

Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2010

Executive Summary

In 2010 the global situation of the right to food and nutrition is dire. The consequences of the climate, energy, financial and food price crises have been felt around the world. These crises are closely related and have had adverse impacts on the enjoyment of the right to adequate food and nutrition. While member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have spent unprecedented amounts to prevent the collapse of financial institutions, only few billions were approved by the same countries to foster food security and nutrition. These contributions are certainly important, but they are nothing compared to what was mobilized for the bailout of the banking system.

At the same time, these crises provoked a shift in investment trends; since last year, massive amounts of land in developing countries have been bought or leased by foreign entities. These faulty investments often lead to land conflicts, forced evictions and increase in the price of land, water and other natural resources. Such processes contribute to violations of human rights and the increasing difficulties faced by the people who depend on land for their livelihoods, such as smallholder farmers, indigenous groups, and pastoralists. Given the magnitude of these investments, they are undermining the right to food and nutrition of hundreds of thousands of people across the world.

Actions and decisions that fail to take human rights obligations into account are among the leading causes of the persistence, and even the rise, of hunger in the world. In 2009, for the first time in history, the number of undernourished people surpassed the one billion mark, and there is no sign that this unacceptably high number will be reduced any time soon. At the current pace, it will be impossible to achieve the first of the Millennium Development Goals to halve the percentage of undernourished people in the world by 2015 without a profound change in national and global policies and governance.

The Right to Food and Nutrition Watch is published annually by Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) and FIAN International, in partnership with the African Network on the Right to Food (ANoRF), DanChurchAid (DCA), the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), Habitat International Coalition (HIC), the Inter-American Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development (PIDHDD), the Observatory - Economic, social and cultural rights, the People's Health Movement (PHM), Rights & Democracy (R&D), the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The Watch intends to monitor food security and nutrition policies from a human rights perspective and to detect and document violations and situations that increase the likelihood of violations, as well as the non implementation of human rights obligations and policy failures.

This year's edition of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch is divided into two parts:

- a) The first contains a number of articles providing updates on the different policy responses to the world's financial, food and nutritional crises. Special attention is paid to the global governance of the world food system and to the practice of land grabbing.
- b) The second is composed of country examples and vividly illustrates cases of the violation of the right to food and nutrition. This year, it focuses mainly on cases involving land grabbing activities in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Key messages of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2010

The international community's response to the food and nutrition crisis demonstrates that there is a broad consensus that **new governance mechanisms are needed** to fight hunger. The reform of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has created new opportunities for addressing key causes of hunger and for guiding international actions towards more inclusive and effective strategies for food security and nutrition.

However, the **reform of the CFS will become a success only if:**

- (a) The committee is accepted by governments, international organizations and civil society as the designated platform for policy coordination and decisions – as a kind of World Food Security Council;

(b) Governments implement the decision to elaborate a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF) through a participatory process at the national, regional and global levels and based on the human rights framework;

c) The principle of accountability is endorsed by establishing a monitoring mechanism at the CFS that will assess national policies and international cooperation using indicators proposed by the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the right to adequate food;

d) The civil society organizations (CSOs) mechanism is put in place in October 2010 with proper funding and an inclusive participatory process.

Profound and necessary policy changes should also embody a new way of **mainstreaming nutrition into global strategies to overcome hunger**. Problems related to food security, nutrition, and health must be seen and tackled in a comprehensive and integrated way. This becomes evident when trying to address the right to food and nutrition of people living with HIV and AIDS for example. The best way to mainstream nutrition dimensions in the global food security context is to strengthen the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) and to ensure that nutrition remains high on the agenda of the CFS. Moreover, the current paradigm debate over a human rights or investment-based approach to nutrition should help to clarify concepts and change practices.

Land grabbing must be stopped. The ongoing participatory process aimed at developing Voluntary Guidelines on land and natural resource tenure, which are guided by human rights standards and principles, is a promising initiative. However, a process of intergovernmental negotiations similar to the drafting procedure established for the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to adequate food is still required. A different proposal was made by Japan at the G8/G20 meetings and is discussed in the document *Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respects Rights, Livelihoods and Resources*. This approach is based on the illusion of functional self-regulation by investors and has been highly criticized by civil society organizations. Besides, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, has stated: “[These] Principles [...] do not even refer to human rights. As a result, the dimension of government and private actor accountability and of control by independent bodies is lost.”

In the end, the current debates on governance, accountability, paradigms, participation and land issues are expressions of a **growing awareness of the**

need to change power relations in the global food system. There is a clear challenge to democratize the governance of the food system and to hold governments, international organizations and the private sector accountable to their human rights commitments. First steps have been taken, but proof of real political determination for change and for success of the new CFS is still lacking. Many governments still refuse to be monitored by their citizens and by the international community or to be held accountable under human rights laws. We must effect change by strengthening the capacity of people to use the human rights framework for monitoring governmental, intergovernmental and private sector actions which worsen hunger, as well as to foster those which alleviate hunger and reduce inequality. A true reconfiguration of power relations in the global food system certainly requires sustained strengthening of global civil society networks and their participation in decision making. People are becoming increasingly aware that they have rights and are organizing themselves in order to hold their governments and intergovernmental organizations accountable to their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food and nutrition.