

FOOD FILES

OCTOBER 2007

The root causes of hunger

**Networking for food security
and promoting the right to food**

**Access to land
and natural resources:
the perspective of women
and artisanal fisheries**



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Editorial

We welcome you to this launch edition of the ActionAid International Food Rights magazine, which we hope will inspire you to take actions for food rights to new and creative heights and to share your valuable experiences and lessons more widely.

Food Files, born and named at the last food rights meeting in Coimbra, Portugal, is being launched at the same time as our international campaign on the Right to Food, which demands a clear commitment from governments to eradicate hunger through the implementation of concrete development policies designed to promote and respect the right to food. As a development organisation using a rights-based approach, ActionAid is working alongside civil society groups, farmers' movements, consumers, women's organisations and other national and international organisations to hold governments accountable, but also to promote and implement alternative development agendas.

Why a magazine? Because newsletters, e-mails and the intranet would not be the best way of achieving what we had in mind: namely, providing our staff, partner organisations and other audiences with access to information on food rights-related issues.

The magazine format is at once sufficiently in-depth to be an effective capacity building tool and accessible enough to share lessons and experiences effectively. It can provide coherent messages on the issues around the food rights agenda and help circulate interesting and useful information about them. It can also help to raise the profile of ActionAid's work on food rights and provide a space for our partners, key actors and donors to share their opinions and achievements on this topic.

In the following pages, we aim to share with you innovative and inspiring research projects, ideas, campaigns and on-the-ground experiences. The **FILE** section provides background articles aimed at capacity building within the organisation and to improve the quality of our work. In this launch issue, we approach the root causes of hunger and the right to food and provide a case study on the violation of the right to food, perpetrated by a transnational corporation. It also includes positive experiences around securing the right to food by ensuring access to land and natural resources (including artisan fisheries) or by ensuring the right to work and other livelihoods.

The **DOSSIER** section focuses on the International Food Security Network (IFSN) project's achievements and those of other networks. In this issue, we provide a brief presentation of the IFSN project, its main international actions at the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) follow-up process, and a case study on the potential of urban agriculture and of networking processes, based on the Ghana experience.

The **POST-IT** section highlights our current work on food rights and is aimed at supporting partner organisations and ActionAid country programmes to share information and best practices. We focus on ongoing grassroots initiatives such as the protection of land by Maasai women in Kenya, self-help groups in Bangladesh and agro-ecological initiatives in Brazil.

The **CLIPS** section is a space for inter-thematic work and exploring the links between food rights and other themes. In this edition, we present the debate on women's rights to land and other natural resources and share grassroots experiences.

Finally, the **AGENDA** section provides short reports on upcoming events and emerging issues. In this launch issue, we highlight our HungerFREE campaign.

We wish to congratulate all our Food Rights colleagues who have contributed to this new endeavor, especially the authors and the "editorial board", and particularly Renata Neder and Marta Antunes for their tireless efforts.

We welcome your opinions on this and future issues, and look forward to hearing your ideas on how we can improve the quality and usefulness of this publication. Please contact us at food.files@actionaid.org

Francisco Bendrau Sarmiento

The roots of the current hunger situation can be located in the way southern countries were integrated into the world economy between the 16th and the 20th centuries.

Rooting Hunger in the Atlantic

INTRODUCTION

It is time for International Financial Institutions and governments to recognize that the market-led development model reproduces the causes of hunger and malnutrition, meaning that food security cannot be achieved through economic growth based on the comparative advantages of nations and their respective markets. In response, it is crucial to re-build individual state sovereignty and to strengthen the new relationships between policy, economy and society needed for the 21st century.

The mobilization of civil society is a fundamental dimension of this process, as well as the increased exchange of knowledge between civil society organizations, particularly smallholder farmers' movements, since both are contributing to new political experiences in the South, particularly in the Americas region. Many policy makers and social activists are currently discussing the promotion of new south-to-south cooperation models with other southern regions of the world. Here we look to contribute to this debate by examining the historical background as a way of gaining a clearer understanding of the possibilities and limitations of this approach.

The roots of the current hunger situation can be located in the way southern countries were integrated into the world economy between the 16th and the 20th centuries. Although inequality and hunger are intrinsically linked to the present economic rationality, we can also identify the potential to build new shared beliefs, interests and visions as a way of strengthening joint mobilization and action. A historical analysis of the relations established in the past between African countries and the Americas region (particularly Brazil) provides an interesting example.

With this in mind, we describe below the root causes of vulnerability in Africa. Acknowledging the current situation found on both sides of the Atlantic, we explore the different limitations and possibilities for sharing knowledge in order to build a common future.



BUILDING COMPARATIVE DISADVANTAGES

For a number of authors, the Industrial Revolution and economic growth in the North were due in large part to the Atlantic Slave Trade.¹ While this institutional approach to capitalistic development based on slavery is becoming increasingly accepted, it is also important to analyze the consequences this regime had for peripheral economies on both sides of the Atlantic.

The first sugar-based slave society was founded in San Tomé and Príncipe. With Brazil's entrance into the sugar market, these islands were transformed into a platform for the Atlantic slave trade, especially after 1600.

Travelling down the west coast of Africa from Senegal to Angola, slave traders made the 'libambo' marches a constant feature for three centuries. No economic alternative was given to other African kingdoms such as the 'Congo,' for example. The total number of slaves that arrived (alive) in Brazil between 1551 and 1860 is around 4 million,² a much higher figure than Spanish America and the British Antilles (around one million and six hundred thousand, respectively).³ It's important to note that mortality rates during capture, transportation and the 'middle passage' were high. The number of captured slaves was much higher than 4 million, probably closer to 10 million if we consider the intense level of violence used in the process, the result of economic concentration and the higher levels of productivity involved in the activity. The slave trade between Africa and the Americas was probably the most profitable legalized economic activity in the history of capitalism.

In Africa, the expected demographic evolution and the traditional political and agriculture-based systems were in some cases systematically disrupted for more than three centuries. Food insecurity and internal conflicts helped traders to reduce costs and supply slaves to a growing international market. Later social, technical and economic dynamics were strongly conditioned by this legacy, since slavery was replaced by various institutional arrangements designed to supply labour forces to one of the first areas in which the capital accumulated under slavery was invested: the plantation, particularly coffee and cocoa.

Consequently, the conditions to develop and consolidate smallholder farmers, develop research and enable the subsequent industrialization of raw materials to supply the domestic market only appeared – and then timidly – towards the end of the twentieth century, still severely limited in their development due to the non-existent purchasing power of the majority of the

'Libambo' in Quimbundo (a traditional African language) means a line of enchained slaves. Today, libombo is used in Brazil's Northeast to refer to the migratory waves of the region's inhabitants towards the south, escaping food insecurity.



Jenny Matthews / ActionAid

The hunger and poverty situation in sub-Saharan Africa is alarming. Even with annual economic growth rates of around 7%, 48 African countries would need 50 years to obtain a per-capita income sufficient to allow them to escape poverty – and this in a scenario considering conservative projections of future demographic growth. Economic growth, therefore, must address the continent's main problem – poverty. (Source: Robert Kappel 2001, *The end of the great illusion*, University of Leipzig)

population, and the absence of medium-level technologies adapted to the tropics. Comparative advantages have also been responsible for the historical development of capitalism in the Americas.

The majority of African slaves were acquired with American (Brazilian) agricultural products: manioc (several varieties), tobacco (*Nicotiana sp*), maize (*Zea Mays*), several American fruits, and finally cachaça or sugar-cane rum. Initially manioc was the main exchange product. Today manioc is grown from south of the Sahara desert to the southern tips of Angola where it is still an important source of calories in rural areas. In contrast to manioc, which needs a year to be harvested, maize (*Zea mays*) or 'masa mputo'⁴ can be transported in grain form. Taking this South American food with them on their raids, the Java warriors of Central Africa were able to extend their mobility and thereby increase the number of slaves captured and sent to the Americas.

Maize and manioc meal production processes were improved in the Americas, particularly in Brazil where rising levels of human and animal food consumption resulted in the adaptation and improvement of processing techniques. However, cachaça (or jeribita⁵) was the product responsible for buying the most slaves⁶ and between 1699 and 1703 represented 78.4 % of legally imported alcoholic beverages in Africa. It raised the supply of slaves,⁷ and had a dramatic impact on African rural economies by contributing to further desertification and increased vulnerability for over 200 years, and has since continued to be an alternative 'currency' in several African countries.⁸

Due to its earlier relationship with Africa, three-quarters of Brazil's population at the end of the 19th century was occupied in production for self-consumption, the internal market or local markets. Domestic market expansion induced a process of industrialization initially based on small manufacturers.⁹

Manioc originates from the Americas and was a staple crop for the Guarani. The Portuguese took manioc to Africa. Grown in Angola since the end of the 16th century, the assumption is that it initially arrived in Sao Tomé and Príncipe. The extreme east of Africa was still importing manioc from Brazil in the 19th century. Manioc forms the basis of the African diet. Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Zaire and Ghana were the main world producers but not exporters. Brazil belongs to the main manioc exporters. Manioc has a high energy content, rich in dextrose and glucose, and has several non-alimentary uses (glue, paper, etc.).

Agricultural development promoted investments in the metal-mechanic industry, whose aim was to produce equipment for the agro-industries.¹⁰

The main concern of this sector was processing and commercializing food products traditionally consumed by urban populations with lower purchasing power. This was a naturally protected sector: on one hand, there was no competition from imported products, and on the other, raw materials were exclusively national in origin. These industries developed national machinery and technologies, less sophisticated technically, but better adapted to local social and economic needs – a technological base and related social categories and agents that failed to emerge in most African countries.

After the Second World War, capitalist relations became hegemonic in rural Brazil where monopoly capital was established and the state became engaged in support of the 'green revolution.' By 1968, multinational firms already owned 35% of the Brazilian national food sector. Meanwhile, civil society was challenging the military regime.

In the 1980s the Landless Movement (MST) sprang up in Brazil's South, a region where smallholder farmers were more consolidated and organized. Together with other rural and urban movements, MST has contributed strongly to civil society's role in fighting for the implementation of the right to food.

BUILDING A COMMON FUTURE

Historically the market-led development process has caused inequality between the North and the South, and within the North and the South. The present global situation of poverty and hunger, as well as the social struggles and related public policies aimed at changing this situation, are also the result of a flow of people, plants, rituals and social patterns that have originated with the expansion of mercantilism and the consolidation of capitalistic relations in agriculture. This applies in particular to cases such as Brazil in the Americas, and numerous African countries, including Guinea, Benin, The Gambia, Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique. The slave trade was responsible at various levels for the underdevelopment of smallholder farming and the related food vulnerability in several African countries. However, it was also responsible for economic development and inequality in the Americas, particularly in Brazil where it helped plant the seeds for the current social mobilization.

By learning from this common history, civil society and other actors can strengthen their relations and share knowledge in order to work together to challenge



this outmoded economic rationality and fight for the immediate legislative and legal implementation of the right to food. This is particularly important in terms of smallholder farmers' movements and policy makers, and the need to support small-scale sustainable agricultural systems as a mechanism for more equitable economic growth.

Thus there are two lessons to be considered:

Civil society's historical struggle in the Americas, particularly among the most disadvantaged groups¹¹ has led to significant political and institutional changes in countries such as Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela. However, these cannot be simply 'transferred' to African countries.¹² Knowledge exchanges within Africa need to be promoted, while exchanges with the Americas should be evaluated in order to bring together social groups with 'historically driven' cultural similarities. They have the clear potential to share and build the new common beliefs, interests and visions mentioned in the introduction to this article.¹³

Development and policy makers should not forget that 'popular and informal economies' are the basis of most African economic systems. This means that a development strategy to promote and secure the right to food must promote techniques of production, supply and diffusion adapted to extend access to locally produced goods and services at a lower cost to a higher number of people.¹⁴ On this particular aspect, south-to-south technical exchanges of knowledge with Brazil and other Latin American countries will be interesting to consider and stimulate. It is important to select territories with common eco-cultural systems as a starting point.

It is time for us to challenge history and build new south-south relations encompassing civil society and other relevant actors, including national states. We have to do so guided by a different rationality, acknowledging the historical limitations of the 'comparative advantage' model. Our fight for the eradication of 'libambos' and 'libombos' both in Africa and in the Americas is also a fight for solidarity, respect and honest relations among equals.

1 INIKORI, Joseph, (2002) *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England*, Cambridge University Press.

2 ALENCASTRO, Luís Felipe, *O trato dos viventes: Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, Séculos XVI e XVII*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000.

3 Though the period considered in the British colonies is from 1626 to 1840, and in Spanish America from 1526 to 1870.

4 In Kicongo, *masa mputo* means 'spike from Portugal.' African sorghum is known as *masa mbela* or 'spike of the village.'

5 *Jeribita* is the name given to the drink in Angola. In Tupi *jeribá* means a type of palm tree used by indigenous peoples in Brazil to produce a fermented drink.

6 ALENCASTRO, Luís Felipe, *O trato dos Viventes: Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, Séculos XVI e XVII*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000.

7 From 1660 the relative price of the African slave compared to *cachaça* remained low until the last decade of the 17th century.

8 At the beginning of the 20th century, the territory had the capacity to produce around 150,000 tons of sugar. However only one thousand tons were produced. 90% of the planted sugar cane was wasted due to liquor production being controlled by the local bourgeois. Almost one hundred years after Brazil's independence, *cachaça* retained its value as a currency item in Angola (Torres 1991).

9 SINGER, Paul 'Interpretação do Brasil: uma experiência histórica de desenvolvimento,' in Fausto, Boris (ed.), *O Brasil Republicano*, 4th volume, Tome III, São Paulo: Difel, 1984.

