



The twin-track approachⁱ

The twin-track approach, consolidated in the practice of the UN system and endorsed as part of one of the Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security, requires specific and urgent attention to both short- and longer-term interventions to address food insecurity and malnutrition. In this approach, it is important to emphasize “long-term” does not mean action to be started in the future, or after completion of short-term action. Rather, both kinds of interventions, or “tracks”, need to be undertaken simultaneously and in a coordinated manner in order to successfully fight hunger and progressively realize the right to adequate food.

Direct action to immediately tackle hunger and malnutrition for the most vulnerable

Attention must be paid to the immediate needs of those who are unable to meet their food and nutrition requirements, in line with the fundamental right to be free of hunger. Immediate actions may include a range of interventions including emergency food assistance, payment of living wages to agricultural workers, nutrition interventions, cash transfers and other social protection instruments, access to inputs and food price policy interventions.

Particular attention must be paid to addressing the nutritional needs of women, in particular pregnant and lactating women, and children under the age of two, especially to prevent stunting. Children are one of the most affected groups in relation to food insecurity and malnutrition and in situations of crisis and emergency.

ⁱ This Section draws mainly on the UCFA and the Declaration of the 2009 World Summit on Food Security.

Medium/long-term actions to build resilience and address the root causes of hunger

As described in the Anti-Hunger Programmeⁱⁱ, the key requirements are to:

- Improve agricultural productivity and enhance livelihoods and food security and nutrition in poor rural communities; promote productive activities and decent employment;
- Develop and conserve natural resources; ensure access to productive resources;
- Expand rural infrastructure, including capacity for food safety, plant and animal health; and broaden market access;
- Strengthen capacity for knowledge generation and dissemination (research, extension, education and communication).

Connecting the tracks

Adequate linkages are required between the two tracks of direct or immediate and medium/long-term interventions. Social protection instruments such as safety nets – provided primarily in the form of cash or food-based transfers – can establish a bridge between the two tracks, making the transition from humanitarian assistance for chronic needs to predictable, longer-term development approaches, including public investment in infrastructure. These can raise levels of child nutrition and improve cognitive development, school attainments and future labour productivity, thereby enhancing earning potential and promoting development. Social protection systems can also contribute to the adoption of higher-risk but higher-income livelihood options and alleviate some market failures. They can, finally, be implemented in ways that also contribute to promote local production and markets.

ⁱⁱ Anti-Hunger Programme – A twin-track approach to hunger reduction. FAO 2003. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/j0563e/j0563e00.htm>

However, elements of social protection are often uncoordinated, short-term, externally-funded, and not adequately reflected in food security and nutrition and poverty reduction strategies. Many agricultural and food workers and their families suffer from hunger and malnutrition because basic labour laws, minimum wage policies and social security systems do not cover rural workers. Formal employment and the assurance of a minimum living wage is key for workers' food security and nutritionⁱⁱⁱ. The cycle of dependence must be broken and the transition made from short- to longer-term support. Social programmes should be enshrined and embedded in national legislation to ensure long-term sustainability and predictability. Existing local safety-net mechanisms should be included with the intention to promote them as life-saving stop-gap measures whenever communities find themselves in situations of hunger and food insecurity (*see Section 10*).

Countries in protracted or recurring crises pose bigger challenges for the implementation of the twin-track approach, and may require special considerations including context specific approaches (*see Section 9*).

ⁱⁱⁱ Assurance of minimum living wage is enshrined in the ILO Constitution "to ensure a just share of the fruits of progress to all, and a minimum living wage to all employed and in need of such protection." Respect of basic workers' rights of agricultural workers is set out in the fundamental ILO conventions, especially the right to bargain collectively ILO Convention 98 (161 ratifications) and freedom of association Convention 87 (151 ratification). The remuneration of workers should provide a "decent living for themselves and their families", according to art. 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.