

# Taking Action for the World's Poor and Hungry People

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## SPEAKER SUMMARY NOTE

**Session:** Strategies for Effective Implementation of Interventions: Scaling Up Interventions Focused on the Poor and Hungry

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**Title:** Zero Hunger Programme: Major Lessons for Scaling Up

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

Launched in January 2003 by President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva at the outset of his mandate, Brazil's Zero Hunger Programme (*Programa Fome Zero – PFZ*), aimed to bring about a rapid reduction in the huge number of families suffering from hunger and malnutrition, and to begin to address the underlying causes of chronic hunger. This report traces the evolution of *Fome Zero*, seeking to draw lessons from the programme which could be relevant to other countries committed to ending hunger, and lists key issues for scaling up food security programmes associated with the Latin America and the Caribbean Hunger-Free initiative (ALCSH).

As happens with many broad-based, popular programmes, *Fome Zero* created expectations of quick results. However, the need to put in place new institutions and programmes reaching out to the poorest communities across Brazil meant that the programme got off to a frustratingly slow start. In spite of this, the scale-up of *Fome Zero's* activities grew rapidly and the programme is now close to meeting the short-term objective of enabling all Brazilian families to have enough to eat every day of their lives. Significant progress, albeit more gradual, has been made in tackling the root causes of hunger and malnutrition on a sustainable basis.

Five key lessons can be drawn from *Fome Zero* which are relevant to other countries committed to ending hunger:

First and most important, *Fome Zero* show that it is possible, given the political will, to bring about a rapid decrease in the number of people suffering chronic hunger and malnutrition, opening opportunities for them to participate effectively in the country's social and economic development. It is particularly noteworthy that success in reducing hunger—a theme that, at first sight, may have little political attraction—can generate significant political rewards in an open democratic society.

Second, contrary to the perceptions of many governments, it is financially feasible to obtain rapid hunger reduction. The aggregate annual cost of *Bolsa Familia*, which brings direct benefits to over a quarter of Brazil's population, is just over 2 percent of the Federal budget and only 0.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). The 31 main components of the *Fome Zero* Programme have been implemented without weakening confidence in the currency (which has appreciated against the US dollar) and without recourse to massive borrowing.

Third, reducing hunger not only cuts poverty and income inequality but also appears to generate economic benefits, especially those related to an expanded internal market for staple foods and other consumer goods—including home improvements—which will likely be reflected in a rise in fiscal revenue. If substantiated by further studies, this will lend support to the claim that hunger reduction programmes should be viewed not as “welfare” but as economically viable investment.

Fourth, institutional arrangements for the implementation of any National System for Food and Nutritional Security must be bolstered by strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Eradicating hunger should be only the first action.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on an evaluation of the Brazilian Zero Hunger Programme prepared by Andrew MacMillan, Alberta Mascaretti, Benjamin Davis, and Fernando Soto-Baquero of FAO (See FAO web sites [www.rlc.fao.org](http://www.rlc.fao.org) and [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)). The author wishes to acknowledge the invaluable comments of Mr. MacMillan on previous revisions of this paper and the work of Mr. David Dion in editing and revising the final draft.

Fifth, the major emphasis should be on decentralised local systems for food security with greater citizenship participation. It is at the local level that actions involving civic society can achieve the greatest results.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The launch of *Fome Zero* by the newly-elected Brazilian Government in January 2003 awoke popular awareness to the paradox of millions of families living without enough to eat in a land of plentiful food and booming agricultural exports. The President's commitment to eradicating hunger touched the national conscience in a remarkable way and triggered an overwhelming outpouring of public support.

President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva's determination to put an end to hunger in Brazil, as reflected in the goals of *Fome Zero* (FZ), also aroused international attention. Interest was strongest among developing countries which were struggling to achieve the goal of the 1996 World Food Summit to halve the number of undernourished people in the world by 2015. This goal was subsequently extended at the turn of the century by the world community in the first of several Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): to halve the proportion of the world's population living in poverty and hunger by 2015. These international commitments were further reinforced by President Lula, together with the Heads of State of France, Chile, and Spain, at the Meeting of Leaders for Action against Hunger and Poverty, held at the UN in New York in September 2004 and attended by over 100 governments.

Within the context of this latest initiative, in October 2005 the Presidents of Brazil and Guatemala put forward the concept of "Latin America and the Caribbean Hunger-Free by 2025" (ALCSH for its Spanish acronym), which was subsequently endorsed by all 29 countries of the Region present at FAO's Regional Conference in Caracas, Venezuela in April 2006.

According to FAO, there are 53 million undernourished people in Latin America and the Caribbean (10 percent of total population), with 20 percent of children under five suffering stunted growth. Although there has been some progress, (under-nutrition declined by 6.6 million (from 13 percent to 10 percent) between 1990–92 and 2000–02), it has been far below expectations, and recently the region has seen a slight increase in hunger indicators. Hunger is largely attributed to a lack of access to food access, and not to failures in food production or availability, since the region is the highest per capita producer of food in the world (with some notable exceptions such as Haiti, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic). Due to grossly unequal income distribution and access to resources (capital, land, labour), the poorest sectors often cannot earn enough money to cover the minimum food basket. This situation is exacerbated by natural hazards (hurricanes, floods, droughts) and a general lack of adequate social safety nets.