10 In Brazil, in 1889, 60% of the industrial capital was invested in the textile sector and 15% in the food sector. In 1907, 26.7% was in the food sector and 20.6% in textiles. By 1920, 40.2% was in the food sector and 27.6% in textiles. SIMONSEN, Roberto, C. *A evolução industrial do Brasil*, São Paulo: Federação das Indústrias de São Paulo, 1939.

11 Most of them Afro-descendants.

12 The same applies to "African" social and political struggles and experiences such as the fight for impendency, socialism or against apartheid. This will be analyzed in another article.

13 The current Brazilian Minister responsible for the 'Hunger Zero' program, Patrus Ananias, has publicly recognized Brazil's historical social debt to Africa particularly with the Portuguese speaking countries.

14 Naturally through local production and not just through imports.

Promoting the Human Right to Adequate Food

to end hunger and malnutrition

The latest estimates of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, issued in 2006, show that the number of undernourished people has grown from 854 to 869 million over the last few years.

It is unacceptable that a significant part of the world's population, especially those living in rural areas of the Global South, continues to face the scourge of hunger and malnutrition on a daily basis. The latest estimates of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, issued in 2006, show that the number of undernourished people has grown from 854¹ to 869 million² over the last few years. The vast majority are peasants, small farmers, landless farmers, indigenous peoples and traditional populations (80%), although the proportion of malnourished people is growing fastest in urban regions. Close to 70% of the latter are women.

It is also unacceptable that:

- more than 2 billion human beings, mostly women and children, suffer from nutritional anaemia,
- 146 million children are underweight,³
- 182 million children have their normal growth significantly impaired,⁴
- more than 120 million have vitamin A deficiency,
- each year 20 million children are born with low birth weight, and
- 18 million children are born each year with preventable mental disorders caused by dietary iodine deficiency.⁵

As a consequence, more than 5.6 million children below age five die every year from preventable causes associated with malnutrition and related diseases.⁶ The survivors, on the other hand, suffer from learning, developmental, affective and emotional impairments that severely affect their capacity to have a dignified life. On top of that, they have a significantly higher risk of developing and dying from chronic degenerative diseases such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disorders.

It is important to highlight that this is happening in a world that produces more food than required to adequately feed the entire global population, and that has enough economic resources and scientific and technical knowledge to address and solve the causes of hunger and malnutrition. So why isn't this done?

THE CAUSES OF HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

Several of the intergovernmental conferences carried out over the last few years, including the World Food Summit: Five Years Later (Rome, 2002), have blamed the failure for reducing hunger in the world to the "lack of political will and investments" on the part of governments.

We believe differently. In reality, most governments – especially those of rich and powerful countries – have taken the political decision to use their 'will and resources' to implement a market-led development model that reproduces the

More than 5.6 million children below age five die every year from preventable causes associated with malnutrition and related diseases



causes of hunger and malnutrition and in many instances aggravates them. Many southern governments were forced into similar action by structural adjustment and trade liberalization treaties, or did so in alliance with national elites. The few governments that have tried to take a different approach have been subjected to pressures from intergovernmental organizations and economically powerful governments to change their policies.

However, the States and governments, as well as intergovernmental bodies, not only have the moral obligation to reduce these numbers: they also have the legal obligation to do so. The vast majority of States in the world have ratified the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (156 countries) in which they commit themselves to respect, protect, promote, facilitate and provide the human right to adequate food, among other rights, for all inhabitants of their territories. The Right to Adequate Food is a human right in equal standing with all other human rights. The Right to Food is inscribed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Art. 25), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 11), as well as in some regional Human Rights – such as the Interamerican Declaration of Human Rights – and several national constitutions.

It is important to highlight that the Universal Bill of Human Rights is the conquest of the continued, centuries-long struggle of social groups and people against oppression and discrimination of all types, and for the regulation of economic, political and religious power. It was this struggle that forced States to commit themselves to the fulfilment of Human Rights. And it will only be through more social mobilization and struggle that we shall be able to guarantee that human rights are assured for all people.

We are facing today – at global, regional and national level – the dispute between two opposite camps: one that believes that the free market and the economy is the only force capable of promoting ‘development’ and eventually reducing hunger and poverty, and the other that defends the idea that people should be placed at the centre of any policy decisions and that the market should be regulated by the primacy of human rights and dignity.

The last 20 years of rampant hegemony of the market-led model has clearly demonstrated what it involves: increased privileges for the few, strengthening of the political power of transnational corporations (TNCs), increased concentration of wealth and land at both national and global level, plundering of the environment with critical consequences for the climate, biodiversity



Liba Taylor / ActionAid

and the quality of life on Earth, progressive destruction of sustainable agricultural practices and traditional populations, increased inequalities, reduced quality of the available food, and displacement of millions of families throughout the world due to so-called ‘development mega-projects.’ These are, in reality, the most important causes behind the already mentioned violations on a worldwide scale of the human right to adequate food. Many of these processes are carried out with the support and incentive of intergovernmental finance and trade organisations, such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO.

THE STRUGGLE FOR ANOTHER WORLD

Civil society, social movements and like-minded governments have stepped up their mobilization against this hegemony and its negative consequences. One example is the growing activism of peasant movements throughout the world in pursuit of Food Sovereignty, a phenomenon that has already managed to garner the support of governments in various parts of the world, such as Bolivia, Mali and Nepal, and continues to expand under the leadership of La Via Campesina.

Another example is the social mobilization that – in conjunction with the World Food Summit process – led to the elaboration of General Comment 12⁷ on the promotion of the Right to Food by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and to the approval by the 189 FAO State Members of the Voluntary Guidelines to promote the progressive realization of the Right to Adequate Food (Guidelines on the Right to

Food). These two documents set out clear recommendations on how Governments should work to guarantee the Right to Food to all their citizens through all necessary mechanisms, including specific legislation, public policies, programmes, and institutions responsible for monitoring the implementation and investigating violations of this right.

GC12 “The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.”

We cannot overestimate the importance of documenting violations and holding States accountable in order to resolve existing violations and avoid new ones, and of monitoring the effective implementation of government activities related to the promotion of the Right to Food.⁹ Civil society should thus continue to exercise a ‘watchdog’ function, maintaining support violation victims through advocacy work and to evaluate state performance vis-à-vis the Right to Food by monitoring state policies.

USING EXISTING INSTRUMENTS TO HOLD GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE TO THEIR OBLIGATIONS

Under these treaties, governments have the obligation not only to use immediately all available means to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, but also to promote the conditions needed to ensure the right to adequate food for all citizens through public policies. This means, for example, guaranteeing access to productive resources so that people can produce their own food (land, water, technical assistance, seeds, credit, etc.); generating jobs; assuring the availability of safe food at adequate prices and in accordance with cultural eating patterns; guaranteeing food quality and safety; ensuring the access to clean drinking water and sanitation; promoting and creating conditions for exclusive breast-feeding until 6 months of age; and providing adequate preventive and curative healthcare. It also means that governments have the obligation to protect the Right to Food against possible abuse by third parties, especially private economic interests such as agribusiness and TNCs.

The General Comment and the Guidelines on the Right to Food provide recommendations on establishing a coherent integrated national nutrition and food secu-

rity strategy, promoted within an approach based on the human right to food, with full and inclusive civil society participation and without discrimination, at all levels of elaboration, decision-making, implementation and monitoring, and the creation of independent mechanisms for claiming human rights.

Civil society organisations and social movements in all countries must take ownership of these tools and use them to push governments into implementing national policies towards the eradication of hunger and promotion of the Right to Adequate Food.

At the same time, civil society movements must strengthen their efforts to expose and document existing violations of the Right to Adequate to Food in their countries, and demand action from local, regional and national public authorities at legislative, executive and judicial level towards overcoming such violations. In parallel to this work, these documented violations should be included in civil society reports to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR) and to regional human rights systems. This is another way of pressuring governments to promote national policies more conducive to the eradication of hunger and to the promotion of human dignity.

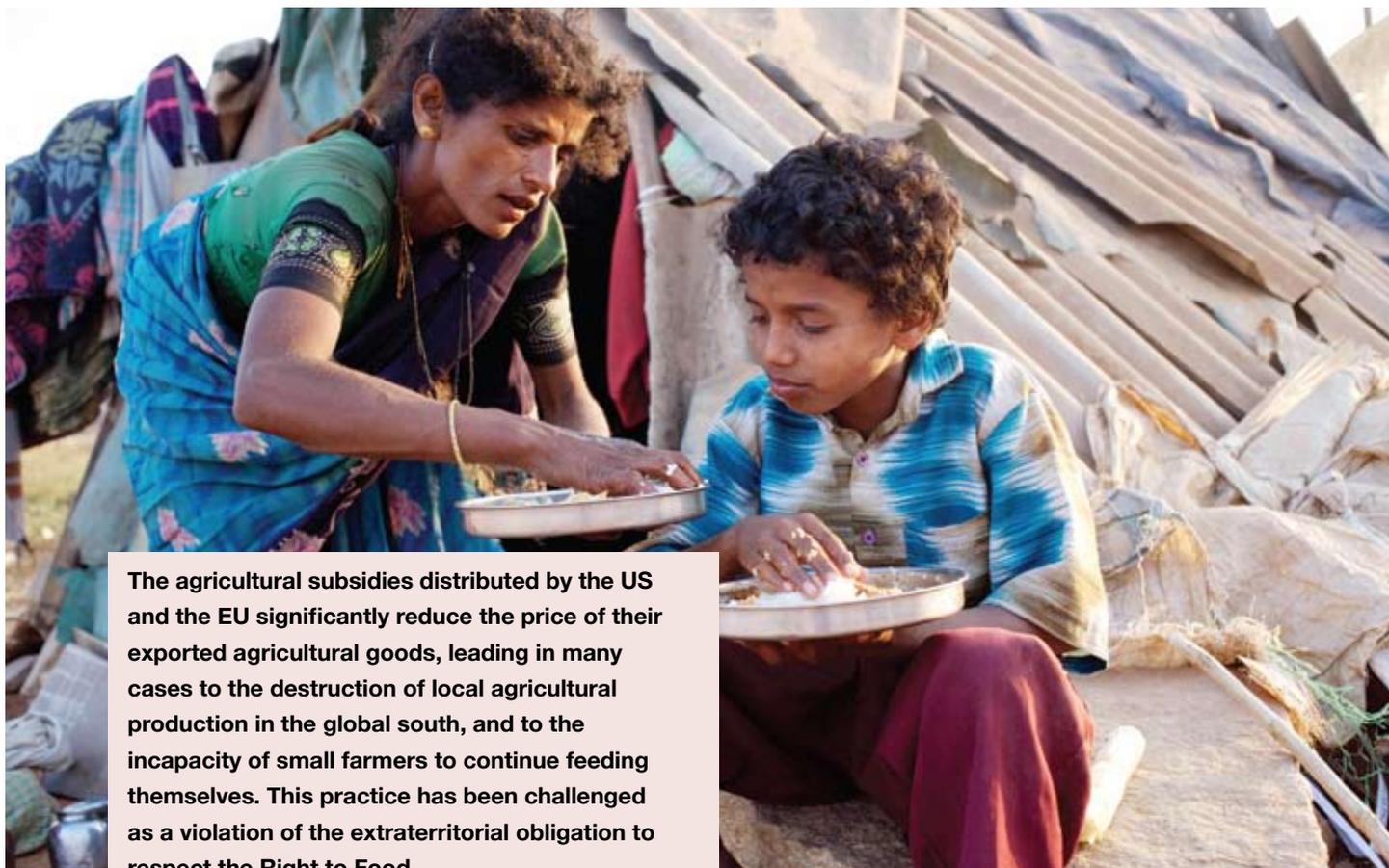
There is an ongoing effort to establish an international appeal mechanism that would allow complaints against the violation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) to be filed directly to the UN CESCR. The optional protocol would be an additional tool in our struggle, complementing the existing protocol for civil and political rights.

GOVERNMENTS ALSO HAVE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

Governments also have the obligation to make sure that their national policies or political decisions in intergovernmental organisations do not hinder the capacity of other governments to guarantee the Right to Food of their own citizens.

Similar questioning has been made of decisions taken by governments on the boards of International Finance Institutions in support of development projects that displace populations without the remedial measures needed to guarantee their continued enjoyment of the Right to Food and other ESCRs.

Finally, governments have been increasingly called upon by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights to regulate the activities of TNCs based in their countries so as to ensure that they do not infringe the capacity of populations in other countries to enjoy their Right to Food.



The agricultural subsidies distributed by the US and the EU significantly reduce the price of their exported agricultural goods, leading in many cases to the destruction of local agricultural production in the global south, and to the incapacity of small farmers to continue feeding themselves. This practice has been challenged as a violation of the extraterritorial obligation to respect the Right to Food.

CONCLUSION

We are at an important crossroads in human history, and the struggle against hunger and malnutrition is at its centre. The market-led development model has already demonstrated its limitations in terms of guaranteeing the quality of life for the majority of humankind. Its continued pursuit will certainly lead to more inequalities, less biodiversity, more intensive agriculture and will speed up the already evident global warming, with possible dire consequences for the environment, food production and food quality. Even the proposed alternatives, such as the increased utilization of biofuels, may further aggravate the global situation if not associated with people-centred decision making, leading to further displacement of farmers and to an even greater reduction in the quality – and maybe the quantity - of the food produced.

Civil society must intensify its mobilization against hunger and for a new world. Using the existing human rights instruments can strengthen our capacity to hold governments and international organizations accountable to their agreed commitments, and to demand more coherence in national and international public policies. These policies should be elaborated and implemented in observance of the primacy of Human Rights that establishes the promotion of human dignity for all as the central priority of humankind.

