDG-F programs has been very diverse including a wide range of criteria such as location, income level, vulnerability level or ethnicity.

Some joint programs highlighted **as a favorable contributing factor to the above the identification of physical spaces to coordinate the delivery of the integrated packages** as for example schools, health centers, households, local organizations, etc.

- **Availability of data is essential in the design of relevant targeted interventions.** This is especially important in contexts of high inequality where food security and nutrition are localized in certain areas or sectors of the population, of which national indicator average values are not representative. The creation of base lines and surveillance systems through the Joint Programs assisted in the process of designing more efficient interventions.
- **Success in the implementation of a multi-sectorial approach depends on the capacity of different actors and authorities to join efforts and agree on COMMON GOALS,** subsequently coordinating their individual interventions. This requires:
 - a) A strong **political commitment** and a solid democratic and transparent **governance structure.** The MDG-F Programs governance and accountability system has proved to be a very successful formula that could be used as reference for future interventions⁵.
 - b) A strong and **inclusive leadership** model that balances involvement, transparency and functionality.
 - c) A clear **definition of institutional roles,** and the fostering of trust between partners.
 - d) **Incorporate the local level** to the decision-making process, such as municipalities and the traditional authorities of certain communities. This has been key to the success and scale up of the MDG-F Joint Programs.
- **Leveraging specific funding for food and nutrition security is critical for guaranteeing long-term sustainable interventions.** The experience of the MDG-F provides many different examples on ways to leverage funds, including local funding, coordination mechanisms for sectorial budgets, or innovative ear marked income tax strategies and mobilization of private sector partners.

⁵ **MDG-F Joint Programs Governance Structure:** At the national level, there is usually a three-layer structure, the Program Management Unit, the Program Management Committee and the National Steering Committee. At the local level, very frequently coordination Units or management Committees were established that include local and traditional authorities, regional representation of sectorial institutions, civil society and beneficiaries.

Accountability and reporting system: JPs have to submit biannual monitoring reports that need to be signed and shared by the management and National Steering Committee. Funds are disbursed annually based on good performance. Midterm and final evaluations have been carried out for every Joint Program, in addition to yearly monitoring and evaluations missions carried out by members of the MDG-F Secretariat. All these tools promoted transparency of the processes and a joint decision making.

3. Rights-based Food and Nutrition Security interventions are more efficient in achieving the “Zero Hunger Challenge”.

Issues Paper submitted to Informal Consultation with CFS Stakeholders, Rome, 11 February 2013

There is a strong call, especially by civil society advocates that human rights standards and principles should guide the formulation of the Post-2015 Development Goals. For food security and nutrition, this would involve establishing a legislative, policy and strategic framework, drawn up with reference to the respective Voluntary Guidelines. A complementary requirement is for strong accountability mechanisms

“The right to adequate food happens when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, have physical and economic access at any time to adequate food or means for its procurement.”⁶ The majority of the poor and food-insecure people live in rural areas, and agriculture is a source of livelihood for most of the extreme poor. In order to improve food and nutrition security and eradicate extreme poverty in rural areas, increasing the availability of and access to food is crucial. Considering Food Security and Nutritional well-being from a human rights approach means that in principle, no compromise is acceptable concerning the right to food⁷.

MDG-F Key Findings

The adoption of a human rights-based approach in development programs on Food Security and Nutrition, involves putting forward ideas for effective ways and tools to achieve them. It also means that development programs will be designed to support States in the fulfillment of their obligations and will highlight the roles of relevant stakeholders.

When working from a human rights-based approach, certain key principles need to be included in the development programs. These principles have been cornerstones in the design and implementation of the MDG-F Joint Programs:

- a) **The right to participate in the way public affairs are conducted** and in the decision-making processes regarding policies on how to realize the right to adequate food.
- b) **The need to emphasize the focus on poor and vulnerable people**, with a special attention to women.
- c) **The relevance of developing a transparent institutional framework** (governance system) for achieving the final outcome of abolishing hunger, with an accountability system.

⁶ General Comment 12 on the Right to Food, paragraph 6. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999

⁷ Conclusions from the 13-17 of November 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, Italy.

MDG-F lessons learned from the implementation of the human rights based perspective

- **Involvement, community empowerment and national ownership** have proved to be the key for the success of the MDG-F programs. Education and activities for raising awareness have been essential for this participation to become possible.
- **It is Key to improve people's rights to food security together with their capacities to claim such rights.** In order for this to happen, it is critical to combine actions that improve health and nutrition with initiatives aimed at empowering communities and capacity-building of both public institutions and of civil society organizations, keeping in mind the final goal of encouraging the involvement of beneficiaries in the process.
- **The preservation and recovery of traditional customs that are beneficial for Food Security and Nutrition Issues,** has proved to be a very powerful tool in the MDG-F Interventions. Traditional agriculture in combination with the transfer and training or new technologies have been elements of success in many MDG-F Joint Programs.
- When developing policies in contexts of **indigenous groups, reflecting the unique constraints and challenges** faced by these communities proved to be critical.

What did we learn from focusing on the most vulnerable populations?

- **Non-discrimination of persons and groups vulnerable to food security and special attention to women and children** embody a critical window of opportunity to prevent stunting and its adverse consequences. When talking about food production, particular attention has to be paid to small farmers, landless farmers, women farmers, herders and fishermen.
- **Small and medium enterprises** represent the most important part of the agricultural sector. In order to ensure Food Security they need to be supported in: a) Improving their productivity, by applying new technologies and facilitating access to Financial Services and b) Development Local Markets and diversification of the availability of agriculture
- **Reducing the gender gap in food security and nutrition, improving and effectively acknowledging the role that women play in household and national food and nutrition security.** There are social and religious barriers to working with women that need to be taken into account when designing food security programs.

