



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/remarks-administrator-rajiv-shah-bread-world-and-concern-worldwide-event-%E2%80%9Csustaining>

Remarks by Administrator Rajiv Shah at the Bread for the World and Concern Worldwide event on “Sustaining Political Commitments to Scaling Up Nutrition”

Good morning. This past weekend, I attended the Nutrition for Growth Summit in London, where you could literally feel the energy that exists for accelerated action on nutrition. For perhaps the first time, it was clear that the prevailing question was not whether we can end hunger or even whether we will. It was how fast we can achieve it.

I had the opportunity to hear Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny deliver a great speech on the urgency of this mission. He spoke about leading a country once stalked by famine—and how the memory of that misery stirred the nation’s actions abroad today.

Here in the United States, that strength of commitment has been matched by organizations like Bread for the World—which has a long history of affecting meaningful change for millions of people across our own country and around the world. Together, you form one of the greatest movements alive today—the fight to make hunger, malnutrition, and extreme poverty permanently a thing of our past. It is because of your attention to the unique needs of children early in life that then Secretary Clinton and then Irish Foreign Minister Martin launched the 1,000 Days Partnership to ensure that every child thrives.

It is because of your commitment to ending hunger that science, research, and agriculture are once again on the development agenda—sowing the seeds of a stronger communities and vibrant economies. And it is because of your support that we have the opportunity today to modernize the way our nation delivers food aid—designing a more flexible approach that can save millions move lives without costing more money.

Today, we have the opportunity to join our voices together—to draw strength from the past 1,000 days and seize the next 1,000 days to achieve progress simply unimaginable in the past.

Because at the end of the day, our efforts are guided by a very simple vision: a world where every farmer has great seeds. Every farming community is connected to a market. And every child has the nutrition they need to grow and thrive. That is the vision of Feed the Future, President Obama’s global food security initiative.

As one of the first foreign policy acts of this presidency, Feed the Future was more than a new initiative. It was a fundamentally different approach that placed smallholder farmers, especially women, at the center of country-led efforts to transform agriculture. This has required us to make tough choices about where our efforts are needed most. Since 2010, we have cut 22 country programs in agriculture in order to focus on the 19 where we will have the greatest impact. And increasingly, we are seeing this impact play out at scale.

Last year, Feed the Future helped 7 million farmers adopt improved technologies or management practices, growing yields *and* incomes. In Bangladesh, farmers are using a new fertilizer technique that led to the first-ever rice surplus in the nation’s poorest region. And in Haiti, improved planting techniques have helped increase corn yields by 340 percent and beans by 100 percent.

Far from fleeting, these efforts are quietly and powerfully changing the face of poverty and hunger. Since 2005, we’ve seen poverty rates fall by an average of 5.6 percent and stunting by an average of 6 percent across all Feed the Future countries. It’s not luck.

Our progress has been fueled by technology, innovation, and direct partnerships with local universities and scientific institutes. Since 2011, we have more than doubled our research investments and launched new programs to quickly scale breakthrough innovations to reach millions of smallholder farmers. But our aspirations are only as meaningful as our ability to

deliver on them.

Later this month, we will release our second annual Feed the Future Progress Report, which upholds our commitment to closely monitor, measure, and publically report on our work. The report's findings are grounded in a robust management system for gathering and disseminating timely, accurate data that measures everything from household income to the participation of women to the prevalence of stunting.

Just as country-based Demographic and Health Surveys helped dramatically expand monitoring capabilities in global health and rallied the world behind new efforts to end preventable child death, Feed the Future's new open data platform will transform our knowledge and inform cutting-edge approaches.

At a time of great fiscal constraint, it is easy to be skeptical about efforts to solve enduring challenges—like hunger and poverty—that are as old as humankind. But even in a time of tight budgets, we have seen the power of high-impact partnerships to break intractable barriers that continue to stand in the way of our progress. And one of the most significant challenges comes from chronic underinvestment in African agriculture, particularly in the infrastructure that connects farmers to their markets. As a result, we have the bountiful harvests, but few good roads to transport them on. And we have nutritious foods, but not enough refining and processing centers to transform them into grocery-store products.

Recognizing this gap, President Obama stood before a gathered audience of global leaders on the eve of the G-8 Summit last year and announced the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition—a groundbreaking model of partnership that matches commitments from African governments to reform with commitments from companies to invest.

In one year, the New Alliance has grown into a \$3.75 billion public-private partnership that has encouraged reforms from six African governments and commitments from more than 70 companies, half of them local.

Last month, Grow Africa released a report that highlighted progress in nearly all of these commitments—with more than half already in the pilot phase and over one-third in the investment phase.