1 FAO. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World - SOFI 2006*. Rome, FAO, 2007. Full text available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0750e/a0750e00.htm> (consulted June 2007).

2 At: http://www.fao.org/es/ess/faostat/foodsecurity/Files/NumberUndernourishment_en.xls

3 UNICEF. *Progress for Children. A report card on nutrition*. New York. UNICEF, 2006.

4 Barbara Macdonald, Lawrence Haddad, Rainer Gross, and Milla McLachlan, "Nutrition: Making the Case." In: *Nutrition: A Foundation for Development*, Geneva: ACC/SCN, 2002.

5 UN SCN *The critical role of nutrition for reaching the Millennium Development Goals and success of the Millennium Development project*. SCN meeting in ECOSOC. 7th June 2005. At: <http://www.unsystem.org/SCN/Publications/ecosoc/RS6%20SCNECOSOC.doc>

6 UN SCN *Participants statement*, SCN 33rd. Annual session, Geneva, Switzerland, March 2006.

7 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Comment 12. The right to adequate food (Art.11). UN Doc. E/C.12/1999/5. Geneva: CESCR, 12/05/99.

8 FAO Council. *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security*. Adopted by the 127th Session of the FAO Council, November 2004.

9 Due to the work of FIAN, the Right to Food is one of the few areas of economic, social and cultural rights work where cases of violations have been documented and politically addressed for over 20 years. This case documentation and submission to national and UN human rights institutions has provided experts with a better understanding of the nature of the different dimensions of food rights violations by applying the different levels of state obligations (respect, protect and fulfil). Especially relevant were those cases in which the advocacy work helped the victims to obtain reparation for their violated right.



Srikanth Kolari / ActionAid

Michael Amendolia / Network / ActionAid

Artisanal fisheries in the discussion of food sovereignty

Fisheries form a part of humanity's memory and constitute an irreplaceable element in the diet of millions of households, especially in developing countries and also in some developed countries. The statistics of FAO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and of specialised organisations reveal the important contribution of fisheries to the world food security with an increasingly growing presence in national and international markets. They also reveal its relevant role of substitution of and complementarity to food-stuffs traditionally coming from agriculture.

One billion people around the world rely on fish as their primary source of proteins. While the annual fish consumption per capita in industrialised countries (in 29 kilograms) is more than twice the consumption in developing countries, at least three quarters of the resources are captured in open sea (according to weight) in developing countries, which also supply 9 out of every 10 fish raised in fish farms.

Thus, fish is one of the most widely traded raw materials. 75 percent of the total marine unloading each year is sold in international markets and is evaluated in about \$US 58 billion, according to 2002 exports. Japan, the United States and the European Union are the leading importers, bringing fish caught in foreign seas or raised in other regions into their markets, and also sending their industrial fishing fleets to empty out developing coastal countries. In the West coast of Africa, for example, big European and Japanese ships have displaced smaller boats, leaving little catch to feed the local population.

One billion people around the world rely on fish as their primary source of proteins.





The irony is that governments subsidise the destruction of oceanic resources with around \$US 15 to 30 billion each year. In 2001, subsidies paid to the fishing industry in Japan reached \$US 2,500 million, which is equivalent to the value of one quarter of the fish catch. Fishing subsidies in the United States added up to \$US 1,200 million, surpassing the value of 30 percent of the North-American fish catch.

It is estimated that the total labour force of artisanal fishermen communities reaches 100 million people throughout the world. It is supposed that for each fisherman there are three people working in related activities, which shows the social, economic, political and environmental value of small-scale fisheries. Allowing a more rational and equitable exploitation of fishing resources, artisanal fisheries contribute to the preservation of biodiversity in marine ecosystems, favouring the social reproduction of the human groups that depend on them. The ecological knowledge of fishermen is a specific trait of their culture, enabling an adequate management of fishing resources. Thus, it is necessary to preserve the most relevant socio-cultural aspects which underlie traditional fisheries by keeping their connection to the exercise of food sovereignty in its maritime aspect.

Small-scale fishing proportionally creates more wealth than industrial fishing due to a smaller inversion in exploitation costs and to the higher unit value of the species caught. In several African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, the exportation of fishing products, in its majority coming from small-scale fisheries, exceeds the value of tea, coffee and cacao exports.

Virtually 99 percent of all artisanal catch has commercial use or is promptly directed to human consumption. This question is particularly relevant for, since 1982, the Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) recognises the importance of marine ecosystems in the ocean biodiversity, their fragility and the need to protect and preserve them from large-scale fisheries (Agenda 21, UNCED). In fact, a great number of countries have already set up fishery management models based on ecosystems and recognise the important role of artisanal fishermen communities, although not sufficiently enough. Nevertheless, the tendency imposed by neo-liberal policies fosters industrial practices that use non-selective extraction strategies and techniques.

These negatively affect sea beds and fish stocks by catching adolescent and other non-commercial fish species (bycatch) which are later thrown back into the sea. The mortality of fish due to bycatch sometimes exceeds 90 percent of the catch, as it is the case of

shrimp fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. For fishermen communities around the world, the globalisation imposed by neo-liberal policies has meant a drastic reduction of the rights of access to fishing resources, traditional fishing areas and territorial space in coastal zones. Despite the growing dynamics of the international market of fishing products, which in their majority come from small-scale fisheries, 95 percent of all artisanal fishermen live on less than \$US 2 a day.

The fishermen of developing countries catch 2/3 of all fishing resources in the world market. The governments of the 10 richest countries in the world grant approximately 20 percent (\$US 15 billion) of all fishing subsidies to 5 percent of all fishermen. This is clearly a case of inequality hindering the development of a free and fair trade.

LOSS OF FISHING RIGHTS

Earlier the access to the world's marine fishing resources was open or followed norms regulated by the traditional customary use. However, during the last two decades, there was an attempt to regulate the access to fishing resources through the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, in 1982, and through several subsequent agreements. The purpose was to overcome conflicts between countries and within the fishing sector (industrial fisheries vs. artisanal fisheries, fishing for exportation vs. fishing for subsistence), and to avoid the overexploitation of marine fish stocks. Although these agreements had the objective of protecting the equity of access to maritime fishing and the purpose of some of them was to safeguard the livelihoods of artisanal fishermen, in reality this hasn't always worked; in practice inequality still persists between developed and developing countries.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea guarantees the right of countries to exploit their own fishing resources in their territorial waters and in their exclusive economic zone. At present, almost 99 percent of the world's fishing resources are under national jurisdiction. Each country is obliged to calculate its "allowable catch" (sustainable fishing level) and to avoid the overexploitation of their resources. If a country is not capable of fishing up until its level of allowable catch, it becomes obliged to allow access by other countries. Nevertheless, it is implied that the conditions of this access are regulated in such a way that the first thing to take into account are national interests and local livelihoods; afterwards, the needs of countries in the region, particularly landlocked countries and countries with an unfavourable geographical

location; and finally the needs of other countries. The purpose of the Convention is to strengthen the rights of countries over their own fishing resources.

Since very poor countries are not capable of controlling fisheries in their territorial waters, illicit fishing (small and large-scale operations) frequently deprives them from their own resources. According to FAO, non-declared and non-regulated illicit fishing is increasing both in intensity and in range, “seriously hindering national and regional efforts for sustainable management of fishing resources”. The incapacity of countries to control their waters is partially due to globalised economic policies which limit the State’s capacity to undertake tracking, control and supervision activities.

At local scale, the world policies aiming at privatisation and at the exportation of maritime fishing occasionally end up depriving local populations from their traditional rights of access to fishing resources. Earlier the access of local populations to fishing resources was open or was regulated by traditional or community access systems, but these rights were not officially established. Nevertheless, some recent attempts to avoid these open access systems, with the argument that they had allowed overexploitation, ended up restricting the access by artisanal fishermen and harming them and their communities - though large-scale fishing is frequently the main responsible for this problem. If in the primary project the poor are not included nor protected, traditional fishing communities could be deprived from the access to their own marine resources. The individual transferable quota system has been systematically used to transfer the control over fishing resources from the poor to the rich. Fishermen communities around the world have denounced that business groups (corporations) claim a disproportionate part of the world’s fishing resources for themselves; and this is not merely due to fact that the rich can contribute with more money to the market than the poor. This is also due to the fact that the rich control a great part of the supply process, particularly its regulation.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN FISHERIES AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The principle of food sovereignty in the fisheries context is directly connected to fishing rights, in two perspectives converging towards a common room: on the one hand, the perspective on the fishing rights of coastal States, assured by the International Convention on the Law of the Sea - UNCLOS (1982); on the other hand, the perspective on the rights of access by the fishermen communities which have historically developed a deep

cultural, economic, environmental and political relationship with fishing resources and seas, including territorial rights in the coastal area where artisanal fishermen communities or small-scale fishermen are settled.

In this way, the food sovereignty principle in fisheries challenges the insufficiency of the present fisheries model of growth and economic development based exclusively on extractive processes. These processes, on the one hand, hinder a sustainable management of the oceans; on the other hand, and as they are exclusively determined by economic efficiency, they put great pressure on fishing resources in order to satisfy market demands. This model does not handle resources as if they were essential nourishment for human life, rather as if they were merchandise or commodities, ignoring all of their cultural, political and environmental considerations.

Food sovereignty in the sphere of human rights and of the basic right to food, in relation to fisheries, can be traced back to the statement in the Roman law, which early considered the sea as a *res communes omnium*. Being a *res communis* implied that it was a good destined to be used by all men and that it was excluded from human commerce. Fishing was one of the sea uses, and it was considered as a free use of a common good. In turn, Title 28 of the Third Partida, Law 3, includes the sea among *res communes*, stipulating that “The things which belong in common to all the living creatures of the world are the air, rain, water, the sea, and its shores. For every living creature may use them, according to his wants. And every man can take advantage of the sea and of its shores, by fishing or sailing...”

In fact, from the point of view of the exercise of food sovereignty, fishing resources are a common property of a nation. Therefore, the State has the obligation to assure a sustainable management of these resources, by incorporating the vision of artisanal fishermen communities, with the purpose of ensuring food sovereignty and the greatest social and economic benefits for the national population. Thus, the food sovereignty principle in fisheries should be observed in the powers exercised regarding a resource or in reference to a space. Thus, one should distinguish the dominion over marine spaces, which is a matter of international law; the right of appropriation of fishing products, a theme reserved to common law; and the right to fish, an issue of the public and economic agenda. It is important to regard the latter not merely as the final transformation of resources destined to nourishment, but rather as a principle integrating the whole productive chain, safeguarded by general fishing rights and particularly regarding the right to food.



The movement towards the right to work and employment in India

The Indian Parliament passed the historic National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) on the 5th September 2005. The NREGA is considered the flagship programme of the Indian Government in its endeavour to provide an economic safety net to India's 40 million rural workers.

Over the last 6 decades, Indian governments have formulated numerous schemes for enhancing rural salaried employment and have also terminated an equal number of schemes due to poor overall performance and failures.

After independence, a direct attack on poverty seemed essential, especially with the introduction of the fourth of India's five-year national plans. This plan gave rise to a number of programmes, such as the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP, started in 1977 and popularly still known as the Food for Work programme, but officially renamed in 1980) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP, begun in 1983-84), which set out especially to employ the rural poor in the rural environment. The Food for Work Programme was introduced to mitigate rural distress during severe drought situations, a relief initiative that made use of surplus food grain stocks available during the period. There were also other programmes, such as the Integrated Rural Development programme (IRDP, begun in 1978-79), which were meant to stimulate self-employment initiatives among the rural poor by providing them with the necessary startup assets.

While rural employment programmes like Food for Work and Cash for Work have helped enhance people's purchasing power and food security, as well as building productive assets for the rural poor, IRDP assets in the form of livestock and poultry have failed badly because of rural people's lack of experience in handling such assets and the lack of ongoing support and liaison from the government.

Salaried employment on public works has emerged, therefore, as a more effective means of alleviating the poverty of the rural poor. The best such example has been the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) run by the state of Maharashtra since 1974. It was designed as a state-level response to adverse economic and demographic trends caused by the lack of modernization of agriculture in Maharashtra, where employment failed to provide an adequate living standard.

After independence, a direct attack on poverty seemed essential, especially with the introduction of the fourth of India's five-year national plans.

The response from wage seekers was excellent and the programme had a sustained impact in maintaining the payment of minimum wages, addressing rural distress, migration, the creation of durable assets for poor people and, most importantly, attracting the backing of political parties towards sustaining the scheme over the long-term.

In 1993, the Indian Government introduced the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) for drought prone, desert, tribal and hill areas in some of the more remote regions of India. The main objective of this scheme was to guarantee 100 days of casual manual employment during the lean agricultural season, at statutory minimum wages¹. Under the scheme, 875 million working days were generated during 1993-94, rising to a peak of 1,232 million days in 1995-96. However, the EAS has also been phased out for various reasons, including its failure to provide the assured 100 days employment to the families, alleviate rural poverty or provide minimum and/or fair wages, and the allocation of a higher percentage of budget resources on materials rather than on generating employment.

In 2001, the Government came up with yet another scheme called JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, an employment generation programme named after the first Prime Minister of India). The JRY scheme was subsequently merged with the EAS (Employment Assurance Scheme) and given a new acronym, SGRY (Sampoorna Gramina Rojgar Yojana: the Comprehensive Village Employment Programme). Here, the emphasis lay more on creating the rural economic infrastructure, rather than investment on road and building, with responsibility given to the village panchayats (rural local bodies) to implement the programme. The programme achieved mixed results. Although fairly substantial funds were allocated to the scheme by both central and state governments, the programme obtained a weak response from rural people themselves, while overall expenditure was low compared to the earlier salaried employment programme.