Until hunger is perceived as a political and economic priority, rather than being treated as a technical issue or humanitarian problem, food security will be assigned a low rank on national and global agendas.

The good news is that there is a proven relationship between people's food security and democratic governance. Only through long-lasting programmes, anchored in legal frameworks and supported by public policy, media, and civil society, can food security for all be achieved.

Through its Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS), FAO is cooperating worldwide with over 100 developing countries in designing and implementing programmes contributing to the achievement of the World Food Summit goal. Many of these countries, inspired in part by President Lula's leadership, are now working towards the design and implementation of national food security programmes to achieve that goal.

FAO has long supported food security activities in the region at local, national, and regional level. Nine countries have initiated (Brazil, México, Guatemala, Venezuela) or are in the process of setting up (Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, and Dominican Republic) large-scale food security initiatives under FAO's SPFS. Encouragingly, regional economic organizations such as CAC-CORECA and CAN have recently lent support to food security and rural development policies.

By mid-2006, FAO's National SPFS activities in the region accounted for US\$87 million, with US\$120 million more for the Regional Programme for Food Security (together with CARICOM). Most of the US\$207 has been funded by national governments through trust funds, though external donors are pivotal in Central America (Spain) and the Caribbean (Italy). Meanwhile, FAO lends support to Brazil and Guatemala in the development of ALCSH 2025, providing technical advice, strategic guidance and open spaces to liaise with other stakeholders. ALCSH 2025 has

been included in FAO's Regional Office Program of Work and will continue to be part of FAO's Program of Work in the region for years to come.

The "ALCSH 2025" initiative emphasizes medium- and long-term structural policies and collaboration between countries to eradicate hunger from a continent that today has the capacity to feed three times its current population. Advocating the "Right to Food" and supporting enlarged, broad-based National Programs for Food Security, this political initiative aims at involving different stakeholders from government, civil society, the media, international and donor institutions, and the private sector.

The major components of the ALCSH 2025 are:

- (a) **Strengthening national food security systems** (institutions, leadership, political will, legal frameworks, public policies, National Programs for Food Security (NPFs), and adequate budgets).
- (b) **Promoting South-South Cooperation** (flexible schemes to encourage peer-to-peer exchanges, from the level of policy-makers to peasant leaders, technicians, private entrepreneurs, and journalists).
- (c) **Building a critical mass of professionals and leaders** to formulate and implement food security programs and sensitize civil society as a whole (on-the-job seminars, university courses, on-site and on-line activities, student exchanges, and mass media campaigns).
- (d) **Networking and advocacy with existing initiatives at the highest political levels** (through building alliances, with FAO acting as a catalyst between and among countries, donors, financial institutions, UN agencies, and other stakeholders).
- (e) **Monitoring, information dissemination and applied research on food security**, including a creation of a Latin American and Caribbean Observatory of Hunger and Poverty.

## FOME ZERO: CONCEPT AND EVOLUTION

### The Original Concept of Fome Zero

*Fome Zero* (FZ) was the outcome of more than a decade of research and conceptual debate in Brazil on food security, originally inspired by the work of Josué de Castro back in late 1940s.<sup>2</sup> The *Instituto Cidadania*—a nongovernmental organization (NGO) created by Luis Inácio Lula da Silva when he led the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) in 1991 as a think-tank on social issues—initiated the formulation of a food security programme for Brazil. A collaboration of more than 100 professionals, politicians and representatives of civil society, including trade unions and NGOs, the food security programme that emerged from this work<sup>3</sup> was given top priority in Lula's three election campaigns (1994, 1998, and 2002) and was formally launched as *Fome Zero* following his victory in 2002.

According to the institute, poverty and hunger in Brazil are not isolated or occasional events but the result of a perverse pattern of economic growth, based on low wages, increasing income concentration and high levels of unemployment.<sup>4</sup> Though the programme goes beyond the immediate objective of hunger eradication and includes policies and activities aimed at ensuring food security on a comprehensive and sustainable basis, President Lula's immediate political commitment was to ensure that every Brazilian be able to enjoy three meals a day by the end of his four-year mandate.

In Brazil, as in many other Latin America and Caribbean countries, hunger and malnutrition are not related to insufficient production or availability of food at the national level, but rather to the lack of access to food in sufficient quantity and quality because of low incomes.

At the time FZ was launched, the target group was estimated to be about 44 million people (about 9.3 million families who live below the poverty line), representing some 28 percent of the total population of Brazil. Of this total, about half were classified as rural, one-quarter as urban (metropolitan), and the remaining quarter as non-metropolitan urban. Distinct strategies and local policies were identified for these three categories of beneficiaries