Judging from the experience of the Fund, **key gender variables** were identified as essential in the inclusion of these factors in the design of future initiatives:

- a) **Understanding communities**, their lifestyles and beliefs is key in identifying factors that exclude women from participating in the economic and social life of certain communities.
- b) **Promoting behavioral change** from traditional practices that are detrimental to women and children's health.
- c) **Integrating activities that increase awareness and capacity building** for protecting the rights of women and mainstream gender issues in national development policies and frameworks in order to be effective.

What has been the role of Governance in the MDG-F Joint Programs?

- **To make multi-sectoriality possible, it is necessary to build adequate institutional and policy frameworks at a national level**, backed by a strong open democratic leadership, and reflected in the national budget. In this sense, the MDG-F has (i) supported the development or revision of national action plans, specific policies (e.g. maternity benefits), and regulations (e.g. food safety) ; (ii) mainstreamed nutrition into national policies and programs (e.g. inclusion of nutrition in school curricula, and inclusion of nutrition course in universities and medical courses); and (iii) developed numerous training programs, both for civil servants at the partner national institutions and for other stakeholders at community level.
- The overall aim of the JPs was to **enable policy dialogue based on global evidence, with the aim of incorporating nutrition and food security into policies**. The advocacy efforts of the JPs have resulted in major achievements with the revision or development of food/nutrition policies at the national and sub-national level.
- The focus on capacity development allowed the Joint Programs to **reinforce the monitoring and surveillance systems in the regions of intervention**, as well as to strengthen service delivery and knowledge management.
- **Using the pre-existing structures of governance at the local level versus developing ad hoc ones for program purposes** has been crucial to articulate the different interventions and to ensure continuity and stability in spite of political turnovers.

4. Ensuring the sustainability of short and medium term development interventions is crucial to tackle the drivers of recurrent food security and nutritional crises.

Informal Consultation with CFS Stakeholders, Rome, 11 February 2013

It was highlighted the importance of linking development and humanitarian interventions

In a context of limited resources, governments and donors have to make critical decisions when designing nutrition strategies: immediate efforts are critical to address the urgent needs of hungry and under-nourished populations, especially pregnant women and young children in periods of food crisis; but long-term strategies focusing on the underlying factors of under-nutrition are also necessary to sustainably improve the food security status of the most vulnerable and eradicate hunger.

The MDG-F experience has shown that in such a context of decreasing resources for development aid, the **added value of the development actors lies in promoting innovation, technology transfer and bringing forgotten or politically sensitive issues to the political Agenda.**

MDG-F Key Findings

How to find the balance between Short term and long term approach?

- **Short-term interventions and long-term strategies should be implemented simultaneously**, in order to respond to urgent needs and, at the same time, fight the underlying causes of the problem. Evidence is clear however, that addressing under-nutrition in children must start early and ideally during pregnancy until children are 2 years of age. Under-nutrition before age 2 has long-term and irreversible consequences for brain development and growth, the consequences of which (poor cognitive development, poor school performance and impaired productivity) extend into adulthood. Therefore short-term efforts must focus on this critical window of development, while also pursuing longer development goals.
- **Improving food security in protracted crises requires going beyond short-term responses in order to protect and promote people's livelihoods over the longer term.** Making a decision about when to go from humanitarian help to early recovery is very difficult. But it is important to bear in mind, that people living in protracted crises are often forced to make radical adjustments in their way of life that require longer-term responses, even if they also require immediate food assistance to build the basis for long-term food security.

The experience of the MDG-F has shown how food security and livelihoods programs can help communities enter an early recovery process, where they become more stabilized and can start peace-building processes, therefore making them less vulnerable of recurring into conflict.

- **Involving civil society has been essential** is a way to reinforce the sustainability and increase the possibilities of continuation and scaling up. They will continue demanding action on the needed areas to the government after the development programs are finished.

What factors have been barriers in practical work to adopt a long term vision?

- Multi-sectorial and multi-partner initiatives as the MDG-F Joint Programs, involve a high number of stakeholders that operate with different timings and have different urgency and political priorities. Combining them has been a highly complex challenge that the JPs had to face to comply with work time tables and meet the expected outcomes. This has influenced the consolidation of the promoted social changes and their long term contributions. In order to overcome this challenge the MDG-F Joint Programs have put in place different strategies that could be useful for future interventions:
 - a) **Flexible planning** is required to adapt to the reality of the areas of intervention, their Cosmo-visions and timing of endogenous social changes.
 - b) Ensuring that the planning and design of the programs are based on a **good understanding of the local reality in the design phase of the programs**. This is especially important when working in isolated and very different areas to the national average. The experience of the MDG-F shows that even if broad consensus of this idea already exists, limitations of time and resources, can jeopardize the involvement of communities in the early stages of program design.
 - c) **Political priorities and bureaucratic processes should adapt to the local context**, meaning the times for the operational and administrative procedures of donors, governments or other agents, should not jeopardize the ultimate goal of the activities and their natural timeframes.
 - d) **A relatively long launching time should be included in the design of the programs** to: 1) agree with the local communities and authorities an strategy of intervention, 2) Clear up priorities and sense of urgencies, 3) local consultation and participation is critical to validate the initiative, 4) build up trust relationships and 5) involve micro-median-macro levels from the beginning of the planning process.
 - e) **Make use of previous experiences and lessons learned to accelerate the process of implementation**. Knowledge management and systematization of lessons learnt is Key to accelerate processes and be more efficient in the use of limited time and financial resources.