EMERGENCE OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND EMPLOYMENT MOVEMENT

The Indian Constitution of 1950 refers to the right to work under the "Directive Principles of State Policy." Article 39 urges the State to ensure that "Citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood." In addition, Article 41 stresses that "the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work." Although the Indian government

has created labour-intensive rural works programmes, these are not based on the right to work; rather, they simply amount to additional employment opportunities provided by the State as and when possible.

India faced one of its worst drought situations in 2001. Large numbers of deaths from starvation were reported across many parts of the country. The people's movements in various places appealed to the government to provide food relief and salaried employment to the affected populations. Meanwhile, a PIL (Public Interest Litigation) petition was filed in the Supreme Court by the PUCL (People's Union for Civil Liberties) on 9th May 2001 on the issue of the 'right to food and work.' The petition drew attention to the fact that 50 million tons of food grain were lying idle in FCI (Food Corporation of India) godowns against a background of widespread hunger across the country, especially in drought-stricken areas.

The main arguments in the PIL were: 1) Article 21 – the right to life – includes the right to food and water as basic humane and fundamental rights; 2) this right is threatened at times of scarcity; 3) it is the duty of the state to prevent scarcity and to provide immediate relief when scarcity arises. As relief measures, the petition demanded the immediate release of food stocks for drought relief and related purposes. The Supreme Court accepted the petition and directed all state governments to implement the food schemes in their entirety and introduce relief measures on a war footing, reporting periodically on their progress. Furthermore, the Apex Court also nominated a commissioner to monitor the right to food work and appoint advisors across all of India's states to enforce compliance. Since then, the right to food movement has won over the support of all the major Indian social movements and civil society groups, enabling widespread community mobilization and policy advocacy on the right to food for the poor and excluded. While the campaign to make the government accountable for ensuring the Indian people's food rights through its wide range of food schemes was proving successful, the movement for the right to work was also being pushed by various movements, academic bodies and civil society organisations who lobbied the UPA (United Progressive Alliance), the ruling coalition that came to power during 2004. In response, the UPA elaborated a Common Minimum Programme, setting out a series of pro-poor policies on poverty alleviation, governance and development. This placed on the agenda for the first time a National Act guaranteeing 100 day salaried employment for people living in the least developed regions of India.



Local Sahariya residents employed in digging a pond as part of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India

THE NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT, 2005

Over the last six decades, the policies and practices designed to provide employment to poor peasants, agriculture and unorganized rural workers have been channelled through a number of schemes. None of these schemes was ever sustained for a long period or succeeded in living up to initial expectations. Based on the earlier experience of Maharashtra State's Employment Guarantee Programme, a strong case developed

for the introduction of a nationwide, legally binding employment guarantee programme. Finally, the ruling UPA constituted a National Advisory Council composed of prominent academics, activists and representatives from mass movements to draft a National Act on guaranteeing the right to employment programme in India. The Act, which was widely deliberated and discussed, is summarized in the following box.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 is a law whereby any adult who is willing to do unskilled manual work at the minimum wage is entitled to be employed on public works within 15 days of applying. If work is not provided within 15 days, he/she is entitled to an unemployment allowance. The key features of the Act are spelt out below.

1. Any person who is above the age of 18 and resides in rural areas is entitled to apply for work.
2. Any applicant is entitled to work within 15 days, for as many days as he/she has applied, subject to a limit of 100 days per household per year.
3. Work is to be provided within a radius of 5 kilometres of the applicant's residence if possible and in any case within the Block. If work is provided beyond 5 kilometres, travel allowances have to be paid.
4. Workers are entitled to the statutory minimum wage applicable to agricultural labourers in the state, unless and until the Central Government 'notifies' a different wage rate. If the Central Government notifies, the wage rate is subject to a minimum of Rs 60/day.
5. Workers are to be paid weekly or in any case not later than a fortnight. Payment of wages is to be made directly to the person concerned in the presence of independent persons from the community on pre-announced dates. If work is not provided within 15 days, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance: one third of the wage rate for the first thirty days, and one half thereafter.
6. Labourers are entitled to various facilities at the worksite such as clean drinking water, shade for periods of rest, emergency health care, and child-minding.
7. Contractor and labour displacement machines are banned.

Furthermore, the Act also lays down strict operational instructions for its implementation. These detailed guidelines stress the need for works capable of ensuring lasting livelihood solutions through the provision of irrigation, land development, water conservation and the creation of community assets. The Act also envisages the participation of women and the community as a whole in planning, monitoring and conducting social audits of the programme. The NREGA has drawn considerable strength from the recently introduced Right to Information Act, which empowers the common citizen to demand information and transparency from the government institutions responsible for implementing the NREGA in rural areas.

The NREGA has been implemented in 200 districts in 27 states across India. To date, 20 million households have demanded employment under the Act. Out of these, 10 million are from scheduled tribe and caste categories, and 8 million are women. Under the NREGA, 391,651 types of works have been realized so far. Of these, 183,402 relate to water conservation, 27,461 to drought proofing and planting, 6,694 to flood control and 92,904 to rural connectivity. At district level, training has been given to 84,822 members of local bodies, 30,859 administrative officials, 1,803 technical functionaries and 11,476 members of village monitoring committees. The union government released 260 million rupees during 2006 for implementation of the NREGA.

The first phase of the NREGA has provided excellent learning opportunities in terms of the declining incidence of distress migration, improvement of water bodies, raised awareness of the minimum wage and increases in wage earnings, and a rise in women's participation – a crucial factor for the sustainability of the programme.

Following the initial success of the programme, the NREGA is being expanded to 130 more districts, or 330 districts in total, with an enhanced budget of 1,600 million Rupees.

Role of mass movements and civil society groups: Making the State guarantees employment as a citizen right is one of the biggest achievements of the Indian mass movements, trade unions, people's bodies and civil society organisations who have been striving towards this goal for decades.

Soon after the programme's launch in 2006, large numbers of civil society groups swung into action to educate people about the Act, stimulate their proactivism and help communities to access the 100 days of employment guaranteed by the government.

Some organizations even took up the issue of transparency and accountability by facilitating social audits, participatory planning and the promotion of labour unions for the poor and the excluded.

ActionAid has been one of the key supporters of the right to food and right to work movement in India. The NREGA has also provided a lot of opportunities for its partners and community members to work closely on effective implementation of the programme through a rights-based approach. ActionAid and its partners are active in around 60 districts out of the 200 districts where the programme was launched. It has helped the Andhrapradesh State Government to design and implement pilot social auditing processes by providing training and capacity building to village volunteers. Similar initiatives have been implemented in the states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Orissa. In addition, village level campaigns, workshops, research and large scale mobilizations have been pursued in various parts of India with the active support of ActionAid. The Government of India has also recognized ActionAid as one of the national resources agencies to facilitate social auditing in UP and Bihar.

The next phase in the NREGA's implementation will involve a specific challenge for India's movements and civil society as a whole; namely, to ensure that the benefit of 100 days of right to salaried employment reaches both men and women, allowing them to enhance their living conditions through the creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities and productive assets. There is also a strong civil society demand to expand the programme to all districts of India and increase the number of days to 200. Since the NREGA has been developed as a means for alleviating poverty, strong policy support, community partnerships and ensuring transparency and accountability are all crucial to its success.



Tom Pietrasik / ActionAid

Local Sahariya residents employed in digging a pond as part of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India

SOCIAL AUDIT TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT

A social audit on the NREGA was organized in the Manatu block of Palamau district in May 2006 by a team of researchers headed by eminent economist and social activist Jean Dreze, with the active support of a local organisation, Vikas Sahayog Kendra, a member organisation of Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, Palamau. The prime objective of the social audit was to assess the teething problems to the NREGA in Palamau after its launch in February. It was initially opposed by the local MLA, Bidesh Singh, who threatened the villagers and the research team with dire consequences. The research team and the staff of VSK went ahead without worrying unduly about the threat. About 1,500 people from 45 villages covering 7 panchayats attended the social audit. The affected people shared their concerns and the research team presented the findings of the social audit in front of the Block Officials and the MLA. The main findings of the social audit were as follows:

- i. The panchayat worker was refusing to accept registration applications without photographs, despite the provision in the NREGA stipulating that the cost of the photo would be borne by the government and not the applicant.
- ii. The cards had not been distributed among the applicants, though the latter had applied for cards 3 months in advance.
- iii. Wage payments were 2-3 months overdue.
- iv. No sincere efforts had been made by the block officials to generate wider awareness about the NREGA. The block officials in general and the panchayat worker –who was effectively the first contact person for the villages vis-à-vis the NREGA – were not fully aware of the latter's provisions.

Given these findings, the MLA and the block officials had no option but to accept the demands presented by the villagers. The immediate result of the social audit was that the panchayat sewak paid the labourers of Pakariadih, Tillo and Kerdih villages Rs. 27,000 in overdue wages. Had there been no social audit, these wages would have been misappropriated by the cohort of block officials and local contractors. Another panchayat sewak from Padma Gram Panchayat was suspended for his involvement in the corruption.

Source: Government of India NREGA statistics, Gopal KS book on the NREGA, Centre for Science and Environment e-updates, Planning Commission of India updates.

Local Sahariya residents employed in digging a pond as part of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India





Gruma-Maseca

the translatin emperor of flour tortilla
in Central America

Founded in 1949, the Maseca Group (GRUMA) is one of the largest producers and distributors of corn flour and tortillas in the world.

BACKGROUND OF THE MASECA GROUP

Founded in 1949, the Maseca Group (GRUMA) is one of the largest producers and distributors of corn flour and tortillas in the world. GRUMA operates mainly in the United States, Europe, Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, Asia and Oceania and exports to 50 countries worldwide. The company's corporate office is located in Monterrey, Mexico, and it includes 16,582 workers and 86 plants. In 2005, the amount of GRUMA's net sales was of \$2,500 million.

By the end of 2006, only one family directly or indirectly controlled more than 50 percent of the actions of GRUMA. Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM), one of the three largest agrifood corporations in the United States, controlled 27 percent of GRUMA actions and the 26 percent left was controlled by other shareholders. Apart from its strong corporate link with ADM, GRUMA maintains relations with another of the most powerful and controversial agribusiness corporations in the world: the North-American MONSANTO, known by its work of investigation, development and aggressive commercialisation of genetically modified seeds. The former director of a seed production company bought by MONSANTO was, at the same time, the director of GRUMA. This clearly reveals the participation of the food biotechnology industry in the administration of GRUMA.

GRUMA has subsidiary companies in several regions of the world, for which it can be considered as a "translatin" company, as defined by CEPAL (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean). One of these subsidiary companies is located in Central America. In the early seventies, GRUMA entered into the Costa Rican market. Soon it established plants in Honduras (1987), El Salvador (1993) and Guatemala (1993). GRUMA Central America, based in Costa Rica, is 100 percent propriety of the GRUMA Group. GRUMA Central America possesses 11 manufacturing plants of corn flour and has capacity to produce 126,000 tons of flour per year.

From an analysis of GRUMA documentation, from the field work carried out to in order to get acquainted with the practices and the market power of GRUMA in the different Central American countries, and from the analysis of their engagement in promoting their populations' Right to Food, it was possible to establish the following:

A woman with dark hair, wearing a vibrant, multi-colored patterned dress, is carrying a baby in a pink basket on her back. She is standing in a cornfield, with large green corn leaves and stalks visible around her. The woman has a serious expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the cornfield.

The Role of the State: neoliberalism vs. protectionism

- There is a double discourse regarding the role of the State in the economy: on the one hand, policies of “free” market and deregulation are promoted; on the other hand, public support is actively sought – through direct (such as the elimination of the VAT - Value Added Tax - in the purchase of maize) or indirect (such as the subsidy for tortilla consumption; subsidies or other incentives for the production of maize, etc.) incentives.
- Similarly, while the advantages of “free” trade are gladly accepted, at some point protectionist measures are welcomed: for example, the embargo to maize exports in Honduras, imposed for ensuring safe access to national corn, at stable prices, by agroindustries.
- The DR-CAFTA (Dominican Republic and Central America Free Trade Agreement) has directly benefited these industries by opening import contingents at 0 percent tariffs. Only in Guatemala, MASECA obtained savings for not having paid the 20 percent tariff on the 8,000 MT it was entitled to, nor on other (estimated) 8,000 MT it gained access to under a different legal form (under MINSA, presently merged with MASECA). These savings constitute an indirect subsidy of around \$450,000, bringing the Inland Revenue in debt and hindering its social inversion capacity.

Market Power: winners and losers

- The fact that a sole corporation concentrates the total of white corn imports, as it is the case of GRUMA-DEMAGUSA in Guatemala (95%), or the majority of them, as it is the case of GRUMA in Central America, confers on it an excessive market power, which is used in an abusive way; with such power these companies can determine the prices both for local men and women producers (especially indirectly, as dumping prices become local reference prices), and for consumers of industrial flour tortilla (working and urban middle classes). The low prices received by men and women producers, directly affecting their income, and the high relative prices charged to men and women consumers compromise the obligation to protect the right to food of vulnerable populations.