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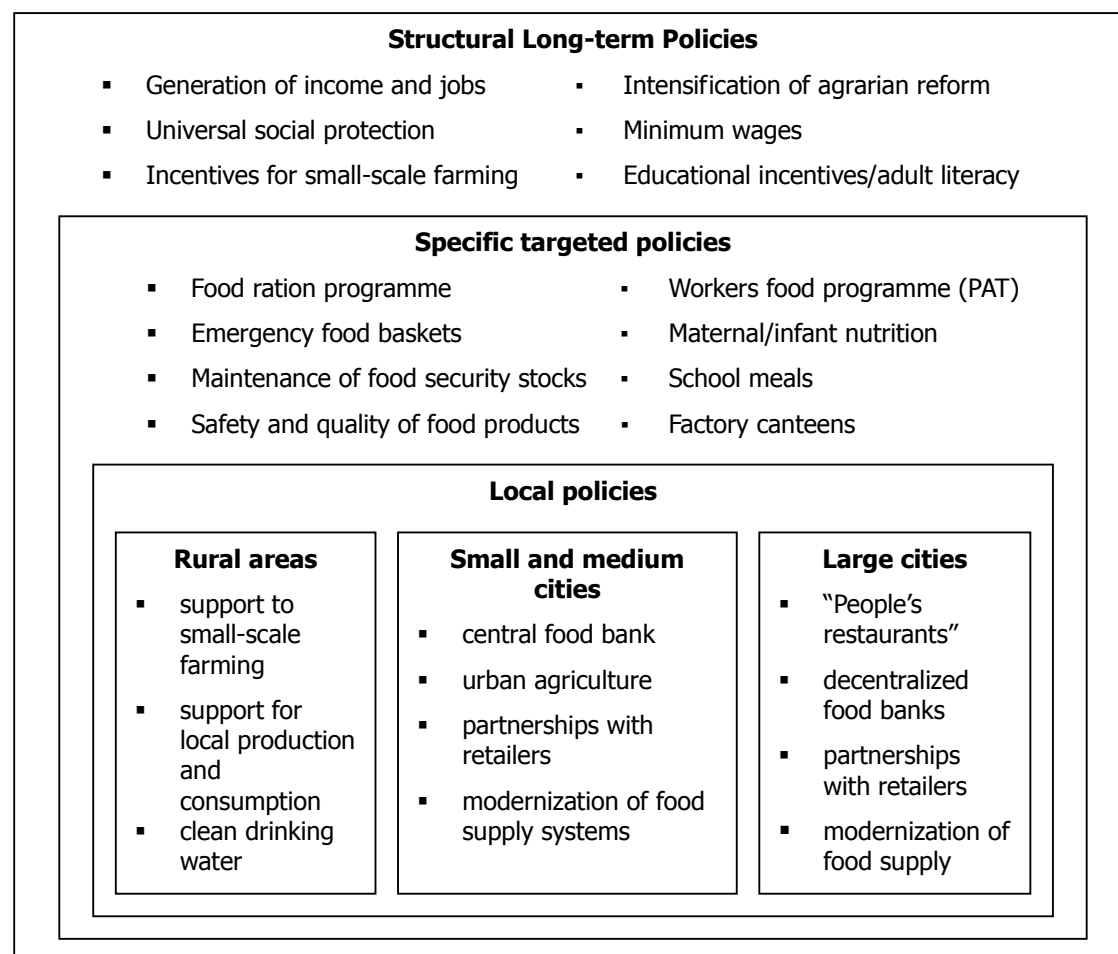
<sup>2</sup> Josue de Castro's famous book, "Geography of Hunger", published in 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Important contributions to this process were made by the Food and Agriculture Economic Institute of the University of Campinas (Unicamp), the Movement for Ethics in Politics, the newly formed National Council for Food Security (CONSEA) and the Institute for Economic and Social Research (IPEA). The former produced a "hunger map" and provided much background analysis on which the programme was based.

<sup>4</sup> Fome Zero – Uma proposta de Política de Segurança alimentar para o Brasil; Instituto de Cidadania, October 2001.  
([www.fomezero.gov.br/documentos](http://www.fomezero.gov.br/documentos))

(see Figure 1). This differential approach was essential to a rapid and simultaneous implementation in all regions of the country.

**Figure 1—Main Activities within Fome Zero**



Source: Fome Zero—Uma proposta de Política de Segurança alimentar para o Brasil; Instituto de Cidadania, October 2001.

Evaluations made one year after the beginning of the implementation of different programmes highlighted that in peripheral metropolitan areas—especially in the *favelas*—the results achieved trailed behind expectations, presumably due to:

- (a) the disintegration of the traditional "nuclear family" household structure;
- (b) the inevitable "resource seepage"<sup>5</sup> of cash transfer income outside the community instead of circulating within the targeted local economic area; and
- (c) other disruptive or destructive factors often associated with extreme poverty, such as the drug traffic, domestic and street violence, disease, etc.

It is important to note that the conditions of individual beneficiaries improved as in other areas under the programme. What appears to have failed in these localities are the knock-on or synergistic effects in the economy of the local communities.

*Fome Zero* took a "rights based" approach to food security. It presupposed that food security is a complex and multi-sectoral problem that goes well beyond production issues alone. As a result, *Fome Zero* aimed to implement an integrated set of policies and programmes and to mobilize different levels of government (federal, state, and local) as well as civil society (NGOs, unions, the church, private sector, etc.) around the ultimate common objective: guaranteeing food security and eliminating hunger in Brazil. As such, the programme was seen as an important means of empowerment, allowing the poorest segment of society to recover their full rights as citizens.

<sup>5</sup> "Resource seepage" refers to the phenomena of local incomes (from direct cash transfers or other sources) being spent outside the local community, thus eluding potential economic benefits within the community.

