

# Achieving Results through Partnerships

## SAFANSI: The South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative

### HIGHLIGHTS

- SAFANSI is a trust fund established in 2010 by The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in the amount of USD 7.5 million, and the World Bank, to increase the commitment of governments and development agencies in South Asia in pursuing more effective and integrated food and nutrition security policies and programs.
- In 2011, SAFANSI launched a new window —Scaling-Up Nutrition Initiative Technical Assistance (or SUNITA)—financed by the Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the amount of USD 9.2 million, to complement SAFANSI's efforts in Nepal, bringing the total trust fund value to USD 16.7 million.
- In 2015, the second phase of SAFANSI commenced with £16.0 million from DFID and €7.5 million from the European Commission.
- This regional effort has helped South Asian countries work towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal —eradicating extreme poverty and hunger—, and had committed financing for 48 activities, of which 15 are complete and 33 are underway.



## OVERVIEW

According to FAO, about 23 percent of the global population that is routinely hungry —336 million people— are in South Asia. This figure still underestimates the true extent of food insecurity, which includes hidden hunger or the micronutrient deficiencies that limit the potential for active and healthy lives. The South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (known as SAFANSI) is a multi-donor trust fund that finances analysis, advocacy, and capacity building activities to improve food and nutrition security outcomes in the South Asian countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. In particular, it addresses the South Asian Enigma —the intractable and chronic malnutrition despite high economic growth— by fostering the cross-cutting actions that will improve food and nutrition security.

Food and nutrition security are not actions. They are outcomes of a confluence of actions. They are affected by everyone but owned by no one and so are often neglected. Addressing the problem of food and nutrition security requires action in multiple sectors both within and across countries. The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) in the amount of USD 7.5 million, and the World Bank established the SAFANSI Trust Fund in 2010 to increase the commitment of governments and development agencies in South Asia in pursuing more effective and integrated food and nutrition security policies and programs. In 2011, SAFANSI launched a new window —Scaling-Up Nutrition Initiative Technical Assistance (or SUNITA)— financed by the Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)<sup>1</sup> in the amount of USD 9.2 million, to complement SAFANSI's efforts in Nepal, bringing the total trust fund value to USD 16.7 million. SUNITA finances analytical work, evaluations of interventions,

and technical assistance to effectively address gaps in nutrition interventions in Nepal.

In 2015, the second phase of SAFANSI commenced with £16.0 million from DFID and €7.5 million from the European Commission.

SAFANSI helps South Asian countries work towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal —eradicating extreme poverty and hunger— a goal which brings to light the many links between poverty and hunger such as:

- The poor are disproportionately food and nutrition insecure, even in countries that have achieved national food security.
- The impact of poor nutrition on long term individual and national economic productivity is significant, with some estimating up to 10 percent loss of potential individual lifetime earnings and 4 percent of potential national GDP due to malnutrition.
- Improving food and nutrition security outcomes in South Asia supports the World Bank's corporate goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity.



## THE CHALLENGE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

**Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996).<sup>ii</sup>**

Despite overall impressive economic growth over the last decade and remarkable progress in increasing national food production and food security, South Asia struggles to achieve the full definition of food security stated above. South Asia is a region of contrasts, representing

seven countries with wide ranging population bases, poverty rates, and income levels<sup>iii</sup>. Despite these differences, they do share surprisingly similar and unsettling food and nutrition security indicators as shown in their Global Hunger Index scores (table 1).<sup>iv</sup>

Table 1. Demography, Economy, and Hunger in SAFANSI Countries

| Country     | Population (m) | Poverty Rate (%) | GNI Per Capita (US\$) | Global Hunger Index 2013 |          |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Afghanistan | 29.8           | 36               | \$680.00              | no data                  |          |
| Bangladesh  | 154.7          | 32               | \$840.00              | 19.4                     | Serious  |
| Bhutan      | 0.74           | 12               | \$2,420.00            | no data                  |          |
| India       | 1236.7         | 22               | \$1,550.00            | 21.3                     | Alarming |
| Nepal       | 27.5           | 25               | \$700.00              | 17.3                     | Serious  |
| Pakistan    | 179.2          | 22               | \$1,260.00            | 19.3                     | Serious  |
| Sri Lanka   | 20.3           | 9                | \$2,920.00            | 15.6                     | Serious  |

Sources: Global Hunger Index 2013 provided by IFPRI (<http://www.ifpri.org/ghi/2013>); the rest of the data from World Bank Development Economics LDB database. The GHI scale is divided into: Low ( $\leq 4.9$ ), Moderate (5.0-9.9), Serious (10.0-19.9), Alarming (20.0-29.9), Extremely alarming ( $\geq 30.0$ ).