- In addition to this excessive market power, there is also disrespect for the competition policy, which has not yet been developed enough, either in Mexico or in other Central American countries: GRUMA has been legally indicted and sued for anti-competitive practices in Mexico. Thus, it was possible to establish that these corporations have cornered markets by accessing more market shares than they are allowed under several legal forms, creating new companies and/or merging and buying other companies (such as the acquisition of MINSA in Guatemala). The (successful) attempt to illegitimately control markets, and thus obtaining the power of manipulating producers and consumers, violates the Right to Food of the latter.
- Not even GRUMA tries to dissimulate its undemocratic interests regarding this issue. It proudly affirms the 'vertical integration in the maize-flour-masa-tortilla chain, which represents important competitive advantages that are hard to match'; an integration which clearly constitutes a direct menace to the development of a healthy competition in the tortilla markets.
- The policy of lack of transparency and accountability which characterises GRUMA-MASECA, more than its shareholders', is especially worrisome in the case of an agribusiness company whose profit comes from the nourishment of the population; such a company should facilitate the access to supposedly public information, which should be available for public institutions and for population in general.

Environment: discourse and practice

- Although they say to expect that 'the tendency towards a greater regulation and application of environmental policies continues', they are implicated in legal processes initiated by the National Water Commission of Mexico against a subsidiary company of GRUMA (GIMSA) for supposed discharges of residual waters from five of its plants; therefore they warn their shareholders: 'the promulgation of new environmental regulations or of greater levels of application could negatively affect us'. Thus, while they fake a concern for the environment, in practice they seek flexibility in environmental legislation according to their profitability interests. This corporate policy clearly contradicts the human right to a healthy environment.

GMOs: why?

- The issue of genetically modified organisms is being approached merely from an economic point of view; that is to say that the only concern is about the cost of the raw material (maize), which is estimated to be cheaper when genetically modified. Therefore, the fact that consumers may oppose to genetically modified organisms (GMO) is regarded as a menace. This demonstrates as little awareness regarding the right to adequate food as the one revealed by the "crusade" against the traditional and community production of nixtamalised tortilla, considered by GRUMA as its main competitor. If one takes into account that the nutritional content of a nixtamalised tortilla is

much higher than the one of an industrialised flour tortilla - and that the tortilla is the basis of the diet of mainly poor populations -, then one should be tactful when discouraging the consumption of the most nutritional tortilla.



Sophia Evans / NB Pictures / ActionAid

TNCS REGULATION: PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Through the analysis of the GRUMA case - which is only one of the many examples of how powerful agribusiness companies perform -, the need for a decisive public intervention becomes even clearer. Such an intervention should penalise and put an end to monopolies, oligopolies or cartels in general, especially if its activation determines the fulfilment of fundamental human rights, such as the right to adequate food. The neo-liberal crusade against state commercialisation companies should better handle local corporations and/or subsidiary companies of transnational corporations which obtain an excessive market power (according to sectors and countries). Hence the need to develop domestic agricultural commercial policies aimed at the achievement and defence of food sovereignty, which facilitates the fulfilment of the right to adequate food of populations. In order to achieve this, we propose to associate public entities that: guarantee fair and stable prices for both peasant farmer producers and common consumers (facing the role of agriculture as price regulator); supply public institutional markets through peasant-based agrifood production and transformation systems; keep appropriate food reserves in strategically located silos for use in emergencies and for food aid to Central American municipalities vulnerable or highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

Finally, and taking into account the data presented, we reaffirm the need to exclude currently in force or future international, bilateral or multilateral commercial treaties from agriculture and from nourishment. In the meantime, accountability mechanisms should be created regarding the allocation of contingents, extra tariffs paid by importers to contingents and the amount of resources allocated to agribusiness companies via direct and indirect subsidies. These subsidies should be transferred from agribusiness companies to programmes fostering peasant farmer food production.

Zimbabwe Land Reform

and the Way Forward

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe's colonial and racial land distribution imbalances were unjust and needed redress. About 4,000 large scale commercial farms on prime land were held by white individuals and corporate landowners, in landholdings averaging over 2,000 hectares, against a million overcrowded peasant families and numerous landless people in communal areas characterized by poor soils and low rainfall. The land question was therefore a racial issue because most of the redistributed land was owned by a few white farmers. Before the implementation of Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform programme in 2000, land reform policy and laws, land markets and international intervention had failed to transform adequately this legacy (see table below).

The official fast-track land reform programme began with the faltering of earlier compromises and negotiations in 1999. Years of dialogue since 1990 over methods of land acquisition and funding for land reform had failed to produce trust and cooperation among the various stakeholders who included the donors, the British Government and the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ). Between 2000 and 2007, therefore, the Government of Zimbabwe proceeded on its own to expropriate 90 percent of the large-scale commercial farm (LSCF) land in a staggered fashion. Land acquisition was bedevilled by extensive land occupations, widespread landowner litigation and sporadic violence and forced evictions on the white-owned land areas. This process was accompanied by significant losses in production and capital stock. Compensation for acquired land improvements in accordance with government policy was well below expectation.

Land occupations led by war veterans of the liberation struggle provided momentum for the radicalization of land expropriation from late 2000, which saw increased demand for land among various classes (peasants, the urban working class and black elites, in general), as the GoZ expanded its definition of beneficiaries and more people joined the 'unlawful' occupation of land or applied officially for land between then and 2002. Land redistribution became embedded in electoral politics, its contested legitimacy becoming the theme of various elections even after 2005.

The context of increased demand for land can be attributed to the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in the 1990s.

This led to marginalization of most black people, alongside increased agricultural production for exports which only enriched a few. De-industrialization, massive retrenchments and wage erosion ensued.

A generation of young graduates was unable to find meaningful jobs. Aspiring black capitalists failed to compete with established white businesses and farmers. Income and wealth inequalities increased.



Marion Khamis / ActionAid

Compensation for acquired land improvements in accordance with government policy was well below expectation.

Evolution of land distribution and landholdings size (million ha) (1980-1996)

Source: Moyo (1999; 2000; 2003)

| Farm Class | 1980 (at independence) Number of families/farms | Hectares (million) | Number of families/ farms | Hectares (million) |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Smallholder | 700,000 | 14.4 | 1,000,000 | 16.4 |
| Small to Medium Scale Commercial | 8,000 | 1.4 | 8,000 | 1.4 |
| Large Scale Commercial | 6,000 | 15.5 | 4,500 | 7.7 |
| Corporate Estates | | | 960 | 2.04 |

National debt grew, as did dependence on erratic external financial flows and aid, reinforcing narrow market-based development and land reform strategies. Small farmers' food security and incomes, which had been bolstered in the 1980s by state intervention and the regulation of agricultural markets, became precarious. Farm labour conditions deteriorated. Rural and urban landlessness and social unrest intensified.

These contradictions polarized perspectives on development, democratization and land reform, leading to a revived politics of land reclamation by 1997, and opposition to it. External influences on politics, the economy and land acquisition impacted the land reform process.

The fast-track land reform entailed a complex interplay of a variety of social and political factors and contestations, which have contributed to the current confrontational politics. Debate on its motives, outcomes, impacts and the way forward have largely been partisan.

SOCIAL FACTS ON LAND REFORM

The 'social facts' on the ground concerning the current distribution of land indicate that land redistribution has redressed the imbalanced racial legacy, but has spawned new inequalities, albeit less sharp, while this outcome remains contested by former landowners.

Land reform transformed the rural and agrarian social structure by substantially extending access to land to over 150,000 families, and by significantly downsizing the average size of commercial landholdings. An uneven landholding structure obtains, but with less sharp racial and landholding size inequalities. Over 120,000 beneficiary families hold less than 100 hectares each. About 12,000 new medium scale farm units now exist with an average of 200 hectares each.

The new inequality entails the retention of large landholdings by approximately 4,000 landholders with an average 700 hectares each. Approximately 260 of these are foreign landholders, although their protection from acquisition under bi-lateral agreements is not yet cleared. Over 30 large agro-industrial corporate estates and conservancies hold over 1,500 hectares each on average. Over 700 landholders are individual white farmers, holding over one million hectares on diverse land sizes, half of which are within the prescribed sizes. About 3,000 of these are old and new black farmers.

Less than 10% of the land beneficiaries are former farmworkers. The main source of exclusion concerns the approximately 200,000 agricultural workers, most of whom continue to reside as farm tenants on redistributed land, without secure land rights, and those displaced to communal and other areas. A significant number of poor peasants, women and various other, middle class populations also claim to have been ex-

cluded from the redistribution. Although a significant number of former white farmers and enterprises remain on the land, the future of white landownership remains contested. Others claim to have been excluded, even though they would accept inclusion within prescribed land sizes.

Land reform altered agricultural land property relations by extending state landownership and by expanding the leasehold and permissive forms of tenure, while substantially reducing freehold tenures. Confidence in the current form of the leasehold tenure among the new and old 'commercial' farmers and existing financiers is limited. However, smallholders generally perceive their tenure as secure. Litigation by white landowners has remained a threat to tenure stabilization.

Land access and ownership have in general been democratized, although the continued politicization of land reform, by both ruling and oppositional forces, undermines debate on the way forward.

MAIN IMPACTS OF THE NEW LAND STRUCTURE ON PRODUCTION

The main impact of land reform has been to transform agrarian social and labour relations, as well as land utilization. The reforms increased the degree of self or family operated farms, some of which use hired labour.

There has also been a decrease in the number of full-time agricultural jobs, as well as reduced levels and regularity of wages, given that agricultural production has so far remained in decline. Since 2001, agricultural production has fallen by about fifty percent in volume, within a more complex structure than the polarized views suggest. Food production (maize, wheat and small grains) dropped by over 50% in both communal and commercial farm areas. Commercial dairy and beef production declined by over 50%. Production of tobacco and oil seeds (soya beans, groundnuts and sunflower) fell by over 65%. These figures have recently rebounded slightly. Horticulture declined by much less (about 30%), while plantation crops (sugarcane, tea, coffee, citrus) and cotton production fell the least (about 20%).

CAUSES OF PRODUCTION DECLINE

In dispute is whether the decline resulted mainly from the land transfers and tenure change or whether other factors have been more determinant. In fact, production declined for various reasons, including land transfers, suggesting that recovery is feasible.

Production of maize in communal areas, which used to supply 75% of the market and own-consumption, suffered severely, not because of land transfers but due to the frequent droughts and input shortages. Cotton production in these areas was resilient due to the crop's drought resistance and effective input supply. Droughts mainly affected smallholder production whose produc-

Output Trends for Key Crops: FTLRP vs. 1990s average

| Crop | Output (000 tons) | | | | | % change vs. 1999 | | |
|--------------|-------------------|---------|--------|--------|------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| | 1990s Ave | 2000 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 | 2000 | 2000 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 |
| Maize | 1,668.6 | 1,476.2 | 750 | 945.0 | -11 | -55 | -55 | -43 |
| Wheat | 219.3 | 225 | 135 | 120 | 3 | -38 | -38 | -45 |
| Small grains | 50 | 83.5 | | | 67 | - | - | - |
| Tobacco | 197.6 | 202.4 | 73.4 | 55 | 2 | -62 | -62 | -72 |
| Cotton | 214.1 | 286.1 | 198 | 270 | 34 | -8 | -8 | 26 |
| Soya beans | 95.5 | 175.1 | 72 | 72 | 84 | -25 | -25 | -25 |
| Groundnuts | 92 | 171.8 | 135 | 57.7 | 87 | -47 | -47 | -37 |
| Sunflower | 36.4 | 15.8 | 20 | 14.0 | -57 | -45 | -45 | -62 |
| Sugar cane | 438.9 | 513.6 | 430 | 446.6 | 17 | -2 | -2 | 2 |
| Tea | 10.6 | 21.8 | 21.2 | 16.7 | 105 | 101 | 101 | 58 |
| Coffee | 8.4 | 7.5 | 10 | 3.6 | -10 | 19 | 19 | -57 |

tivity was reduced by limited access to inputs and poor maize prices, as well as weak agricultural and social support policies, including the lack of international recovery support.

Tobacco, wheat and oilseed production declined due to a reduction in the areas planted on the transferred land, limited financing of new farmers and their limited skills in the immediate production of specialized commodities. Loss and withdrawal of farm machinery and irrigation equipment affected plantings for most crops. Reduced livestock production arose from rapid cattle slaughtering and rustling, limited breeding stocks and limited skills. Another critical factor has been the decline in private agricultural financing, due to negative credit risk ratings, the perceived insecurity of the leasehold land tenure and macro-economic instability.

A fall in the agro-industrial capacity to supply inputs, largely related to forex (foreign exchange) shortages and price controls, affected production of all crops.

The incentives required by farmers were limited by the regulation of agricultural input and output markets. Superior profits were being made from non-farm investments, particularly in parallel forex and commodity markets. State agricultural subsidies and other interventions were limited by resource constraints, forex shortages and discordant policy management. These were also undermined by corrupt practices.

International sanctions and/or isolation, especially the withdrawal of concessional loans and aid and market access instigated and/or exacerbated the deficiencies in agricultural financing that have affected agricultural production in general. International market access and weaker prices specifically affected horticulture, cotton and land uses for wildlife or tourism.

THE WAY FORWARD

Agricultural production can be recuperated in the medium term through a strategy of accommodation in terms of greater inclusion, tenure security and production incentives. A reversal of Zimbabwe's land redistribution is neither politically feasible nor a pre-requisite to recovery. Sustainable land utilization requires key

*AIAS estimates based on various production statistics for GoZ and FAO estimates

land, agricultural and economic policy measures in order to increase agricultural productivity, investment and exports, and to bring stability and confidence to the new land property rights and related laws.