*Fome Zero* involved a combination of structural measures with medium to long-term impact, intended to address the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity, and more direct measures aimed at reducing the incidence of hunger immediately. An Extraordinary Ministry for Food Security (MESA) was created in January 2003, to coordinate and implement the programme with other Ministries.

The main objectives programmed (Figure 1) were the following:

- Raising the incomes of food-insecure households;
- Increasing the availability and affordability of staple foods;
- Improving access to food; and
- Alleviating hunger and malnutrition as a matter of urgency.

Paramount importance was given to the participation of civil society at all levels. For this purpose, the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition (CONSEA) was re-established in 2003 (having been shut down by the previous government), bringing together all concerned Ministries, as well as representatives of civil society involved with hunger, food security and nutrition issues, to advise the government on policies and programme design. Similar councils were also set up at state and municipal level and an Inter-Ministerial Working Group on *Fome Zero* was subsequently created in the Office of the President to contribute to cross-sectoral coordination within the government.

As originally conceived, *Fome Zero* put strong emphasis on the linkage between food security and local development. The role of municipalities in creating the necessary synergies between the various activities at the local level was stressed, with the aim of developing local mechanisms able to ensure that the resources invested would have the effect of stimulating the local economy, creating jobs, and opening markets.

The first significant measure adopted by *Fome Zero* to improve access to food, the food ration (or voucher) card programme, was created in 2003. Magnetic cards were distributed to families at risk of food insecurity, entitling them to a monthly allowance of R\$ 50 (approximately US\$20 at the time) to purchase food. To oversee the programme and monitor its social and economic impact, local management committees were established comprising representatives of Government, civil society and beneficiaries. This programme was intended to complement other on-going cash transfer programmes, such as education grants (*bolsa escola*) and cooking gas coupons (vale gas). Eventually, 10 months later all such programmes were joined into a general purpose conditional cash transfer programme (entitlement programme)<sup>6</sup>, named "*Bolsa Família*".

Support for small-holder agriculture included various mechanisms aimed at stimulating demand and raising prices for the staple food crops produced by these farmers. Insofar as possible, municipal and state governments were to buy the food products necessary for their various needs (school meal programmes, hospital kitchens, "People's Restaurants", etc.) directly from local small-holders. Other components included access to micro-credit and improvements of rural infrastructure, as well as initiatives promoting home gardening and diversification activities, such as raising poultry, small ruminants, and bee-keeping.

Support for urban and peri-urban agriculture was an important element of the strategy targeting non-metropolitan urban food insecure populations, as were initiatives to enlarge the existing school meal programmes and reduce maternal/infant malnutrition.

## Recent Evolution<sup>7</sup>

At the beginning of 2004, a year after the program was launched, the newly formed MESA was merged with the Ministry of Social Affairs to form the present Ministry for Social Development and the Fight against Hunger (known by its Portuguese acronym MDS). MDS is responsible for coordinating the various programmes under *Fome Zero*. In some cases, such as the *Bolsa Família*, these are implemented directly by MDS. It also makes contributions to other programmes which come under the management and budget of other Ministries and governmental entities.

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<sup>6</sup> In keeping with World Bank practice, this paper adopts the terminology "conditional cash transfer" to describe direct monetary government subsidies to qualified beneficiaries, though we tend to favour the alternative usage "entitlement" as this implies that beneficiaries have the **right** to be free of hunger. See "Glossary of Political Economy Terms", <http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/entitlement>.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed review see Maya Takagi; A implantação da Política de Segurança alimentar e nutricional no Brasil: seus limites e desafios; Unicamp; Campinas, February 2006.

In addition to the overall coordination, monitoring and evaluation of *Fome Zero*, the MDS is responsible for several other large social security programmes not directly related to *Fome Zero*. One of these is the “Unified Register” (*Cadastro Único*) which MDS developed as a key management tool for targeting *Bolsa Familia* participants. The creation of the Register, along with unification of diverse aid programmes under the *Bolsa Familia*, has significantly reduced transaction costs and simplified implementation of the cash transfer programme.

When the MDS was created, efforts were made to better define the “boundaries” of *Fome Zero* clarifying the responsibilities of different Ministries and facilitating communications with the public. One significant result of this realignment was a reduced emphasis on creating linkages between food security and local development under the MDS.

*Bolsa Familia* is now considered the central programme of *Fome Zero*, around which other necessary and complementary structural programmes are being implemented in coordination with different line Ministries and associations. The Unified Register is now used to improve synergies between various different programmes.

*Fome Zero* at this point consists of a collection of 31 complementary programmes (see Annex 1) that address both the immediate and the underlying causes of hunger and food insecurity. These programmes all build on the original foundation of *Fome Zero*.

### The Achievements of Fome Zero

The major *Fome Zero* programmes, in terms of level of investment, number of beneficiaries and visibility, consist of:

PROGRAMME	CHARACTERISTICS
<b>Bolsa Familia</b>	A conditional cash transfer programme (or entitlement), targeting poor families and linked to children’s attendance at school and health checks.
<b>National School Meal Programme (PNAE)</b>	Guarantees school meals for children attending state-run pre-schools and primary-schools.
<b>National Programme for Family Agriculture (PRONAF)</b>	Supports small-scale farming through technical services and subsidised credit.
<b>Food Procurement Programme (PAA)</b>	Promotes the purchase of food from small-scale farms for local distribution to institutions which form part of the social protection network.
<b>Water Tank Programme</b>	Helps families construct tanks to collect and store rainwater for domestic use in arid areas in the North-East.