Several factors contribute to insufficient food availability for the poor and marginalized population, including:

- **Agriculture.** Agriculture impacts food availability through production, affordability -through income to producers and pricing for consumers-, and availability of a nutritional diet through diversified production. Megatrends like climate change will adversely affect food production, especially in rain-fed areas which are also relatively more

impoverished. Solutions will come from a mix of policy and regulatory reforms, research and technology, and improved farming practices. South Asian agricultural productivity growth is slowing down, contributing to higher prices. Moreover, diversification has been limited and dietary diversity is low. According to FAO data, cereals, roots, and tubers comprise less than 50 percent of the daily diet in South Asian. In some countries, for example in Bangladesh, they are as high as 80 percent.

- **Income inequality.** Food consumes a larger proportion of household income among the poor in any society, so policies or events that limit production or adequate trade will lead to scarcity and increased food prices. Among the poor, more marginalized and remote households have a greater challenge accessing a nutritious diet. Unfortunately, large numbers of extreme poor and the most vulnerable households that cannot afford a basic and sufficient assortment of nutritious food also do not have access to adequate safety nets.

- **Women’s agency.** In many South Asian households, women eat last and eat least, and their nutritional status is severely affected (figure 1). Where women do not have a decision-making role in how income is spent, overall household nutrition is impacted. Moreover, early marriage and pregnancy starts a downward spiral of inter-generational malnutrition passing from mother to child. Over a third of adult women in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are underweight<sup>4</sup>, and the prevalence of iron-deficiency anemia ranges between 55% and 81% across the region.

Figure 1. Prevalence of Vitamin A Deficiency

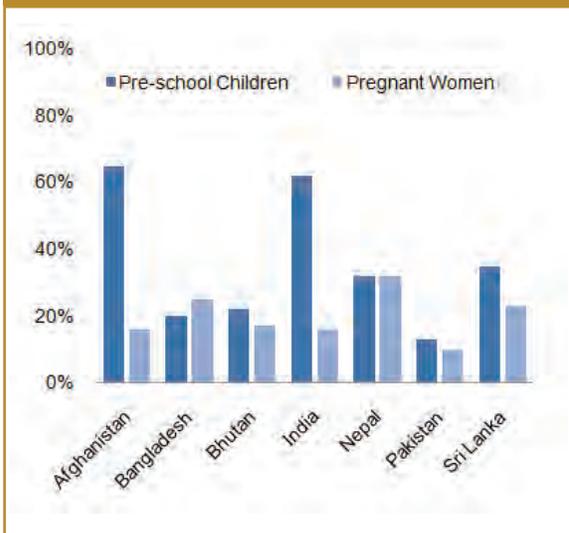
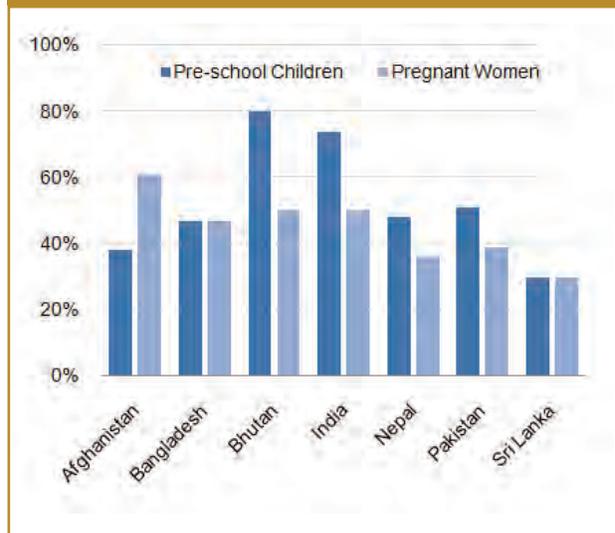


Figure 2. Prevalence of Iron Deficiency



- **Unsafe water supply and poor sanitation.** Poor health prevents the body from properly using the nutrition it receives from food and supplements. Unsafe drinking water and sanitation facilities are among the primary sources for disease (e.g., diarrhea), especially among children. Beyond human sanitation systems, the proximity to livestock waste has also led to the spread of disease and the contamination of drinking water.
- **Inadequate Safety Nets.** The overall coverage of safety net programs in the region is low and much lower than in other developing countries. Inefficient targeting

and management of these programs also limit their potential in mitigating the adverse effects of extreme poverty and shocks on food and nutrition security outcomes. Few safety net programs address the need to mainstream gender in the design of the programs in order to improve women's access to food.

Given the breadth of the food and nutrition security challenge, it is perhaps not surprising that South Asia has among the highest rates of malnutrition and the largest numbers of malnourished children in the world.



## APPROACH

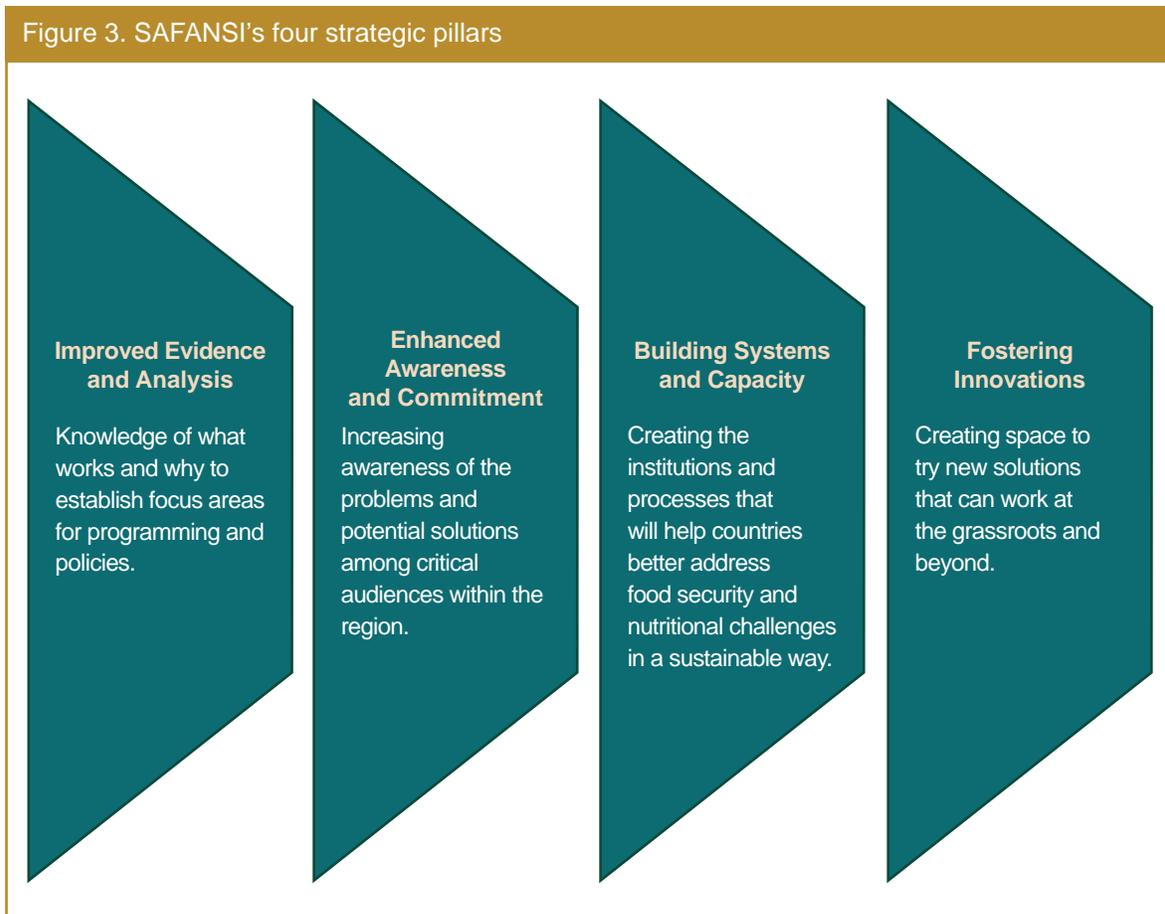
SAFANSI commissions studies and receives proposals for funding that are reviewed and approved by a technical committee for quality and relevance. It is careful to incorporate critical themes like gender and social exclusion in its studies as much as possible.

The program has 2 primary windows: (1) Bank-executed where World Bank staff manage implementation; and (2) recipient-executed where outside agencies directly implement an activity. To date, the majority of grants have been Bank-executed and have focused on creating and sharing analysis and research to raise awareness of food and nutrition security. Staff from a variety of sectors, including agriculture, nutrition, health, infrastructure,

economic management, and social protection, have participated in studies which brings multiple lens to bear on the challenge.

All of SAFANSI's funded activities are screened to ensure they are aligned with its four strategic pillars (figure 3).

The target audiences of this SAFANSI strategic approach are: 1) high-level policymakers, decision makers, and opinion leaders in the region; (2) development partners and program implementers (e.g., government, private sector, and civil society); and (3) food and nutrition insecure communities and interested members of the public.



## RESULTS

In its first phase SAFANSI (including SUNITA) committed financing to 48 activities, of which 15 are complete and 33 are underway. Some important results achieved are:

**In Afghanistan**, SAFANSI supported a High-Level Task Force on Food and Nutrition Security. The Task Force was informed by a series of reports on nutrient balance, women and nutrition, infant and young child feeding, conditional cash transfers, and the baby friendly villages, all of which fed into an extensive *Nutrition Action Framework* with the support of five key ministries.

**In Bangladesh**, SAFANSI financed technical expertise for analysis to inform Bangladesh's current Five Year Plan, and subsequent plans, as well as the ongoing National Food Policy Plan of Action 2008-2015.

**In Pakistan** SAFANSI is helping the Government to address food and nutrition security, in particular in relation to gender, poverty and geographic location, providing a framework for development partners and government to direct their investments.

**In Bhutan**, SAFANSI conducted a multi-sectoral assessment of the first 1,000 days of a child's life in order to address the key determinants of under-nutrition in the country, take stock of current programs, and identify gaps in services.

**In India**, SAFANSI is funding Social Observatories, within the largest rural poverty reduction project nationally, to improve food and nutrition monitoring down to the community level across the country. This enables both government and communities to better identify the most effective pathways to food and nutrition security.

**In Nepal**, SUNITA funding helped development and implement the **Nepal Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan**, which is the cornerstone for enabling the country to address the problem of persisting malnutrition. Support included building the capacity of the National Planning Commission Nutrition Secretariat to undertake analysis and craft a nutrition strategy in coordination with donors.

**At the regional level**, the tools developed by SAFANSI —such as, the Multi-sectoral Simulation Tool (MST) that helps countries understand how different types of interventions at varying scales are likely to impact nutritional outcomes and the cost of reaching their goals, and the Political Economy Analysis framework to provide a deeper understanding of the politics of food and nutrition security at various stages of the policy cycle— can be used by academics, governments, and donor agencies to enhance their own programs.



## PARTNERSHIPS

SAFANSI aligns with the principles for Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS), agreed at the L'Aquila Summit in July 2009, in that it seeks to: (a) support and encourage country and regional-led processes and add value to them; (b) ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to combating malnutrition; and (c) strategically coordinate development agencies' support through a World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDFT). It also aligns with the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* by coordinating with development partners to streamline efforts and increase collaborative effectiveness.

## MOVING FORWARD

SAFANSI's second phase of programming began with additional support from the European Commission and continued support from DFID in 2015. The growing pipeline will include more collaboration with external agencies and more testing of actual approaches to improve the food and nutrition security situation throughout South Asia. Recently and moving forward, SAFANSI will support strategic knowledge management and communications to help increase: (1) interaction and collaboration between grant recipients, (2) the flow of relevant information to those recipients, and (3) the communication of findings to critical audiences.

## PARTNERS

# SA FANSI

Administered by:



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



<sup>i</sup> Formerly the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)

<sup>ii</sup> Food Security as defined in the Rome Declaration on World Food Security created at the World Food Summit 1996 in Rome, Italy. Available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.HTM>

<sup>iii</sup> In the World Bank, the South Asia Region includes 8 countries, but SAFANSI does not cover the Maldives.

<sup>iv</sup> The Global Hunger Index includes three equally weighted indicators: the proportion of people who are food energy-deficit (FAO), prevalence of underweight in children under 5 (WHO), and mortality rate of children under 5 (UNICEF). It is a 100 point scale with 0 being the best and 100 being the worst. In 2013, the worst-ranked country was Burundi with 38.8.

<sup>v</sup> According to World Health Organization's (WHO) global database on Body Mass Indices

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