Land acquisition should be brought to a conclusion. Compensation for land improvements should be sped up through policy compliance. Negotiations with the former colonizer should remain open. Land redistribution should be completed by allocating land to the excluded. This includes accommodating white farmers, on the basis of parity rather than privilege; namely, through the 'one person one farm' policy. Farms protected by bi-lateral investment agreements should be speedily cleared, with the policy expectation of increased utilization of their land. The security of leasehold land tenure among 'commercial' farmers can be improved by making leases transferable within a regulated land market and by enabling financial institutions to secure their loans. Land tenure policy should aim to ensure landholding security among all the current landholders and those still to be included.

Agriculture can become sustainable if a coherent agrarian reform strategy is implemented consistently, focusing on the main goal of improving the livelihoods of the majority. Smallholders can play a critical role in future production, if policies are supportive of them. Agricultural price controls, subsidies, and farmer and agro-industrial support should be rationalised to improve production incentives. Foreign exchange management should be rationalised and diverse external financing mobilized.

Addressing Zimbabwe's land and agrarian reform should entail an inclusive national dialogue in search of social justice and reconciliation, based upon equitable land rights, protective laws and accessible land management institutions, with the aim of building towards a democratic future and national development.



The International Food Security Network and ICARRD follow-up

Since 2004, ActionAid International has been implementing the IFSN – International Food Security Network project in partnership with more than 450 local and national civil society organizations from the south, mainly from Africa, along with the collaboration of Ayuda en Acción, FIAN International, and other international organizations.

This project officially started in 2004 and after three years there are already 20 national networks working together in this initiative:

AMERICAS Guatemala (REDSSAG), El Salvador (REDSSAE), Haiti (REN-HASSA), Honduras (SARAH), Nicaragua (GISSAN) and Bolivia (ASSAN-BO)

AFRICA Angola (RSAA), Burkina Faso (ROSSAD), Ethiopia (CFS), Ghana (FoodSPAN), Guiné-Bissau (PLACON-GB), Malawi (FOSANET), Mozambique (ROSA), Uganda (FRA) and The Gambia (IFSNTG)

ASIA Afghanistan (IFSNA), Bangladesh (IFSNBC), Cambodia (CNFSC), Nepal (NAFOS) and Vietnam (CIFPEN)

Marta Antunes

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Tom Pietrasik / ActionAid

IFSN: WHAT IS IT?

Co-funded by the European Commission (EC), the main aim of this project is to create or strengthen national food security networks that facilitate a broad and inclusive dialogue with different civil society organizations that are working to build common lobby and advocacy proposals (at national, regional and international levels) for the implementation of the human right to food in southern countries. This implementation involves creating institutional and legal frameworks, and designing coordinated national inter-ministerial food security policies that favour the poorest of the poor. In this sense, the national networks establish bridges with national governments and international donors as a way to negotiate and monitor national food security related policies and influence law design, as well as to strengthen southern governments' voices in international negotiations.

Aiming to create a broad-ranging dialogue with different sectors linked to food security, the IFSN national networks includes women's movements and organizations, small farmers' movements and organizations, NGOs, PLHA organizations, youth groups and organizations, consumers groups, church groups and research centres. In Africa, Asia and the Americas region, numerous other countries are joining the project and starting their own national processes of network creation/strengthening.

These include: Cabo Verde, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, South Africa, Peru, Paraguay, Ecuador, India, Colombia and Pakistan.

At national level, many of the national networks have created sub-national networks or identified focal organizations to strengthen and facilitate the micro-macro linkages needed to ensure that the voices of people affected by food insecurity and hunger are heard, and that innovative and adapted technologies and experiences can be identified. This accumulated knowledge can then be shared at national and international level within the networks and with national governments in order to influence and improve food security related policies and programs.

Taking advantage of the different countries involved, this project has a strong component of south-south shared learning, sub-regional networking and internationally coordinated lobby actions.

Since 2006, a strong move towards strengthening the regional level has been made through initiatives to enhance the micro-macro linkages. In Centro America region, in close collaboration with Ayuda en Acción and La Via Campesina, a sub-regional network was created – RedCASSAN – that includes networks in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras. In Africa, the African Portuguese Speaking Countries Network was

recently launched and Southern African countries are also beginning to develop various linkage projects. In the Andean region of the Americas, negotiations are under way to establish a sub-regional network for food security.

At the international level, several coordinated actions have been developed to translate local and national demands into concrete proposals at international forums. Here we wish to highlight in particular the intervention made at FAO (United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture) concerning access and control over natural resources and rural development. Working mainly within the UN system, we have extended our cooperation and dialogue initiatives to international small farmers' movements like Via Campesina and to the IPC (International Planning Committee) in order to strengthen the voices from the South.

WHY FAO AS A FOCUS OF IFSN ACTION?

FAO was created in 1945 with the mandate to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity, better the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy (http://www.fao.org/UNFAO/about/mandate_en.html). Due to the neo-liberal economic policies implemented in the 1980s and 90s, the UN system became clearly disempowered. In the case of agricultural trade, for example, UNCTAD and FAO almost entirely lost the role

they were supposed to have in terms of international regulation. The same has happened in terms of the promotion of programmes and policies in support of small-scale agriculture and the fight against hunger – ironically, a clear part of FAO's mandate since its inception.

Recognizing this situation, smallholder farmers' movements and other international civil society organizations have always been engaged in the discussions inside FAO. It is important to note that this organization is still an arena for building international agreements between the more than 180 member states with the aim of promoting food security and better livelihoods, in particular for the rural areas where 70% of people suffering from hunger are located.

Considering the sort of support to countries that FAO can give by providing information and technical assistance, as well as advice to national governments on issues related to food security and the right to food, since 2004 ActionAid has used FAO as a space for foregrounding the demands and proposals of IFSN's national networks, as well as those of other partner organizations around the globe. As 'access to land' was the major common problem identified in all countries participating in IFSN, we based our initial work with FAO around this issue. The priority for our policy work was clear: bring land back to the international policy discussions and government's agenda.

IFSN'S ROLE IN ICARRD AND THE ICARRD FOLLOW-UP PROCESS

In 2004, the International Food Security Network organized a seminar in Valencia (Spain) where the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) was announced and discussed. As is known, the International Conference was organized in Brazil, in March 2006, more than 20 years after the previous FAO conference on these issues.

As a result of the seminar, a specific land platform was created – www.land.tenure.info – and IFSN was invited to co-organize ICARRD, presenting four case studies (Mozambique, Ethiopia, Uganda and Nepal) at the official conference. The national networks, with the support of the ActionAid offices in their countries, engaged in a deep consultation process at local and national level to produce these case studies. Special attention was given to the mobilization of women's groups and to their major concerns over ownership and control of land and natural resources.

Prior to the conference, ActionAid and the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture organized a seminar to analyze the proposal for ICARRD's final declaration and to make various recommendations designed to guarantee that women's rights to access and control land were assured in the final declaration. ActionAid International was the only NGO focusing specifically on women's rights to land to take part in the conference: we held a 'Women's Rights To Land' seminar during the Parallel Civil Society Forum. Both the seminars and the case studies contributed to generating a broad alliance towards lobbying on Women's rights to land and natural resources and were crucial to what we consider to be a very good declaration from a women's rights perspective. A delegation of IFSN and ActionAid was present in ICARRD, involving 14 countries: Pakistan, The Gambia, South Africa, Malawi, Uganda, India, Nepal, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Bolivia, Brazil, Nicaragua, Honduras and Senegal. This regional balance was crucial in terms of lobbying the regional representatives on the drafting committee of the ICARRD declaration.



WHAT IS RELEVANT IN THIS DECLARATION?

The final ICARRD declaration was probably the most progressive ever achieved at an FAO conference. The declaration clearly states that Agrarian Reform is necessary to fight poverty and hunger, and recognizes the existence of different forms of tenure, as well as the links between rural development, the environment and the traditional rights of indigenous peoples, extractivists and fishing communities. It also reaffirmed the important role played by women and the necessity of removing all forms of gender discrimination.

Relation between agrarian reform and the fight for food security and poverty alleviation

"We, the Member States, gathered at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), hosted by the Government of Brazil, strongly believe in the essential role of agrarian reform and rural development to promote sustainable development, which includes, inter alia, the realization of human rights, food security, poverty eradication, and the strengthening of social justice, on the basis of the democratic rule of law." (ICARRD Final Declaration, para. 1, March 2006)

Relation between access to natural resources, hunger and poverty alleviation

"We reaffirm that wider, secure and sustainable access to land, water and other natural resources related to rural people's livelihoods, especially, inter alia, women, indigenous, marginalized and vulnerable groups, is essential to hunger and poverty eradication, contributes to sustainable development and should therefore be an inherent part of national policies." (ICARRD Final Declaration, para. 6, March 2006)

Equitable rights to land and related resources

"We recognize that laws should be designed and revised to ensure that rural women are accorded full and equal rights to land and other resources, including through the right to inheritance, and administrative reforms and other necessary measures should be undertaken to give women the same

right as men to credit, capital, labour rights, legal identification documents, appropriate technologies and access to markets and information." (ICARRD Final Declaration, para. 7, March 2006)

Diversity of groups (other natural resources)

"We recognize that policies and practices for broadening and securing sustainable and equitable access to and control over land and related resources and the provision of rural services should be examined and revised in a manner that fully respects the rights and aspirations of rural people, women and vulnerable groups, including forest, fishery, indigenous and traditional rural communities, enabling them to protect their rights, in accordance with national legal frameworks." (ICARRD Final Declaration, para. 14, March 2006)

"We recognize the need to ensure fishing, forest, mountain and other unique communities' rights and their access to fishing, forest and mountain areas and other unique environments within the framework of sustainable management of natural resources." (ICARRD Final Declaration, para. 26, March 2006)

Participation of all groups

"We emphasize therefore that such policies and practices should promote economic, social and cultural rights, in particular of women, marginalized and vulnerable groups. In this context, agrarian reform and rural development policies and institutions should involve stakeholders, including those producing under individual, communal and collective land tenure systems, as well as fishing and forest communities, among others, in relevant administrative and judicial decision-making and implementation processes in accordance with national legal frameworks." (ICARRD Final Declaration, para. 15, March 2006)

Why is the ICARRD follow-up process so important?

Despite the strongly worded paragraphs presented above, the follow-up actions were not clearly defined in this declaration, and the process now denominated as ICARRD follow-up has

been passed on to the next session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to be held in 2006.

In November 2006, nine months after the ICARRD declaration had been signed by 96 member states of FAO, the Committee of Food Security met in Rome at FAO's headquarters, 10 years after the World Food Summit. At the Rome meeting, FAO member states recognized that hunger was not set to be halved by 2015, despite their earlier commitments, due to a lack of political will. They also recognized the need to introduce concrete policies at national level to reduce the number of people suffering from hunger in the world. However, at this same meeting, the same member states that had signed the ICARRD declaration in March 2006 in Brazil failed to give priority to this discussion, despite clear evidence that the denial of access and control over natural resources and the lack of adequate rural development policies comprises one of the main causes for the prevalence of hunger in southern countries, and its increase in some of them, as well as constituting one of the main violations of the human right to food in these regions.

After trying to push ICARRD off the agenda, the chair of the session transferred ICARRD follow-up to another FAO meeting – the Committee on Agriculture (COAG).

IFSN national networks combined forces to keep ICARRD follow-up alive on the COAG agenda and in some of the southern countries where links and alliances with national EC delegations and national FAO representatives were already established. Letters were sent demanding the EC and FAO to keep this issue on the agenda and to deliver concrete follow-up actions. Ministers of Agriculture – the national government representatives at FAO Rome – were also visited by the national network coordinators in order to sensitize them to their role in influencing this Committee and ensuring that its interventions reinforce the national network demands.

The result was that the COAG final text relating to ICARRD read as follows: “In considering the outcome and follow-up of ICARRD, the Committee recalled the importance of agrarian reform and rural development and the significant role of FAO in this matter.

Deciding to:

- Request the Secretariat (that is FAO) to submit, when presenting the Report of the 20th Session of COAG to the 132nd Session of The Council in June 2007, information on the cross-sectoral treatment by FAO of agrarian reform and rural development, with clearly defined functional responsibilities and points of contact;
- Request the Secretariat to provide an overview of:
 - the existing and ongoing activities of FAO on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development;
 - the capacities of the Regional Offices to deal with the issue of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development;
 - FAO technical cooperation programmes on this matter;
 - Cost estimates for possible implementation by FAO of recommendation contained in Paragraph 30 of ICARRD Declaration (that is how FAO will assist Member countries revive regional rural development and agrarian reform centres).

The overview is to be submitted as an Information document to the Conference, in November 2007, and to be considered by the 134th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2008.

- Request the Secretariat to propose the inclusion in the draft Agendas for the Regional Conferences and as and where appropriate, the issue of agrarian reform and rural development and ICARRD follow-up.”

Should we let this agenda die?

Despite being signed by member states, many overly ‘sensitive’ international declarations and resolutions end up ‘in the drawer.’ This is what happened to the ‘Campesino Letter’ of 1979, 23 years before ICARRD when the last FAO conference addressing this issue was held.

In relation to the COAG final text, it is clear that the inclusion of ICARRD follow-up on the agendas of Regional Conferences is open to negotiation. IFSN and ActionAid are working towards alliance building at regional level in order to ‘Keep ICARRD follow-up alive.’ For this to happen, dialogue with important actors such as ROPPA, La Via Campesina, World March of Women, and women’s organizations within mixed social movements and organizations is taking place, as well as sensitization at national level by national networks on the importance of keeping this agenda alive.