*Bolsa Familia*, a monthly allowance averaging about US\$30 per family, has become the dominant element of *Fome Zero*, involving investments of US\$4.16 billion in 2006. It was created through the merger of several cash transfer programmes targeting poor families, and the aggregate number of families benefiting has risen from about 3.6 million in 2003 to over 11 million (or some 46 million people—over a quarter of Brazil’s population) by mid-2006. Studies show that the *Bolsa Familia* has been accurately targeted, with 88 percent of resources going to families in the lowest two income quintiles. Much of the allowance, which represents an increase of 21 percent over the average income of participants, is spent on food. Surveys show that the quantity, quality and diversity of food consumed by beneficiaries have increased. Although no overall assessment has yet been made of the nutritional impact of *Bolsa Familia*, one study shows that infant children of families participating in the programme in the Northeast of *Brazil* have a significantly lower risk of stunted growth than those outside the programme. Other studies show that *Bolsa Familia* is having a strong impact on the reduction of poverty and income inequality, now at its lowest level for 30 years. While not yet quantified, it also seems likely that the substantial flow of resources into poor communities is stimulating local economic growth where it is most needed. It has been shown that conditional cash transfer programmes, when accurately targeted, result in an expansion of the internal local markets in the poorest regions.

The National Programme for Family Agriculture (PRONAF), which was launched in 1993 to support small-scale farming and rapidly expanded under *Fome Zero*, commands comparable funding (about US\$4.5 billion in 2006, including funds from repaid loans). The main component is targeted credit linked to technical support services. PRONAF has enabled some 700,000 farm families to have access to credit for the first time, and increased the amount of credit provided to the poorest farming households. However, it should be noted that there are conflicting reports about the impact of the programme on small-scale farmer output and incomes, as well as the impact on local economic development. Several studies pointing to strongly positive results appear to have been

based on flawed methodology. A major concern is that the growth in the scale and quality of technical assistance services has failed to keep pace with the rapid expansion of credit availability.

*Fome Zero* has also brought about improvements in the National School Meal Programme (PNAE) which provides meals to some 36 million children. It has doubled the funding available per meal, with the aim of improving its nutritional quality, and extended eligibility (previously limited to primary schools) to include children at public pre-schools. Lists of eligible children have been up-dated, resulting in significant savings. The impact of these changes on child nutrition, learning ability, and school attendance has not yet been evaluated.

The Food Procurement Programme (PAA) was launched in 2003 with the aim of purchasing food, mainly crops and milk, from small-scale farmers to meet the needs of institutions which form part of the country's social protection network. Apart from bringing immediate benefits to producers and consumers, the PAA's procurement activities are intended to result in higher and more stable prices for small-scale farmers. Evaluations indicate that the programme, which now buys from some 100,000 producers, has been successful in influencing prices and has had a beneficial impact on milk quality and livestock health and management systems. An unintended result is that the milk programme has tended to benefit mainly the medium and large-scale producers already supplying processing plants.

Considerable success can also be claimed by the *Cisternas* Programme, which funds the construction of water tanks to collect clean rainwater for rural households living in arid areas. About 150,000 families have built such tanks since 2003 through an innovative programme funded in part by the Federal Government and in part by the private sector, and implemented by a network of NGOs. Overall, the programme appears to be meeting its goals of providing clean water, freeing up labour by reducing the time spent on water collection and weakening the dependence on predatory water suppliers.

In line with the original programme, other components involve food distribution to vulnerable people through social protection networks, "Peoples' Restaurants", food banks, urban agriculture, vitamin A and iron supplement distribution, nutrition education, nutrition and health monitoring, and tax reductions for firms providing workers' meals.

Of particular significance from an institutional perspective has been the re-establishment of the National Food and Nutrition Council (CONSEA) which brings government and civil society representatives together to advise the President on major strategic issues. One result was the creation of the Unified Register (*Cadastro Único*), which has played a vital role in the expansion and accurate targeting of *Bolsa Familia* participants. The establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation capacity from the outset of the programme has meant that many decisions are taken on a well-informed basis.

CONSEA continues to play a leading role in terms of advising the President and national authorities on food security strategies and policies. This role is recognised by MDS as well as other Ministries. Although CONSEA concurs with the central role of *Bolsa Familia* in the national food security strategy, it advocates strengthening the structural programmes complementary to *Bolsa Familia*, such as support to family agriculture (including agrarian reform, nutrition education, income generation and adult literacy). It has played an important role in promoting the Organic Law on Food Security and Nutrition (LOSAN), which was recently approved by the Government. CONSEA also wants increased and more pro-active attention given to excluded social groups such as indigenous people, "quilombolas" and street population of urban areas.

It would be appropriate at this stage to take a closer look at *Fome Zero's* most important Programmes and highlight achievements which merit particular attention:

- (a) Improving the Unified Register (*Cadastro Único*) of social programme beneficiaries with monitoring mechanisms that ensure participation and social control.
- (b) Providing greater priority to the national food and nutrition educational programme for children, complementing the social and economic promotion programmes.
- (c) Designing mechanisms to gradually adjust the emergency cash transfers programme in order to increase its impact on income distribution, and expediting the implementation of different "exit strategies" to *Bolsa Familia* (professional training, micro-credit, employment generation, etc.).

