

1 In my view: Let's stop pointing at complexity and act now to end poverty and hunger – we already know how

Wellington Dias, Minister of Social Development and Assistance, Family, and Fight Against Hunger, Brazil

The year is 2015. Emboldened by a successful experience with the Millennium Development Goals, the world comes together behind a new set of targets. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embody the promise of a better world in which no one would live in hunger, a world that would be well on its way to achieving a dignified life for everyone while caring for and preserving our planet and environment for future generations. That same year, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides the blueprint for expanding and aligning financing and development co-operation to enable the SDGs.

Fast forward to 2024. On current trends, SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger) will be missed by wide margins. On SDG 10 (reducing inequality), the situation is even worse on many counts than in 2015: in-country inequality is growing steadily, and between-country inequality has started growing since 2020, reversing a generation's worth of progress.

Meanwhile, despite a bigger total aid envelope, the promise of the Addis Ababa Action has fizzled, leaving an overburdened, fragmented and mostly dysfunctional financing landscape as far as the fight against hunger and poverty is concerned. Resources are not reaching those most in need and rarely attain the scale required for inducing transformational change. Governments in low-income countries and lower middle-income countries are confronted with what is widely termed aid bombardment, with support for hunger and poverty interventions dispersed in thousands of small transactions – and often loosely co-ordinated projects that are difficult to scale up and which circumvent the very governments that could sustain them. At the same time, high interest rates and debt servicing are narrowing countries' fiscal space to elevate their own people and deliver on the SDGs.

...despite a bigger total aid envelope, the promise of the Addis Ababa Action has fizzled, leaving an overburdened, fragmented and mostly dysfunctional financing landscape as far as the fight against hunger and poverty is concerned.

We should ask ourselves: where did we lose our way since 2015? Where is the global partnership for sustainable development as called for in SDG 17? Why are we failing the 735 million people experiencing

actual ravaging hunger, the more than 1 billion in extreme multidimensional poverty – half of them children, and the more than 2.4 billion people facing moderate or acute food insecurity?

Yes, we already know that intersecting crises including climate change, conflict and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are making our situation more complex. But it is time to stop pointing at complexity and move to action. Eliminating hunger and extreme poverty is not that difficult or prohibitively expensive, and doing so can advance other SDG targets, help mitigate and avoid both current and future crises, rein in uncontrolled migration, and renew popular trust in political and democratic institutions.

We do not have to start from zero, as we in Brazil know well. Over seven decades of policies and programmes for poverty reduction and food and nutrition security in many countries have taught us what works most efficiently and effectively. Social protection, starting with cash transfers to the poorest, is the most efficient way to lift families out of poverty; it can be tied to health and education outcomes and made adaptive in response to emergencies. School meals programmes boost education, health and nutrition and, when done right, also incentivise family agriculture. Socio-economic inclusion programmes, smallholder and family farming support and extension, and climate resilience programmes for the most vulnerable communities are all investments with proven and rapid social and economic returns, and they pay for themselves many times over by building a more resilient and integrated society.

The results in Brazil speak for themselves. In just one year after, our government restored or shored up such policies that were discontinued or pared back during the previous administrations, 24.4 million people emerged from acute food insecurity in 2023, a 74% reduction from 2022 (Ministry of Social Development and Assistance, Family, and Fight Against Hunger, 2024^[11]). We are confident that we can eliminate hunger in Brazil again by 2026.

Social protection, starting with cash transfers to the poorest, is the most efficient way to lift families out of poverty; it can be tied to health and education outcomes and made adaptive in response to emergencies.

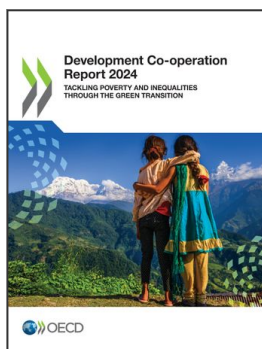
While we know what has worked in Brazil and other countries – many have equally valuable lessons to share – concerted action is needed to better apply these lessons at scale around the world, gathering resources and know-how from where they are abundant and channelling them to where they are most needed. This edition of the *OECD Development Co-operation Report* makes a strong case for such an approach, but the words on these pages will be wasted if not accompanied by decisive action. This is not about donors doing the work for other countries. It is about creating the minimum conditions for countries to do this essential work themselves.

To champion this approach, President Lula has proposed that a Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty be launched during the G20 summit in November. This alliance could enhance coherence among existing actors in support of the urgent implementation and scaling up of pro-poor, evidence-based policies to get SDG 1 and SDG 2 back on track. True engagement of OECD Development Assistance Committee members will be critical – first, to fulfil their commitments and close the development finance gap and second, to properly align those resources to the fight against hunger and poverty.

We must take this last opportunity before 2030 to better mobilise, co-ordinate and align resources to reduce fragmentation in support of government-led, evidence-based policies in the poorest countries and regions. As disheartening as the situation may appear, that better world we promised back in 2015 remains within reach. Let's join the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty!

Reference

Ministry of Social Development and Assistance, Family, and Fight Against Hunger (2024), “More than 24.4 million people will escape hunger in Brazil in 2023”, web page, [1]
<https://agenciagov.ebc.com.br/noticias/202404/24-4-milhoes-de-pessoas-saem-da-situacao-de-fome-no-brasil-em-2023>.



From:

Development Co-operation Report 2024

Tackling Poverty and Inequalities through the Green Transition

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/357b63f7-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

Dias, Wellington (2024), "In my view: Let's stop pointing at complexity and act now to end poverty and hunger – we already know how", in OECD, *Development Co-operation Report 2024: Tackling Poverty and Inequalities through the Green Transition*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/75a10dee-en>

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.