Although these conferences have no binding power, it is important to mobilize actions towards these regional conferences in order to keep ICARRD follow-up as a discussion point on their agendas. So please keep these dates on your agenda as well:

Twenty-Ninth Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC)

1 > 5 March 2008
Egypt

Twenty-Fifth Regional Conference for Africa (ARC)

31 March > 4 April 2008
Kenya

Thirtieth Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC)

14 >18 April 2008
Brazil

Twenty-Ninth Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC)

19 > 23 May 2008
Pakistan

Twenty-Sixth Regional Conference for Europe (ERC)

23 - 27 June 2008
Austria

proposals in those spaces open to our participation. Especially in the context of FAO reform and the pressure from some member states for cost reduction, the day-by-day work in Rome is essential in terms of advancing the agenda set out in the declaration.

- To download the ICARRD final declaration, please visit www.icarrd.org
- To know more about IFSN project, please visit www.ifsn-actionaid.net

Besides the conferences, the work at national level, in particular within G-77 countries that maintain a clear position in favour of ICARRD follow-up, is crucial in terms of various ICARRD follow-up demands. Using the declaration to strengthen existing demands from the groups regarding access to natural resources is a way of ensuring FAO support to these countries in particular. Another important front of ICARRD follow-up is located in Rome within FAO: here civil society participation is crucial to maintaining our ‘watchdog’ role and to negotiating concrete



RCSA / Mozambique



Miguel Malta

Networking for food security in cities: Placing urban agriculture on the policy agenda

Although it might seem unnatural, it is common to find farmers and agricultural activities in most cities of the world. Urban farmers can feed themselves and make food available to others, promoting food security in cities. This activity can help to cope with food crisis situations, and contribute to the household economy. Urban farmers are closer to markets, a distinct advantage in countries that lack adequate food conservation and transport infrastructures. Urban agriculture can supply households with fresh products, improving diets, both in quantity and in quality.

It is important to stress that there are not only advantages to this activity: since land is a scarce resource in cities, urban farmers tend to intensify their production systems, and this intensification can have serious consequences for human health.

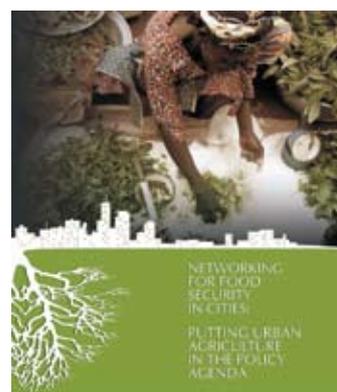
Quality water is difficult to find in the urban contexts of the South, and most city farmers use contaminated water sources, as well as sewage water, to irrigate their small plots. Urban agriculture can contribute to the spread of well known diseases, such as malaria and diarrhoea; the concentration of poultry and livestock near urban settlements and the use of 'free range systems' further exacerbate these problems.

Regardless of these negative aspects, the development of sustainable urban agricultural activities can be highly effective in promoting food security in cities. The problem is that urban agriculture is often ignored or disregarded by governments, organisations and policies as an important tool in assuring food security. This limits its success in fighting hunger and improving the life of the poor in the developing world's rapidly growing cities.

There is an urgent need to discuss food security in cities, placing urban agriculture on the policy agenda. This could be done by establishing opportunities to promote analyses, discussions and advocacy activities at various levels (local, national and global), with the involvement of urban farmers (men and women) and their organisations, NGOs, local governments and other interested institutions, covering topics such as: the political, economical, social and environmental dimensions of urban agriculture; access to land, water and other agricultural resources; access to appropriate technologies and markets; good urban agricultural practices; food safety, nutrition and health; gender issues; and the risks and potentialities of urban agriculture.



In Tamale, a small but growing metropolis in Northern Ghana, a group of organisations initiated a process that culminated in the development of a regional network for supporting initiatives related to urban agriculture. The main goal of URBANET-NG is to "contribute to poverty reduction among agricultural workers and urban dwellers through sound agricultural and environmental practices." It is a diversified and open network including 18 members: farmer associations, research/teaching institutions, government agencies and NGOs. This innovative experience has an enormous potential for replication in other contexts in the developing world. Based on this experience, a set of strategies has been proposed to promote food availability and security and a better urban environment. A full report was published and can be downloaded from the IFSN platform.





Kiteleki Muntet (left) and Naimodu Taki

Alex Diang'a / ActionAid

KENYA Maasai Women join forces to protect land and improve food security

For years, the Maasai never owned land. Men are the heads of the household, although women are the ones who deal with real issues. The Maasai culture discriminates greatly against women. Men can sell land without consulting their wives, leaving women and children to suffer.

When the Government of Kenya embarked on land distribution, it was outsiders and Maasai men who were given land. As a result, women walk long distances to fetch water and graze their animals because the nearby ranches are privately owned. In 2004, a group of women got wind that their husbands were planning to sell their land.

The 9600 acres of land were composed of 80 title deeds, each 120 acres in size. Each acre was set to be sold at Ksh 30,000 per acre. With assistance from ActionAid, the women were able to obtain legal advice from lawyers and then seek help from the government, meaning the sale was indeed stopped. Since then, the land advocacy campaign has continued to grow, leading to the formation of a land committee.

This committee requested the government to allow women to sit in the

land board meetings set up to monitor land sales. The committee and the land tribunal then issued a declaration stating that land cannot be sold unless a legal wife is present.

Soon after the declaration, a group of Maasai women teamed up and registered the Nchulla Women's Group, which fights for women's rights, including land issues. With a membership of 16, the group has been trained by ActionAid on issues involving women's rights, children's rights and the importance of land as a resource. Twenty-eight year old Naimodu Taki is among the members of Nchulla Women's Group. When her husband sold trees on their land to charcoal burners without her knowledge, she was lost for words because she knew that while the charcoal burners were working on their land, she would be unable to use it for grazing their animals or for cultivation.

"My husband was given Ksh 500 (US\$ 7) for the trees while the charcoal burner made Ksh 6000 (US\$ 85) and we remained hungry with no food or land for the animals to graze on for almost six months", says the soft-spoken mother of six.

But when she shared her predicament with other women in her group, she acquired courage and mobilized them to chase the charcoal burners off their land. Together with her co-wife, the two women are now able to graze and cultivate their land.

"ActionAid has raised our awareness. We now know to say no when our rights are infringed," says Taki, adding, *"We are now able to protect our land and cultivate it whenever we want."*

But Taki is not the only woman facing land problems in Narok. Twenty-year old Kiteleki Muntet's husband wanted to sell their 25 hectare landholding, when she got wind of it. Having gone through the awareness training provided by ActionAid, she and her co-wife successfully blocked the transaction. *"I am glad the transaction was stopped because we are able to produce food for our family,"* says the mother of four. *"Awareness has been created and women are able to put to task their husbands whenever they do things out of the ordinary that may affect their livelihood,"* says Magdalene Setia, ActionAid Kenya's Programme Coordinator in Narok.



Stephen Hiley

Munjila Begum from the Rajanigandha self-help group
(female circle)

BANGLADESH The journey towards self-help groups

“Economic solvency not only provides food for living, it also boosts a person’s social dignity. Economic independence brings them due respect and importance, both in the family and society. I realised this from my own life experience,” says Munjila Begum from the Rajanigandha self-help group in Satkhira. Just a couple of years back, group members were unable to afford two square meals a day; now they are a unique example of a group of women entrepreneurs. Munjila started her small shrimp cultivation business with a loan from the collective, formed in a remote village of Satkhira in 2004. Now she is an icon of success and occasionally a mentor for other group members. She is contemplating the idea of running in the upcoming UP (local governing body) election and working for the rights of the people in her area. An innovative approach to empowerment, the self-help group has introduced a remarkable dimension into an era dominated by micro-credit in Bangladesh. ActionAid initially launched the idea of self-help groups in 2004, realising that where there is a lack of adequate services, promoting people’s rights must include a comprehensive initiative towards poverty eradication. Hence, the aim was to provide poor and

marginalised people with a sustainable economic livelihood through increased access to employment and job training, while raising their understanding of the issues involved. ActionAid implemented the project in three areas (Satkhira, Kurigram and Patuakhali districts) through its partner organizations (Uttaran, Zibika and Speed Trust). The project covers 1200 households, spread across 48 groups. Among these, 31 are female groups. Serious adversities exist in the current micro-credit programmes for the poor and the past experiences of their users are far from happy. ActionAid has worked to facilitate the process of building poor people’s organisations, convinced that these can create sustainable livelihood options for their members, while establishing their political space, developing their skills and potential, and asserting their rights over resources. Such organisations can also help increase poor people’s bargaining power and indeed can become highly successful enterprises. Their uniqueness lies in the fact that they are managed and led by the group members themselves, making them true examples of democratic organisation with equal participation of women in decision-making processes.

ActionAid encourages the active participation of the people with which it works, believing that the directly affected populations have the best knowledge about their situation, deeper awareness of the crisis and the ‘know-how’ to resolve their dilemma. Acting on this belief, ActionAid and its partners perform the role of facilitator in empowering the self-help group members as the key players. Starting with the selection of villages and target households for group membership using Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, the programme participants took the lead at every step. These included: identifying livelihood profiles through wealth ranking, identifying livelihood options, promoting skills training, entrepreneurship and market support and management, developing links with existing livelihood support mechanisms, and implementing advocacy initiatives. People were encouraged to identify and analyse their own problems instead of being provided with pre-set indicators and alternative livelihood components. The households in the selected areas were hugely indebted to various organisations and local money lenders. ActionAid relieved the debt of the group members by providing each group with a certain amount

of seed money deposited in a bank account. The group owns this fund, manages its capital, lends money to its members, keeps its members' savings and reinvests according to their own internal regulations. They are provided with financial management training to perform the job competently. Analysing proposals from individual group members, the executive teams sanction loans and arrange training courses covering the various income generating activities. Unlike the high interest rate micro-credit programmes, the group members pay only 5% interest and schedule the loan repayments according to their own convenience. Besides the seed capital, each group saves a certain amount as an insurance or safeguard against future disasters or mishaps. The group members are engaged in agriculture, small trade, shrimp cultivation, poultry breeding and so on. They also take on joint business initiatives as a group. "As a joint initiative, we have taken a four year lease on a body of water measuring 21,000 m² and started shrimp farming and forestry," says a member of the Shapla male circle. It was realising the importance of access to land rights that led them to take this initiative. Apart from the livelihood initiatives, the groups analyse and identify rights abuses that constrain people's options for a sustainable livelihood, as well as activities destructive to biodiversity and ecology, and work to ensure the availability of public services such as water and electricity supplies, infrastructure projects and the promotion of advocacy-related works. The achievements of the groups are huge in each area. "Even a few days back, 95% of the village's children did not go to school. Now all of them do. We have built an office with the first savings of our circle and allocated a portion of it to the school. We named it 'Pathshala'," says Amal Krishna Majhhi, president of the Shapla male circle. Safe latrine facilities are

available in every house from Burigoalini Kachhari village, something that was once no more than a utopian dream. The group members also rebuilt roads in the area and obtained Vulnerable Group Development and Vulnerable Group Fund cards, old age pensions, and widow allowances from the Union Parishod (UP).

The Shapla circle has won the best circle award among the 21 circles and is cited as an prime example of a committed group of people whose work stimulates others to replicate its experiences. They have realised that political empowerment will enable them to become part of society's decision-making processes and therefore wish to contest the next UP election. If their representative is elected as chairman, they will gain the opportunity to become involved in developing their area and further promoting the welfare of its people. "We were in the dark and have now been exposed to the light of hope. We want to go forward with it and build our own destiny. Poverty engulfed us from head to toe and we have been able to liberate ourselves through our own effort. Now we feel confident to fight hard to have our representative in the local governing body," says Gobinda Prashad Majhhi of the Shapla circle. After completing a phase of nine months, the groups are set to form federations and acquire individual registration. The main objective of the federation is to improve the socio-economic condition and position of each self-help group by creating relationships between themselves and to be self-reliant and sustainable as an autonomous body. A network, 'Prantajan' (The Marginalised People), has also been formed to promote and practice the idea of the self-help group. The members of the self-help groups and federations living in the remote corners of the country and deprived of the light of literacy have proved the words of Confucius: "Mankind is as big as its hope."



Shapla men circle

Monisha Biswas / ActionAid



Shapla men circle

Monisha Biswas / ActionAid



Schrimp farm in Satkhira district

Pabitra Kumar Basu / ActionAid



Rahela Begum from Chotabalia circle, Munshiganj district

Pabitra Kumar Basu / ActionAid



BRAZIL ActionAid encourages experience exchange between men and women family farmers

In a background in which socio-environmental degradation has become evident and concerns with sustainability play an emphatic role in current debates, the search for alternatives that enhance the overcoming of social inequalities and of the deprecation of natural resources is considered as the central issue in this debate.

ActionAid believes that this will not merely be achieved through the way of conventional knowledge, as postulated by the defenders of new technologies, who regard genetically modified organisms and the double green revolution as the way out for agricultural and/or social problems. We believe that, if the present social exclusion processes and the degradation of the natural resources base which sustains agriculture persist, the food security of the whole society might be compromised in a relatively short term. Thus, ActionAid has been increasing their investment in Agroecology for we believe that, among the alternatives reproduced in Brazil and also internationally which counterpoise to the agricultural and technological degradation model, an agroecological orientation contributes to reducing and/or overcoming part of the social

and environmental problems through productive methods, techniques and processes more compatible with the objectives of a sustainable agricultural model.

This model is not established through income and technology packets, rather through constructed experiences based on the local practices of family farmers. Therefore, agroecological initiatives bring with them the valuing and the incorporation of accumulated know-how, knowledge and experience of men and women farmers, combining them with academic knowledge engaged in sustainable agriculture.