## MAJOR LESSONS

Each country that embarks on the design and implementation of a large-scale food security programme needs to address the local situation, which is bound to differ considerably between nations. While it is not suggested that the approach adopted by *Fome Zero* in Brazil should necessarily be applied everywhere, the programme has accumulated a great deal of useful and relevant experience in a very short time. It has also achieved impressive results. It is therefore important to try to draw lessons from this experience which could be applied, albeit with adjustments, in other countries.

1. The first and most important lesson that emerges from the Brazilian experience is that, given political will and determination, it is possible to make very fast progress towards bringing an end to hunger over the course of just a few years. In the short term, this has meant giving priority to improving poor peoples' access to food by increasing their purchasing power through direct conditional cash transfers. This in itself represents an important beginning in cutting hunger levels, and opens many opportunities for people whose capacity to participate in the country's social and economic development has hitherto been curtailed. Alone, however, a cash transfer programme is unlikely to become a sustainable solution.
2. A second major lesson is that, contrary to widely held perceptions in governments, it is not prohibitively expensive to reduce the incidence of hunger through these means, at least in the short-term. The direct cash transfer component of the programme *Bolsa Familia* involves an allowance of approximately US\$0.25 per beneficiary per day, or less than US\$100 per year, which nevertheless results in a 21 percent marginal increase in the recipients' average income. The aggregate annual cost of this crucial element of the programme, benefiting about one quarter of the country's population, is just over 2 percent of the Federal budget and 0.4 percent of GDP. *Fome Zero* has been implemented on a vast scale without weakening confidence in the currency (which has appreciated vis-à-vis the US dollar) and without resorting to large-scale borrowing.
3. A third lesson, discussed in more detail below, is that success in reducing hunger is bound to create a beneficial chain of economic, social, and local development, as well as fiscal revenue. These programmes should be seen, therefore, not as "welfare" but as investment.

As noted above, the direct cash transfer component of a comprehensive food security programme will likely be fiscally affordable even in countries with lower per capita GDP levels than Brazil—where the amounts transferred can also be lower. This also holds true of school meal programmes, which the Brazilian experience shows can cost as little as US\$0.10 per day for each child. Other major programme components, especially those focused on support for small-scale agriculture and skills training, also generate their own streams of economic benefits.

Progress in reducing the incidence of hunger and improving food security will be reflected in an accelerated decline in hard-core poverty and generate its own economic benefits. Even initially, direct cash transfers often translate the need for food into a growth in actual demand for consumer staple goods, and at least a part of the proceeds of this economic activity will be used for investment in the community. This, combined with the recipients' improved health and higher energy levels, unlocks their capacity for work. When such a change occurs across the whole of the low-income population of the country, it is bound to stimulate increased economic activity, raising the aggregate earnings of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike, and creating a significant new source of domestic demand for low-cost consumer goods with knock-on effects across the economy.
4. A fourth lesson is that growth in agricultural production, especially in the large-scale farm sector, does not automatically result in hunger reduction. Indeed, it can exacerbate the hunger problem through competition for markets and financial resources and through taking over land previously occupied by small farmers, preventing their access to good but under-utilised farmland. Nor will any type of economic growth necessarily result in hunger and poverty reduction, especially in economies with skewed patterns of income and asset distribution. This suggests that fast progress towards the achievement of the first MDG in many countries can only be made through specific programmes that directly address hunger and poverty and their underlying causes.
5. A fifth lesson says that a strong and sustained political commitment to adopt hunger eradication as a national goal—ideally bi- or multi-partisan—backed by popular support, is essential if the resistance from those with vested interests in perpetuating dependencies is to be thwarted.

The Brazilian experience also suggests that there is considerable political capital to be gained in a democratic society from putting in place large-scale programmes aimed at reducing hunger and poverty.

The fact that President Lula was re-elected with a large majority is evidence of the widespread popularity amongst voters of *Fome Zero* and especially the *Bolsa Família*.

Boldness in setting goals, combined with the determination to succeed, is vital in spite of the risk of popular impatience over the relatively slow initial progress likely to be achieved in relation to the high expectations created. Any goal which falls short of enabling all of a country's citizens to enjoy their right to adequate food over a relatively short period is unlikely to mobilize action on the scale and with the necessary sense of urgency required to bring about a permanent end to hunger.

6. The sixth lesson says that it is important to move as quickly as possible towards broadening the ability of all food-insecure people to produce or acquire adequate food. At the same time, however, if lasting results are to be attained, it is essential to put in place institutions, policies and programmes which address the often complex underlying causes of vulnerability to hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in ways which respect the rights and dignity of all concerned. This "twin-track" approach is consistent with FAO recommendations on national food security programme design.

Some components of a food security programme can be designed in such a way that they achieve dual benefits. If emergency food or school meals programmes are sourced locally from small-scale farmers who are themselves living in poverty, they benefit both consumers and suppliers.