- In Ghana, a local agriculture company is building a nut processing facility to help farmers increase their incomes with a higher quality and more nutritious product.
- In Mozambique, a local seed company is opening a state-of-the-art seed processing plant and connecting farmers with international buyers.
- And in Tanzania, Yara International has started construction on a fertilizer terminal at the nation's largest port.

Incentivized by the commitments of governments to reform, these investments are coming together to transform agricultural production across the continent. But each of you here today knows that long-term food security is not only defined by crop yields and strong markets. It is also defined by the health of a child and the resilience of her community. Over the last few decades, we have learned the real cost of hidden hunger and undernutrition, which leads to more child deaths every year than any other disease.

Because these children do not live in one place and because they smile like any other children, it has taken us a while to understand how their condition robs them of their potential, undermines economic growth, and holds back families trying to escape poverty. As the recent Lancet Maternal and Child Nutrition series reported, malnutrition can cost individuals up to 10 percent of their lifetime earnings and countries up to 8 percent of their annual GDP.

That's why President Obama has made nutrition a central pillar of Feed the Future and a focus of our efforts in global health—doubling our nutrition-specific funding since 2008. This past weekend in London, we presented a series of announcements that underscores this Administration's tremendous commitment to nutrition. From 2012 to 2014, we will provide more than \$1 billion for nutrition-specific interventions and nearly \$9 billion for nutrition-sensitive activities.

But far more important than these unprecedented resources are the results they're delivering. Over the next five years, we will reduce stunting by 20 percent—resulting in 2 million fewer stunted children. This goal represents an ambitious rate of reduction of 4 percent across our Feed the Future focus regions. Over the past year, these investments have enabled us to reach 12 million children through nutrition programs that have reduced anemia, supported community gardens, and prevented malnutrition.

That includes Aisha Majuto and her infant son Lubanga, who live in central Tanzania. When Aisha was pregnant, she received home visits from a nutritionist, who taught her about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. When Aisha's husband tried to stop her from breastfeeding after only three months—believing that the infant was not getting enough to eat—the nutritionist stepped in and successfully counseled the whole family. In many ways, this story represents just the beginning of our efforts.

This past weekend, U.S. NGOs joined together through Interaction to announce a pledge of \$750 million in private funds towards nutrition. In response, we are committed to building a new partnership that can accommodate the incredible size of their largess—aligning our investments and scaling our impact together.

One of the finest representations of American generosity today, our public and private investments to improve nutrition together represent the largest contributions globally to our ambitious goals. All of you represent organizations that have advocated for meaningful change against some of the toughest issues. You know that there are always those who say the challenge is too complex... the risks too high... the politics too hard to achieve incredible goals.

But you know better.

You know that even at a time of tight budgets, we can still come together to have big aspirations and accomplish big things. In fact, right now, we have one of those rare opportunities to take action and save four million more children every year with the same resources.

Earlier this year, as part of his 2014 budget, President Obama outlined a plan to significantly overhaul the way our nation provides food aid by shaping a more agile, cost-effective program that harness new tools in the fight against extreme hunger. These tools include vouchers that can reach insecure places in Somalia or Syria where our food aid cannot go. And they include the next generation of highly nutritious American food commodities, which meet the diverse needs of an entire population, from a nursing mother to a malnourished child.

But while we have these tools today, we often don't have the flexibility to use them when we need them. So if you care about nutrition, you should care about this effort to modernize our life-saving work. Over the next few days, our political leaders will be making decisions that define not only whether we have the courage to do the smart thing, but also the right thing. And I encourage you to add your voices to this conversation—over the next few days and after you return to your communities and congregations. Because the truth is that the moral vision that guides our mission does not start with the government here in Washington, but with the people our governments represents... with all of you.

Today, we can look at the realities around us—at widespread fiscal constraint and sharpening political rhetoric—and see it as the boundary of our work. As a reason to lower our sights. Or we can look over the horizon—towards opportunities that offer to transform the lives of those traditionally left behind. Today, we are within reach of goals once thought impossible: the eradication of extreme poverty and its most devastating corollaries, including widespread hunger, chronic malnutrition, and preventable child death.

That's the mission that President Obama called upon us in the State of the Union address to achieve in the next two decades. That's the mission that has been echoed with resounding optimism from the cover of *The Economist* to the U.N. report on post-2015 development goals. And that's the mission that has brought you together today—not to rest on the accomplishments of the past but to focus on the possibilities for the future.

I look forward to hearing about the results of your meetings over the next two days and continuing to transform our world together. Thank you.

These remarks originally [appeared](#) on the USAID website.