The "Farmer to Farmer" project valuing experience exchange processes

During the last two years, ActionAid has been implementing the project "*Farmer to farmer knowledge dissemination: exchanging experiences and strengthening the agroecological movement*" by its partner organisations in rural areas, with the purpose of contributing to the widening of the agroecological perspective. The project's main objective is to strengthen agroecological processes by enhancing and valuing experience

interchanges between men and women farmers and between these and technicians.

There are 12 rural entities involved in this process, which are ActionAid partners: AS-PTA, in the Paraíba State; SASOP and MOC, in Bahia; CTA and CAA, in Minas Gerais, COMSEF, CONVIVER and AQCC, in Pernambuco; ESPLAR, in Ceará; and ASSEMA, MIQCB and MST, in Maranhão.

AS-PTA: Assistance and services for alternative agriculture projects

SASOP: Assistance services to rural people's organisations

MOC: Community organisation movement

CTA: Centre for alternative technology

CAA: Centre for alternative agriculture

COMSEF: Community seeding the future

CONVIVER: Living together in Sertão

AQCC: Quilombola association of Conceição das Crioulas

ESPLAR: Centre for research and assistance

ASSEMA: Assistance in settlement areas in Maranhão

MIQCB: Interstate movement of women Babaçu coconut breakers

MST: Landless rural workers' movement

"I am a woman farmer, and am very proud of it, and to be able to talk about my experiences with other farmers and organisations is very important for me. This is why I am really enjoying these meetings. Through them I learn and I teach. I feel empowered knowing people who have the same problems as I do and who search for solutions".
Severina Dias, 60 years-old, farmer in Pernambuco

"I am very happy to be able to share my experiences in these meetings. I am also excited to hear about the experiences of other farmers. I learn a lot from that. I feel fulfilled through that and very eager to participate more and to learn more. I have also learnt a lot from the document of other men and women farmers."
Ismael de Sousa, 19 years-old, farmer in Pernambuco.

All these organisations work from an agroecological perspective, despite their different locations, themes and forms. Each of them has different methodological experiences, techniques and practices which are being implemented by family farming. The exchange of these experiences with other organisations and men and women farmers strengthens the work of those directly involved in agroecological processes, as well as of those participating in similar experiences.

This project is carried out through meetings for exchanging technical and organisational experiences between men and women farmers and between these and men and women technicians. In May 2007, ActionAid conducted an activity in the semi-arid region of the Paraíba State involving 70 people, consisting of men and women farmers and technicians from partner organisations. The importance of these interchanges for the organisations and for the men and women farmers involved was the object of reflexion of this activity. Each organisation explained the way they carry out interchange meetings and presented their results. Another part of this activity were the field visits, through which the participants had the chance of knowing experiences of farmers who manage community gardens, underground dams, organic cultivation and small animal breeding. The participants also visited a fair of agroecological products and got acquainted with the organisational experiences of the rural labour unions of the region.

Lessons learned

This and other meetings promoted by the project have taught us that, by bringing people and their work into contact, experience interchanges contribute to the construction of



Ana Paula Lopes Ferreira / ActionAid

identities, strengthening the feeling of belonging to a group and erasing isolation. We have also learnt that experience interchanges favour the dissemination of knowledge among men and women farmers, enhancing self-esteem and individual and collective empowerment within a context of greater social equity.

Although it still has a long path to run, the project "Farmer to farmer knowledge dissemination" has contributed to strengthen the Brazilian agroecological movement, as it enables collective reflexion and knowledge and experience exchange moments involving men and women farmers, social movements and entities engaged in building Agroecology.

Let's redream
our world



The personal is political

Women's Rights and the Right to Food

Actions concerning the Right to Food should be inclusive of the specific demands which have been made by ActionAid regarding Women's Rights. We have been working jointly with the Right to Food theme both at international and regional levels towards the promotion of the right of women to natural resources since 2005. Access to land has been a key-component in our demands and policies.

Natural resources are today considered as a key-element in political and social struggles especially affecting a "new rurality". Reviewing the concept of rural identity as part of the struggle to reinforce the rights of women and men farmers is an important aspect of this debate. In rural agriculture it is the woman who selects the seeds, stores them and exchanges them with other women in order to try them at home.

The issue of access to and control over natural resources has created room for simultaneously working on the themes of the right to food and women's rights. The land market is developing in several forms in almost every country of Latin America. In Honduras, for instance, the Project of Access to Land (PACTA), a programme which emerged as part of the Strategy to Combat Poverty by the Honduran Government, is presently being implemented. The cost of this project per benefited family is of US\$ 12,844 and it includes credit for buying land, funds for the capitalisation of the company and the provision of technical assistance.

The lack of support and backing for the development of productive capacity and the possible absence of links with the national economy in its whole are obstacles which have hindered poverty reduction among the women and men beneficiaries in many cases.

It is necessary to recognise that there are very strong patriarchal structures and attitudes which prevent women from having access to land property.

In many cultures wives and daughters are seen as properties themselves. Thus, the challenge is not only to publicly denounce such inequalities, but also to

recover in our struggle the idea of the agency of women, their capacities, their values, their contributions, their voices, their testimonies. It is necessary to recover the processes which create room for women to speak up for themselves, to make their own choices and to be able to transform their societies.

International calls for the right to adequate food must be an instrument to reinforce the civic and political rights of women and to consolidate the fulfilment of legislation which promotes equality for women within public and private spheres.

Women are discriminated against regarding inheritances and widowhood, which has terrible consequences in their dignity and well-being and that of their sons and daughters. At a wider level, discrimination against women regarding the access to natural resources is contributing to a scenario of human and food insecurity, violence and environmental degradation.

In the work for Women's Rights we face several forms of resistance and/or indifference from the part of political leaders, legislators, administrative workers in governments and also from civil society movements and organisations. The elimination of these forms of discrimination has led us to create prompt analyses and specific demands.

But beyond these more concrete realities it is especially interesting to apprehend the symbols which remain in the rural world and which we should also defy through international campaigns and our actions.

My participation in a farmer to farmer dialogue, organized by ActionAid in May 2007 in Paraíba (Brazil), was important to deepen the common understanding about how to reinforce women's rights in initiatives within the Right to Food theme.

Sexuality plays a very important role in women's entry into work. The idea of lasciviousness is prompted into the imaginary of women and men and this affects women's possibilities to organise themselves, participate and bring merit to their own work. *"If I go out for a meeting, then my husband thinks that I am*

going out to have fun" - said a fellow women farmer regarding her inability to participate in events, meetings and campaigns.

In several occasions I could feel the pride of women when talking about their salary and their power. Women regarded and stated their salary with much pride because it provided them with more authority before their peers from their family and from their community. Some argue that they work for necessity since their children migrated to the city or since their husband died or got ill.

This argument does not defy man's incapacity and women's salary is mostly used to cover these needs and services which were previously provided by the state.

What is interesting is that more women are talking as

with it very serious costs. Many men farmers admit having trouble getting used to seeing their wives outside their homes. Dona Rosa said: *"I only began working when my husband died, but now my daughter and her husband do not have these problems"*. We can see that the new generations start making a different sense out of this and change traditional roles.

Finally, I hope that these reflections can help us building that new cultural consonance regarding the idea of an alternative world where there is no gender inequality. As members of a group of social activists, we all should take on in our agendas the right of women to natural resources.

"The worst realities of our age are manufactured realities. It is therefore our task, as creative participants in the universe to redream our world. The fact of possessing imagination means that everything can be redreamed. Each reality can have its alternative possibilities. Human beings are blessed with the necessity of transformation".

(Ben Okri, *A Way of Being Free*. Guernsey Press. Channel Islands 1997)

agents regarding a certain form of control and power when they say *"I buy this, I plant that, we manage, etc."*. In Queimadas, in the Paraíba state in Brazil, where we went for a field visit, the labour union was led by women. They do not only provide assistance in their homes and communities, but they also go out to work, manage seeds, manage credit, etc. They often acquire more rights in the community than in their own home. This reshapes power relations between women and men.

The nostalgia of women at home and the weight of the family were also recurring issues. The massive introduction of women in the productive field brings

The international calls for food security and the Hunger Free campaign allow us to develop the intersectoral aspect of these elements, but there still is a long path to run in order to turn this theme into a central one in the public agenda. The challenge is to create room for Women's Rights in each area we work in, to transversalise this issue in our campaigns and agendas and to encourage other fellow men and women to conduct gender analyses in their work.



The HungerFREE Campaign

The HungerFREE Campaign has been launched! In the last couple of months, national launches have taken place in India, Senegal, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Brazil, Pakistan, the Gambia, Thailand, Nigeria, Mozambique, Bangladesh and many other countries. Thousands of people have been engaged in these launches, with demonstrations, marches, music festivals and opportunities to rally for the right to food.

We have also launched the campaign internationally at the UN. In July we presented HungerFREE to government officials and diplomats participating in the UN Economic and Social Forum's Annual Ministerial Review (AMR). Even UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was briefed about our campaign! ActionAid colleagues from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana and Cambodia followed the presentation of reports by their governments. We also participated in the Civil Society Development Forum and introduced the campaign to keenly interested audiences.

Our international work in 2007 will focus on the UN General Assembly (September – December) where we are fighting for a strengthened resolution on the right to food, and for much more attention to be shown from member States to the global hunger situation. The draft text for a stronger resolution has been sent to country programmes who have been asked to meet with their Department of Foreign Affairs to lobby for these improvements.



HungerFree Campaign / ActionAid

Over ten country programmes are directly involved in the work at the UN General Assembly, providing case studies and delegates.

The HungerFREE activities are also planned at national level, and our hope is that country programmes will be able to campaign and divulge information in national capital cities during the General Assembly. The UN, as a collection of states, has presided over a global failure in relation to the right to food. If current trends persist, there will be 950 million undernourished people in the world by 2015, over 440 million more than the 1996 World Food Summit pledge, and 280 million more than the 2000 Millennium Declaration pledge. Given this shocking situation, we are inviting supporters of the right to food to write a message on paper plates that will be presented to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The paper plates have been sent to all country programmes. In addition there is a dynamic HungerFREE site at www.hungerfreeplanet.org where visitors can take action by posting a

message demanding the right to food, which will later be delivered to Ban Ki-moon. It is important for us to promote this on-line action centre and encourage as many people as possible to join our campaign.

On the domestic front, ActionAid has been engaged in capacity building activities. Our objective is to mobilize people on their right to food and demand that States fulfil their obligations through every possible means, including new public policies specially set up for this purpose.

One of ActionAid's main objectives is to support civil society organisations in developing countries, helping them to contribute effectively to securing the realization of the right to adequate food. Civil society organizations are usually very close to the vulnerable groups suffering directly from the consequences of governmental failure to secure the right to food. This approach is shared by FAO's Right to Food Unit, whose coordinator,

HungerFree Campaign / ActionAid



Barbara Ekwall, has stressed that “[t]he principal strength of civil society organizations lies in their mobilization power, their linkage to the grassroots level and their legitimacy in speaking on behalf of those whose human rights are violated. Civil society organizations play an essential role in awareness building on the right to food and in creating the political will necessary to bring about change. As political commitments are made, these organisations will have a crucial role in ensuring that these translate into concrete action. They will draw the attention of governments and stakeholders on the Right to Food Guidelines accepted by FAO members in 2004, which are a practical tool to this end. Finally, civil society organisations should introduce a right to food perspective into their own development work, piloting the paradigm shift from assistance to a human rights-based approach.”

ActionAid is supporting several civil society networks through the International Food Security Network project (IFSN) to provide its local partners with the training and support needed to undertake assessments on fulfilment of the right to adequate food in their countries, and subsequently contribute to the global mobilization through HungerFREE.

A complete assessment involves reviewing the individual State’s public policies and institutions, along with the fulfilment of its obligations to protect promote and implement the right to food. This includes assessing whether the State has taken immediate steps to respect, protect and fulfil this right, and whether policies and institutions contribute to its progressive realization.

Once the assessment has been carried out, civil society organizations will possess documented information that can be used by the HungerFREE campaign to raise public awareness about the State’s performance on the right to food issue and its fulfilment of related obligations, establish specific demands related to concrete cases of violations in order to put a stop to them, and encourage change on the part of national authorities.

At the end of ActionAid’s training program and the practical experience gained during this exercise, civil society organizations and networks will be more prepared and motivated to monitor the realization of the right to food by State authorities on a continuous basis.

As a development and campaigning organization, our aim is to foster civil society’s capacity to intervene and advocate for concrete changes at the local and global levels. HungerFREE is up and running in pursuit of this goal and working to ensure governments respect their obligations to all of us.

Further information about the campaign can be found at www.hungerfreeplanet.org. To learn more about training and IFSN initiatives, visit www.ifsn-actionaid.net

THE RIGHT TO FOOD UNIT AT FAO AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Barbara Ekwall: “The FAO Right to Food Unit supports member countries in their efforts to realize the right to food and implement the Right to Food Guidelines. Our activities span from the elaboration of methods and tools to advocacy, policy advice, information, training and capacity development. An active participation of CSOs in these efforts is indispensable. The very comprehensive methodologies developed by FAO, like for instance the legislation framework, the right to food assessment, the guides on monitoring and budgeting, can be - and some are being - adapted by civil society organizations for their own use. Extensive information on this and other issues related to the right to food can be found on www.fao.org/righttofood. Finally, civil society organisations could take advantage of the overall framework provided by the Right to Food Guidelines, which reflect an international consensus and can serve as basis for interaction with governments.”

“This training was like an awakening of consciousness to our rights, not only the right to food but also other rights. It increased my responsibility in raising awareness about, and improving, the right to food.” (Participant from Mozambique in the anonymous evaluation of the training.)

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and injustice together.

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