7. The seventh lesson is that, though often perceived largely as an agricultural issue, food insecurity has its roots in multiple sectors. There is a need, therefore, for a cross-sectoral approach to food security. This can be ensured through institutional arrangements which lead to the full and coordinated engagement of all entities whose mandate touches on food production, quality and consumption and on related health, nutrition and education issues.

Coordination of such programmes may be assigned to a single Ministry, as in Brazil, though this could lead to a concentration of effort on the programmes it directly executes vis-à-vis those of other involved ministries. Rather than have a single Ministry assume coordination functions, there may be advantages to attaching programme coordination responsibilities to the office of the Presidency or Prime Minister. Wherever the locus is situated, coordination will be most effective when a substantial share of the public resources in support of the programme is channeled through the lead agency.

8. Civil society plays a vital role in programme design and implementation, especially through its engagement in the creation and empowerment of institutions, such as the CONSEA and National Alliances Against Hunger in Brazil, which can underpin government-civil society partnerships at national and local levels. Ample space and encouragement, including selective financial support, must be given to civil society, including the private sector, to contribute to hunger eradication and food security. FAO strongly supports and promotes the development of civil-government and public-private alliances, in particular for broadly based food security initiatives. All sectors, from NGOs and academia to business and charities (including international donors and other partners), have important contributions to make. This model has proven to be more effective and, ultimately, more efficient in many countries where FAO supports SPFS projects.

9. In programme design it is useful to distinguish between the needs and opportunities for improving food security in rural, urban and metropolitan areas and to design specific programmes accordingly. While the direct cash transfer component of a programme may be applied uniformly throughout a country, other activities need to address locally specific needs and opportunities.

10. Large-scale food security programmes break new ground and must be seen as learning experiences, with a consequent likelihood of in-course corrections. It is therefore crucial to design, from the outset, monitoring and evaluation systems that generate a continual flow of reliable information and relevant indicators on programme performance and impact. The output of these systems can provide the information on which to base any programme adjustments. Regular and accurate reporting on progress can also help to nurture continued public support for the programme and contribute to the enhancement of programme management.

Substantial investments are needed in sophisticated management tools, backed by skilled personnel, for identifying and registering programme participants, issuing and accounting for funds, progressively improving targeting and managing the overall programme. Of particular importance is the creation and regular updating of a comprehensive register of programme participants which is perceived to be fair and accurate. Local institutional arrangements need to be created to ensure maximum transparency in the identification of programme beneficiaries and to avoid the risk that resources are captured by vested interests or used for patronage.

11. Finally, the commitment to end hunger must be reflected in laws, particularly in legal instruments which promote the adoption of the concept of access to adequate food as a human right. Consecrating such public policy as law provides a means of assuring programme continuity, independent of the government in power.

*Fome Zero* remains a source of much discussion in Brazil to such an extent that this has diverted attention away from the tremendously important results that have been achieved. Four recurrent themes relevant to the design of food security programmes in other countries must be addressed:

- (a) The extent to which eligibility conditions, especially in relation to food purchases, and strict local monitoring of beneficiaries need to be attached to the direct cash transfer component of the programme to ensure that it meets its food security and nutritional goals.
- (b) The risk of creating long-term dependencies.
- (c) The extent of emphasis given to addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity vis-à-vis the achievement of short-term improvements in hunger alleviation and nutrition.
- (d) The particular difficulties encountered in blighted urban and peri-urban metropolitan areas (such as the *favelas*), where benefits have not accrued to the local communities.

On the first theme, there has been much debate about the relative impact of direct cash transfer on recipients' food consumption when this is deliberately linked to food purchases, as opposed to de-linked cash transfer. Given the fact that the linked (but narrow) *cartão alimentação* was superseded by the de-linked (but far broader) *Bolsa Família*, no firm conclusions can be reached on this. What is clear from the experience of *Bolsa Família*, however, is that a very substantial part of the cash transfer is being spent on food, and that the transaction costs are likely to be lower, given that participants do not have to present proof of purchase. It nevertheless seems quite probable that food expenditure and nutritional value could have been raised still further if more resources had been allocated to effective nutrition education programmes. Moreover, such programmes need not be targeted only on programme participants, but rather on the population as a whole, given the contemporary focus on healthy eating and lifestyles. Such a programme could simultaneously address malnutrition related to both food insecurity and obesity, and seek to counter the impact of massive commercial food and beverage industry advertising, especially amongst children.

Meanwhile, it is debatable whether the conditions attached to participation in *Bolsa Família* (relating to school attendance and medical check-ups for children) have had a significant impact on recipients' behaviour. Some observers see these conditions as an infringement on the individual's right to food, which should be unconditional, while others claim that the imposition of conditions ensures a wider constituency of support, especially amongst tax-payers, for the programme. What seems important is not so much whether conditions are imposed or not, but that a progressive improvement in the quality of services, especially health and education, and including skills training for youth and adults, are readily accessible to the poor. As mentioned above, there may also be a case for greatly expanding the reach of nutrition education programmes, probably through the mass media, for all Brazilians.

On the second issue, it would seem self-evident—especially to a mother faced with the stark reality of being unable to feed her children—that nothing can induce greater dependence or undermine human dignity more than the constant threat of uncertain access to adequate food. This does not imply that exit strategies for food security programmes are not needed, but rather that it would be retrograde to reduce cash transfers before participants have the ability to meet their essential food requirements on a continuing basis. In the end, building greater self-respect and self-reliance are the only real exit strategies.

The third point concerns how to address the fundamental causes of hunger through policies which promote structural change, as in the classic case of land reform in the interests of the landless rural population. One could argue that this is essentially an issue of timing and resources, taking account also of the need for new legal instruments and more complex institutions—as well as larger investments to underpin the changes. Given the lead time required, however, there are advantages in moving ahead early with programmes which, to the extent feasible from an institutional and fiscal perspective, anticipate the conditions which reduce the risks of long-term dependence on direct financial support. Cash transfers will generate some of the conditions for permanent emancipation from hunger, but will not be sufficient. Eventually these need to be supplemented by large scale programmes in capacity building, employment creation, and, in many cases, the redistribution of land and other assets.

With respect to the fourth issue, it is doubtful that any food security and nutrition programme alone, however well conceived and executed, can substantially alter the grim reality of concentrated poverty in these communities. It

has been observed in some instances that direct cash transfers to these areas can even bring negative results through inappropriate purchases and intra-family competition for the proceeds. It is most likely the case that food security and nutrition programmes must form a secondary or supplementary mechanism towards poverty alleviation in these situations, where basic physical security, substance abuse, the splintering of family structures and a growing population of street children define the social and economic conditions.

## **TEN FINAL POINTS**

1. Combating hunger should be considered an emergency and the first priority of a wider programme of poverty alleviation, especially in countries with surplus food production. Until hunger is defeated, it will be impossible to achieve social cohesion and real democracy.
2. Political commitment needs clearly defined goal of hunger eradication. The hunger-free flag has more appeal than others. Eradicating child malnutrition could be an appropriate intermediate goal for 2015.
3. Eliminating hunger demands national policy as well as a government action. But this is only the beginning, the 'emergency' phase of a hunger-free programme. A food security policy should be consecrated in laws that assure the right to food for all citizens. It is necessary to combine emergency action (to guarantee access) with structural change (support to family farms, job and income generation, education and training, etc.).
4. A programme for hunger eradication must be connected to the model of national development; that model must be inclusive, lest it remain limited to palliative and compensatory measures. Depressed regions require special attention with the view to fostering local development.
5. A differentiated territorial approach needs concrete actions at national, provincial and local levels, with different "menu options" according to the locality, be it rural, small or medium cities, or metropolitan areas; the latter require larger interventions and more "targeting" of non-traditional family units.
6. Local coordination is as fundamental as regional and national coordination. Inter-sectoral coordination requires involving Ministries from the social sphere (Education, Health, Social Welfare, etc.) and the Economic sphere (Economy, Finance, Agriculture, Environment, etc). Experience shows the importance of direct involvement from the highest level (President or Prime Minister), as well as, and in addition to, a specific council of Ministers and members of social organizations and civil society, to coordinate efforts at the national level.
7. The participation of families and organizations from different corners of civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes is essential in order to avoid "resource seepage" at the local level and generate greater economic activity within the community.
8. Management of press relations and other media communications is essential to contain negative impacts resulting from raised expectations confronting the frustration of delays in benefits from the programme, especially in the early stages of hunger-free programmes.
9. The allocation of public resources to guarantee sustainability could start with loans and international donations. But an effective programme will only be sustainable with the support of appropriate budgets.
10. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are fundamental to keep the programme on track and to reach the desired goals.

These and many other issues will have to be taken up by countries as they design food security programmes adapted to their particular needs and potential, drawing on Brazil's encouraging experience to the extent deemed relevant. Debate is important, but if there is one lesson to be learnt from Brazil, it is that we are in a learning process. What we do know is that, when the livelihoods of so many people are at stake, it is better to embark quickly on large-scale programmes with imperfect knowledge and data—accepting that there will be flaws—and to make subsequent mid-course adjustments, rather than to delay action until a full consensus has been reached.

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## COMPONENTS OF FOME ZERO

### FOOD ACCESS:

#### Additional cash transfer:

- *Bolsa Familia* (BF)

#### With nutrition programmes:

- National School Meal Programme (PNAE)
- Food for ethnic groups
- Rainwater cisterns
- Popular restaurants
- Food banks
- Urban agriculture/Community gardens
- Food and Nutrition Surveillance System
- Distribution of Vitamin A (Vitamin A+)
- Distribution of iron (Iron Health)
- Food and nutrition for indigenous people
- Food and nutrition education for consumption
- Healthy Diet/Promotion of Healthy Habits

#### With tax incentives:

- Workers food programme (PAT)

#### With tax reduction:

- Basic food basket tax reduction

#### Strengthening family agriculture:

- National Programme for strengthening family agriculture (PRONAF)
- Harvest insurance
- Family farming agriculture insurance
- Food Procurement Programme (PAA)

#### Income generation:

- Social and professional training
- Solidary economy and productive inclusion
- Food security and local development consortium (Consad)
- Food and nutrition security organization (Produzir)
- Development of cooperatives of recyclable material collectors
- Guided productive micro-credit

#### Partnership promotion and civil society mobilization:

- Family houses – Social Assistance Reference Centres (CRAS)
- Social mobilization and education for citizenship
- Social and public agents capacity building
- Volunteer work and donations
- Partnership with private sector and NGOs
- Social Development Councils

Source: Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS).