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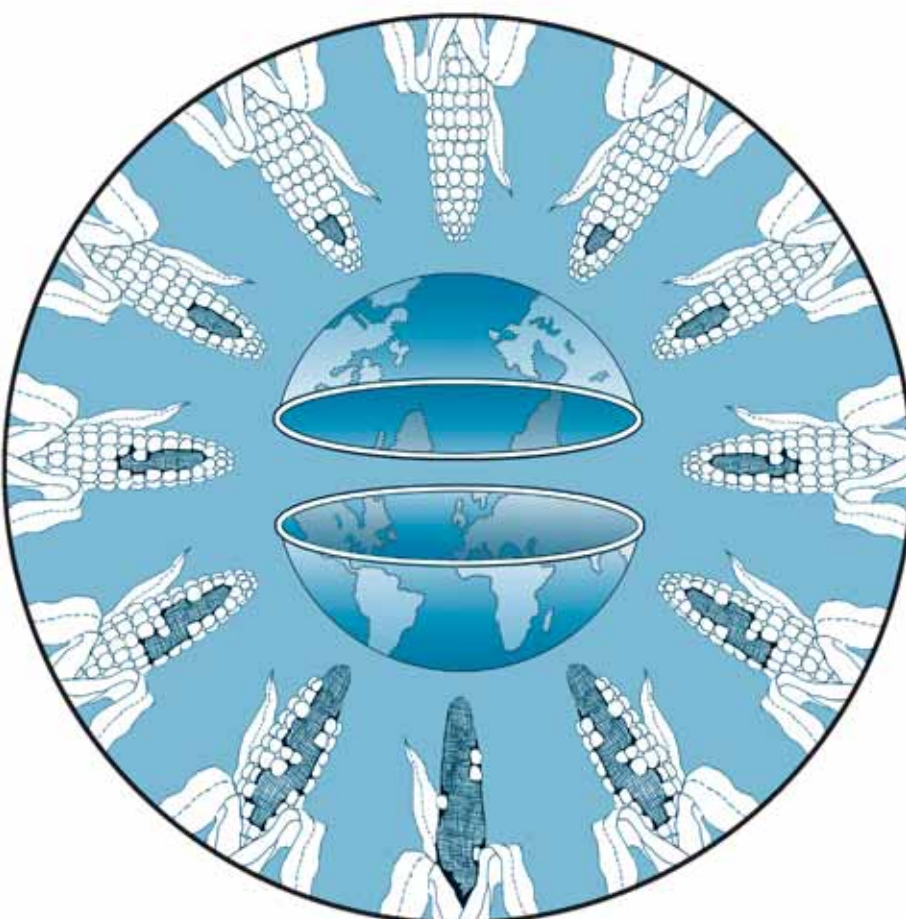
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Developments in International Nutrition

Closing the Gap on the Right to Adequate Food



The Voluntary Guidelines

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**WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE FUNDING ASSISTANCE FROM
THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NETHER LANDS**

Chair's Round Up

This edition of *SCN News* is the 30th, representing over 15 years of providing news about food and nutrition activities across the globe. *SCN News* has a new cover to celebrate this. The focus of this edition is on the challenges provided by the new Voluntary Guidelines on realizing the right to adequate food, adopted by the FAO Council last November. The papers include the SCN's experience of developing case studies on how to strengthen food and nutrition components of national poverty reduction plans. They describe the FAO-led processes that resulted in the Voluntary Guidelines being approved by governments. Further, they describe the faced challenges in order to realize the right to adequate food. Professor Wenche Barth Eide, from the University of Oslo, and Dr Asbjørn Eide, on behalf of the International Project on the Right to Food in Development, reviewed the 10 articles compiled by Carlos Lopez from Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Julian Thomas from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, and Andrea Moreira from the SCN Secretariat.

There were two important achievements for the SCN in the first half of 2005. First was the 32nd Session in Brasilia in March. For the first time at an SCN Session, national and international meetings discussing similar themes were run in parallel. Over a thousand participants enjoyed the week long programme of activities. The organizational efforts put in by the Brazilian team, led by the Ministry of Health with strong support from the local UN agencies, was really outstanding, making it reportedly one of the best ever SCN Sessions. Second in June, ECOSOC, in consultation with the SCN, held a special information meeting at the UN in New York on the *Critical Role of Nutrition for Reaching the Millennium Development Goals*. This was in preparation for the September 2005 Millennium +5 High Level Plenary of the UN General Assembly, 2005 Summit. The conclusion from that meeting, reported on page 74, once again strengthens the message of just how vital food and nutrition programmes are, and how more attention has to be paid to these issues if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved. This was the first ever ECOSOC/SCN session.

The first half of 2005 has seen many changes among the SCN partner community. UNICEF has a new Executive Director with Ann M Veneman replacing Carol Bellamy. António Guterres was appointed UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Paul Wolfowitz took over as President of the World Bank.

Patrick Webb has left his position as Chief of Nutrition at WFP and has taken up a position at Tufts University as Dean of Academic Affairs at the Friedman School of Nutrition, Science and Policy. Martin Bloem, previously with Helen Keller International, has taken over the nutrition position at WFP. Marie Ruel has been promoted to become the Head of the Food Consumption and Nutrition Division at IFPRI, filling the gap left by Lawrence Haddad. I have also moved on, and have returned home to Central New York, where I have joined the faculty of Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs as Professor in Public Administration. I must say it is a joy to be home and to be teaching.

Most sadly we report on the passing away of Dick Heyward, one of the founding fathers of the SCN, and major figure in the development of UNICEF as a global organization for children. A memorial note to Dick has been contributed by Alan Berg on page 4.

Looking forward, we have several future events being organized by the SCN. At the World Food Prize International Symposium to be held in Des Moines, Iowa on October 12-14, the SCN is promoting a panel session on the *Dual Global Challenges of Malnutrition and Obesity*. In September, the SCN is holding a pre-congress workshop on 19 September at the 18th International Nutrition Congress to be held in Durban, South Africa. Former SCN Chair, Dr Namanga Ngongi, will lead this session entitled, *Realizing the right to adequate food and achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges facing the nutrition community*. Finally the 33rd Session of the SCN will be held in Geneva, March 13-17, 2006, hosted by the World Health Organization. The topic for the Symposium will be *Nutrition and the Double Burden of Disease: a Global Challenge*. We are now seeking applicants for the 10th Dr Abraham Horwitz Lecture to be given at the 33rd Session (see inside back cover).

Catherine Bertini
Chair SCN

SCN Spotlight



Simon
Maxwell

The Advisory Group on Nutrition (AGN) provided assistance and advice on policy and the science of nutrition to the SCN until 1999. It was comprised of nutrition scientists and practitioners of world repute from different regions. The AGN usually met once per year to advance SCN proposals and initiatives and to review the progress of the SCN. Simon Maxwell was a member of the AGN from 1990 to 1996. He is Director of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the UK's leading independent think-tank on international development and humanitarian issues. He is also President of the Development Studies Association of the UK and Ireland and a Fellow of the World Economic Forum.

SCN News: Mr Maxwell, what stands out as the AGN's most important and memorable achievement during this time?

Simon Maxwell: The SCN was at its best when it provided a vehicle for consensus building among technical experts and a platform for collective advocacy. From that perspective, the best regular product was undoubtedly the World Nutrition Situation Reports, which grew in coverage and authority under the leadership of John Mason; and the best one-off was the James Commission, published in 2000 as 'Ending Malnutrition by 2020: an Agenda for Change in the Millennium', which provided policy-makers with both a strategic problem statement and a strategic plan. Of course, there were many other fine, technical products, including George Beaton's meta-evaluation of the impact of vitamin A supplementation, which demonstrated that supplementation in areas affected by xerophthalmia could cut child mortality by nearly a quarter.

The SCN itself was often a little frustrated, however. It brought together nutrition advisers from UN agencies and bilaterals. Advisers by definition advise—on the whole, in those days at least, advisers did not control budgets or manage overall policy. That was a problem. This was the converted talking to each other. Nutritionists needed to reach out and engage with the wider development agenda, especially poverty reduction; and also with policy-makers. I addressed this in various papers and lectures, including my Forman lecture in 2001, the sub-title of which was 'Why new thinking on poverty reduction challenges nutritionists and other 'hunger-fighters', and what we should do about it'. I argued then that those of us concerned with hunger and undernutrition had to 'pitch' nutrition as an effective and cost-effective way to reach the Millennium Development Goals. From my current position, running a think-tank which works on all aspects of development, the need to contextualise is even more apparent.

What role do you see the SCN playing in leading nutrition in the context of UN reforms?

Don't get me started on UN reform, which is one of my favourite topics! Everyone agrees that the system as a whole needs a shake-up, and sadly this will not happen at the MDG Summit in September 2005. I've been trying to understand UN reform as a collective action problem. My conclusion is that the incentives are wrong and that donors need to be much more assertive. What we want is a single and coherent UN system, able to act as a genuine counter-weight to the World Bank, and with a proper financing window. This means strengthening the centre, viz the Secretary General and UN Development Program, with a corresponding subordination of the specialized agencies. Donors could achieve this by routing all their funding through a single budgeting process. Nutrition could provide a very good test case. Could the SCN not design a new architecture?

This current issue of SCN News features the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food. How do you see the Voluntary Guidelines shaping our approach to adequate food?

I haven't worked on food rights for a while, but we do have quite a bit of work at ODI on rights, again in the wider context of the MDGs. To my mind, the value-added of a rights approach lies in justiciability. I'm personally not excited by 'rights as exhortation' or 'rights as advocacy', because we have other ways of reaching poverty reduction strategies which privilege the basic needs of the poor. From the perspective of justiciability, there are two main problems. The first is that poor countries cannot afford to provide all economic and social rights immediately. There is useful language in the rights instruments about progressive realization and about taking steps which are concrete, deliberate, and targeted, and in some countries those words have been operationalized in the courts. If that can be done, a rights approach adds something useful to the MDGs. The second problem is that it has proved difficult to include international agencies and companies among the group of duty-bearers, who can be held accountable for not delivering rights. We need to work on that, but there are signs of movement.

Voluntary Guidelines are useful, I should say, as an intermediate step on the way to justiciability.

In your article in this issues' Speakers' Corner (see page 75) you advocate for either adding nutrition onto an existing fund such as the Global Fund on malaria, HIV/AIDS and TB or giving it more attention in donor programmes, such as a G8 initiative. The recent communiqué from the G8 meeting in Gleneagles (July 2005) did not mention nutrition nor hunger as part of its plan for Africa and development. Why is nutrition not making it onto international agendas?

Good question and one I ought to be able to answer, given the amount of work we do at ODI on bridging research and policy and on policy entrepreneurship. Nutrition ought to be a shoo-in, but it isn't, which is why I wrote the note you reproduce elsewhere in this issue. If you had asked me three years ago, I would have said the main constraint was that donors were reluctant to invest in what looked like consumption subsidies, even though we know that nutrition is actually an investment. The administrative and political requirements for successful community-based programmes also looked daunting. HIV/AIDS has changed the political landscape, along with immunization. Very large sums of money are available for the Global Fund and GAVI. So why not nutrition? Well, I go back to our work on four styles of policy entrepreneurship and ask: (a) do we have a clear message which provides policy-makers with both a problem and a solution; (b) do we have the right networks, involving non-nutritionists; (c) are we working with policy-makers on the ground, in governments and outside; and (d) are we thinking politically? If we wanted to hit the G8 this year, we should have had a sustained campaign starting 18 months ago. We didn't, but let's try for Russia (2006), Germany (2007) or Japan (2008).

In the spirit of Dr Horwitz, what advice do you have for the SCN and its members?

I wouldn't presume to second-guess a man who inspired and led us in this field. But if I return to my models of policy entrepreneurship, my advice would be to develop the story-telling skills of She-herezade, the networking skills of Paul Revere, the engineering skills of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the political savvy of Rasputin (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Meetings/Evidence/Meeting_7.html).

Contact: Simon Maxwell, smaxwell@odi.org.uk

Updating the History of the SCN

Many of you will be aware that Professor George Beaton has carried out an extensive and stimulating history of the SCN up to the mid-90s. At the invitation of Sir Richard Jolly, Richard Longhurst will be updating this work over the next few months. Richard Longhurst is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London where he works on mainstreaming human rights into development programming, and was principal consultant at the ICN. He will be contacting many people at the centre of SCN affairs over the next few months and if you are especially keen to give him your views, please contact him on longhurst@clara.co.uk or richardlonghurst@hotmail.com

4 Dedication



Dick Heyward 1914-2005

Mr EJR (Dick) Heyward, who died August 3, 2005, in Long Island, New York after an extended illness, was the key architect in making the SCN the focal point for international nutrition, and then was the unanimous choice in 1977 to be its first chairman— a position he held for three terms. For half a century he was in the vanguard in recognizing the nutrition needs of children in developing countries.

As head of operations for UNICEF, Mr Heyward was largely responsible for the massive milk distribution programme, particularly in India, with which UNICEF was initially identified. But soon recognizing that milk distribution was not the best response to the need, he became a force in the development of formulated weaning foods. Then realizing that donating food was insufficient, he fathered a more comprehensive approach, known as the Applied Nutrition Programme, contending—well ahead of his time—that it was essential to mobilize affected populations and search for community-based solutions.

Mr Heyward also was responsible for getting UNICEF involved in salt iodization, nutrition education and training programmes, and nutrition studies and surveys. Breastfeeding and good weaning practices were included by him in UNICEF's mission, and he played a key role in developing the infant formula code. A nomination of Mr Heyward for the World Food Prize said, "No other person has done more to lay the groundwork for today's large-scale interventions associated with child malnutrition."

The son of a family of Tasmanian apple farmers, Eric John Richard Heyward trained in economics at the University of Tasmania and at the London School of Economics. He spoke half a dozen languages. He became familiar with UNICEF as the First Secretary of the Australian Mission to the UN, where he sat as the Australian representative on the UNICEF Executive Board from 1947-49. In the latter year he was appointed UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director in Charge of Operations and, subsequently, Senior Deputy Executive Director, with the rank of Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations. His career as the chief deputy at UNICEF spanned the tenure of its first three executive directors. Those were the days when the executive director was primarily a political figure who dealt with heads of state and with the executive board. It was Mr Heyward who was responsible for the organization and running the day-to-day operations. As executive directors came and went, he provided the continuity, the intellectual leadership and, with his contemporary understanding of development issues as they related to children, pioneered new approaches that made UNICEF the unique development institution it became.

People now forget, but the decision of the General Assembly to continue indefinitely the existence of what was established as a children's emergency relief fund, and in the process transforming it into an agency focusing on the long-range needs of children in developing countries, was a hard-fought issue. Its successful resolution, according to papers in UNICEF's archives, was due in very large part to the work of Mr Heyward.

UNICEF was characterized in those years (and the reason many chose to join it) by its hard work, in doing the practical and the manageable, and by being effective. It is unlikely there has ever been another bureaucracy that so reflected the qualities of an individual. Jim Grant said of him, "He more than anyone else has helped to make UNICEF a living legend. Dick Heyward has been simultaneously for UNICEF its prime minister, its minister of overseas development, its secretary of health, education and welfare, its minister of home affairs and general troubleshooter. He has been UNICEF's one man think-tank over the years." In his book, *The Brutality of Nations*, author Dan Jacobs described Mr Heyward as "the intellectual and moral force behind UNICEF."

Active even in retirement, Mr Heyward's interest in nutrition never faded. He authored the field nutrition manual for UNICEF; he collected masses of information, structured and synthesized it and distilled it for its essence. And for years he also worked on projects for the World Bank, IFAD, and the WHO/UNICEF joint nutrition programme, primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa. Until he suffered a stroke in 1997, at age 82, this *éminence grise* was still traveling to countries like Madagascar, Rwanda, Mali and Mozambique several times a year.

On a personal level, Mr Heyward was incurably modest and unassuming—so much so that few people outside of UNICEF were at all aware of his towering achievements. The UNICEF press release announcing his death said Mr Heyward was known as "someone who talked little but spoke volumes." When he did speak, whether formally or casually, he was listened to carefully. What he had to say was invariably well prepared. Jim Grant often referred to Mr Heyward's tireless work ethic and to his not uncommon hundred-hour workweeks. Part of that time was taken up by his responsibility for the UNICEF Greeting Card Operation, the phenomenal growth of which he inspired and promoted.

Former UNICEF Executive Director Henry Labouisse said Mr Heyward "is tough-minded but open-minded. He has an extraordinary intelligence, an encyclopedic knowledge, and his incisive analytic capacity is sometimes overwhelming to the rest of us." In spite of his intellectual power he never lost sight of the heart of the mission—meeting the needs of the children.

Mr Heyward was a man of conviction and a model of integrity. He did what he did because he thought it was important, never because it was in his self-interest. In short, he had the kind of qualities we so desperately need in our national leaders today.

Dag Hammarskold, in his book *Markings*, said the goals he set for improving himself (and, by implications, for others): to be "simpler, quicker, warmer, firmer." Few people better filled that prescription than Dick Heyward.

Mr Heyward, who died just short of his 91st birthday, is survived by his wife, Elisabeth, a retired interpreter at the UN (working at the Nuremberg Trials, she was one of the pioneers of "live," unrehearsed simultaneous interpretation), and sons Peter, a Washington lawyer, and Andrew, the President of CBS News.

Alan Berg was a member of the SCN from 1977 until 1995.

The Right to Adequate Food Six Years Later



Introduction by Carlos López

**Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

It has been six years since the 26th session of the Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) took place at the United Nations in Geneva in April 1999, to discuss "The substance and politics of a human rights approach to food and nutrition policies and programmes". In May of the same year the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food. To commemorate these events, *SCN News* #18 (July 1999), featured "Adequate Food: A Human Right" and offered readers a number of articles and news related to the topic.

Six years after the adoption of General Comment No. 12, another ground-breaking event has taken place. In November 2004, the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) adopted a set of Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (Voluntary Guidelines). The Voluntary Guidelines were elaborated within an Inter-governmental Working Group established by the FAO Council by invitation of the World Food Summit: *five years later*. Following the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines, the 32nd Annual Session of SCN held in Brazil had as its main theme "Realizing the Right to Adequate Food to Help Achieve the MDGs". To mark these events and to contribute to the dissemination of this new instrument, the present issue of the *SCN News* is devoted to the Voluntary Guidelines and the Right to Adequate Food.

The need and virtues of a human rights approach to nutrition and food security have been explored for many years. Today there is wide agreement that such an approach enables wider participation, and hence, sustainability of policies and programmes; it also adds legitimacy to interventions by providing a legal and moral basis for action. The fact that people have rights by definition draws attention to the actions or inactions of associated duty-bearers. This provides a solid basis for strategies by means of which people at large and those involved in food and nutrition programmes in particular, could hold policy-makers and authorities accountable, including for remedial action. Examples of how this translates into practice are presented in case studies described in this issue of *SCN News*.

Several organizations have joined forces to coordinate and offer the diverse, challenging and serious set of articles related to the Voluntary Guidelines presented here. In particular, I would like to highlight the contributions and coordinated action by staff of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the SCN Secretariat. FAO has also contributed financially to make this special issue possible. The contribution of Professors Wenche Barth-Eide, from the University of Oslo, and Asbjorn Eide, from the International Project on the Right to Food in Development-Oslo, in providing an overview is also invaluable. To them our special thanks.

We hope the collection of articles written from different perspectives and disciplines for this special issue, will show how the Voluntary Guidelines contribute to the effective implementation of the right to food, and will encourage professionals and officials to use them.



OVERVIEW

A 'new deal' in the efforts to fight hunger and all forms of malnutrition

Wenche Barth Eide, University of Oslo

with Asbjørn Eide, International Project on the Right to Food in Development

A decade has passed since the concept of the human right to adequate food began to be discussed substantively within the SCN. *SCN News* now launches a review of the hitherto most significant event in the promotion of this right—the Voluntary Guidelines—adopted by all governments at the FAO Council in November 2004. This is indeed a historical event for human rights and one that provides hope for the role that human rights principles can play in fostering not only economic, but also social and human development.

In the mid-1990s, the question facing the SCN was if a rights-based approach to food and nutrition problems could make food and nutrition analysis, policies and programming more efficient. After a rather strained debut, the SCN community has gradually embraced the new opportunities created by a right-based approach to food and nutrition security. This current issue of *SCN News* signals a 'new deal' in addressing the end to poverty and hunger and the promotion of healthy lifestyles and ensuring access for all to adequate food, healthy diets and nutritional wellbeing.

This issue of *SCN News* clearly affirms that human rights are here to stay in the international nutrition community. Authors are right-to-food advocates as well as practitioners; some may even combine these functions. The articles provide for the uninitiated a solid introduction of what the Voluntary Guidelines stand for and the process that led up to their adoption. For those who have followed the debate, and may have been direct partners in it, the collection of papers constitutes an organized overview that offers further nuances to the richness and potential use of the Voluntary Guidelines.

This issue is a valuable educational tool, as it advances the human rights debate within the SCN and points to future initiatives by the SCN community. It challenges the international development community to link the specialized aspects of nutrition to more general aspects of economic and social development. It places the SCN among the key actors in promoting the right to adequate food and other rights relevant to nutrition as a critical factor in poverty reduction and national development.

Carlos Lopez, a human rights lawyer affiliated both with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and FAO as member of the Ad Hoc Unit for the Intergovernmental Working Group, takes the reader through some of the background of the World Food Summit in 1996 and the subsequent events inside and outside the United Nations leading up to the Voluntary Guidelines in 2004. To better understand the remaining points of contention among and within stakeholders regarding the use of a rights-based approach to development, this article provides the historical and political context in which the work and debates were rooted and their evolution over recent years. The author makes no claim that with the Guidelines at hand, implementation of the right to adequate food will be easy. There are still areas that remain insufficiently elaborated, with practical legislative experience, recourse for rights violations, as well as impact assessment and monitoring of the right to food still lacking. There continue to be difficulties across sectors concerning the agreed interrelatedness and interdependence of all human rights. Yet, Lopez emphasizes the great potential of the Voluntary Guidelines for empowering people to claim rights and establishing accountability at the national level.

Jean Ziegler, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food of the UN Commission on Human Rights and his research team, explain the usefulness of the Voluntary Guidelines in cooperation with governments, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs to promote effective implementation of the right to food. He finds the Voluntary Guidelines a groundbreaking initiative not only by showing a stronger commitment by governments towards more effective implementation of the right to food in their respective jurisdictions and at the international level, but because the Guidelines strengthen the interpretation of the state's obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights speaks of international cooperation as essential and commits all states to act together to ensure a fair distribution of food resources. This, as Ziegler and his team point out, calls for both collective action and individual state



action concerning the food security situation beyond national borders.

Michael Windfuhr of FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) discusses the overriding and tremendously important role played by NGOs/CSOs in shaping the Voluntary Guidelines. Their participation demonstrated what international civil society can do when well prepared and organized, having sorted out their internal concerns prior to participation in intergovernmental fora where they need to stand together to ensure collective strength. A split civil society has too often proved unable to influence both process and outcome of important meetings. It is not least due to FIAN and the leadership of the author himself that civil society could play such a role this time. Windfuhr reviews the nature of the Voluntary Guidelines: while legally non-binding for governments, they are rooted in internationally agreed norms and principles ingrained in international human rights law, which ensures their legal significance. As well illustrated by the work of FIAN itself, the author underscores the necessity for civil society to be active both at national and international levels, which will continue to be mutually reinforcing in the protection and promotion of human rights, including the right to adequate food. In this spirit it is commendable and promising that NGOs/CSOs have agreed to collect examples of national best practices and make these known to organizations in other countries, and open a website for exchange of ideas and experiences on the use of the Voluntary Guidelines. In support of this, the NGO/CSO community will jointly prepare relevant information to be translated into different languages.

Bilateral development agencies are important potential users of the Voluntary Guidelines, both in establishing principles for rights-based approaches in development cooperation and in promoting similar developments in the partner countries. Switzerland was among the most active states in the negotiations leading up to the Voluntary Guidelines. Barbara Ekwall of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), reports that already in 1997, SDC adopted their own guidelines for "Promoting Human Rights in Development Cooperation" as a practical tool for integrating human rights in its work. The SDC guidelines are currently being revisited in light of international developments, where also the Voluntary Guidelines are seen as an opportunity for closer partnerships and cooperation with countries in the South and North, as well as with civil society organizations, in pursuing common goals of hunger and poverty eradication. Ekwall describes the Voluntary Guidelines as a major breakthrough for economic, social and cultural rights and a source of inspiration for development actors. She highlights in particular their pioneering role in getting Members States to agree, for the first time, on a definition of food security. She outlines several areas where the Voluntary Guidelines will have special relevance to development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and lists options from SDC's own guidelines that can also guide future actions directed by the Voluntary Guidelines, such as developing programmes and projects that will promote human rights; including human rights in policy dialogue with recipient countries; using differentiated human rights conditionality cautiously (and as a last resort); mainstreaming human rights as a transversal element through all sectors of development cooperation; and through promoting competence and capacities among agencies' own staff.

Milla McLachlan, in addressing the significance of the Voluntary Guidelines for Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs), identifies some problems that can hamper true country ownership of these strategies and how donor criteria for funding—rather than the need to adapt strategies to local conditions—can hinder participatory planning processes. She underlines the opportunity for enhancing such ownership by linking PRSs to obligations countries may have already undertaken by ratifying international human rights conventions. These commitments should serve as reminders of the values and principles they have officially chosen to adhere to. Some of these values and principles are already implicit in the work of PRSs (such as justice, fairness, equality, participation and freedom) but, as McLachlan says, "A human rights approach makes the values and norms underpinning PRSs explicit and frames poverty reduction as a matter of the realization of fundamental human rights and of meeting obligations, rather than as charity, benevolence or economic expedience." Furthermore, the Voluntary Guidelines demonstrate the indivisibility of rights by emphasizing that political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights must be equally respected, protected and promoted. As the Guidelines lay out the range of issues that may require attention in rights-based food and nutrition strategies, they can facilitate a common understanding, dialogue and more coherent action on hunger, malnutrition and food security and build greater coherence in the work with food security and nutrition.

Jem Bendell addresses the role of the private sector, arguing that in light of its vastly increasing influence, efforts should be made to harness its power as an actor in the realization of the right to food. Controversies have surrounded this issue in the past, but taking into account the growing market liberalization and the ever-growing impact of the food industry on food access and intake, the nutrition community should seriously address this issue. Bendell recognizes the primary importance of national and international public regulatory frameworks in this field, but that there are limits to their effective-



8 Features

ness. He therefore explores the supplementary gains that could be had by engaging the private sector in a holistic, co-operative approach towards the realization of the right to food. This, he argues, could be pursued through multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs), where NGOs, the private sector and the intergovernmental system would be involved. He examines the pros and cons, and ends by arguing that the SCN and its constituencies should define its vision of the private sector's relationship to the goal of adequate nutrition for all, and then redesign its procedures to be able to engage corporations while upholding the independence and integrity of the SCN's work.

Aliro Omara, member of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, argues that the application of the Voluntary Guidelines will contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are based on the Millennium Declaration, where human rights are at the core. The MDGs must, therefore, be interpreted and applied in light of the contemporary human rights system. During negotiations of the Voluntary Guidelines, some states were reluctant to accept the whole of the normative system of human rights; some states still hold doubts about economic and social rights and their enforceability. Fortunately this did not block agreement on the Voluntary Guidelines and their reliance on the right to adequate food. Consequently, in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration, the Voluntary Guidelines constitute very practical tools for the realization of the MDGs as depicted in the article by Aliro Omara: The Guidelines serve to ensure an enabling environment, facilitate assistance and accountability. Omara illustrates this also with the Ugandan experience, where the National Food and Nutrition Policy has now recognized adequate food as a human right, calling for a rights-based approach in its realization.

A set of case studies were conducted under the auspices of the SCN, with results presented at the 32nd SCN Annual Session in Brasilia (March 2005). A consultant team (Roger Shrimpton, Uwe Kracht, Elisabetha Recine and Flavio Valente) undertook this process and reported their experiences in Brazil, Bolivia, Angola and Mozambique on how adequately a rights-based approach to food and nutrition programmes was included in national development plans to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The case studies also intended to foster capacity to better understand the issues involved among national development actors. In comparison with the FAO studies, these studies place somewhat more emphasis on biological vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity over the life cycle, which is often forgotten in the debate on social and economic vulnerability to food insecurity. An important part of the case studies were participatory multisectoral workshops to understand the importance of food and nutrition interventions. It is disappointing, but not surprising, that the studies revealed a serious lack of coherence in nutrition concepts and terms. Further, no common agreement was reached on food and nutrition inputs needed to enhance the development goals. There was also a conventional focus on hunger and malnutrition as primarily energy-related undernutrition, forgetting the hidden hunger of micronutrient deficiencies and ignoring overnutrition, obesity and related chronic diseases as a reflection of poverty.

Lessons can be drawn from five case studies conducted in Brazil, Canada, India, South Africa and Uganda for understanding the conditions required to implement the right to food. Important information was gathered about experiences with different policies, programmes and mechanisms that may be conducive to the realization of the right to food. In his contribution to this issue, Julian Thomas, Coordinator of the Ad hoc Unit within FAO on the right to food, provides an excellent overview of the lessons learnt.

The studies show that an enabling policy framework, which gives human rights a central place, where the principle of indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights is respected and applied is essential. An overarching and integrated food-security policy based on human rights principles should be developed, preceded by a thorough socio-economic analysis of food insecure individuals. Integrated policies are particularly difficult to achieve in federal states with decentralized governance, such as Canada, but fragmentation between governmental departments can be a serious problem also in unitary states.

The case studies point to the need to balance the components of food security: availability, stability, access and utilization. The Indian case study shows that inequalities during the 1990s were increased as priority was given to overall food production and neglected investment in rural roads, irrigation and rural power which could have benefited also the smaller farmers. These imbalances have been sought to be remedied in later years. The strong nexus between food insecurity and inequalities is now most obvious in South Africa where land dispossession was a key feature of colonialism and apartheid. Efforts are made in post-Apartheid South Africa to re-balance land ownership and protect tenure rights, but there is a long way to go. Extreme inequality remains in Brazil, but are now sought to be reduced by public policies that improve access to land and credit for the most vulnerable. But even successful economic growth in highly developed countries do not ensure the right to food for all, as shown in the case study



of Canada where structural changes and tight fiscal policies have led to a deterioration in social services.

Essential for the realization of the right to food are legal and institutional frameworks. Although constitutional protection for the right to food exists in some countries, a clear justiciable right to food is conducive to its realization. Beyond legislation, national human rights institutions or mechanisms can play an essential role as in South Africa, India and Uganda. Regarding an institutional framework, a proper allocation of responsibilities with coordination and accountability is critical. Julian Thomas underlines that a rights-based approach shifts the focus from technocratic to political solutions and emphasizes State obligations' to food insecurity, poverty and the empowerment of rights-holders.

Lastly, the overriding dimension of capacity is discussed by Kaia Engesveen, here in the broad sense of the term proposed by the SCN as a central element in a role and capacity analysis of duty-bearers and others responsible for ensuring the realization of a certain right. Originating from UNICEF's efforts to integrate human rights principles in programming, 'capacity' was proposed to encompass more than just 'competence' and 'skills' for tasks identified as needed to meet a human rights obligation by responsible actors. It also includes factors such as being motivated and having authority for conducting those tasks, and possessing the ability to draw lessons and communicate with others about the outcome for rational decision-making about what further may need to be done. Engesveen tested each of these factors around the objective of fostering optimal breastfeeding practices linked to the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in state hospitals in the Republic of the Maldives. She considers 'capacity' at three levels of actors: mothers, the hospitals, and the State authority. Her study and analysis is one of the first that has made full use of this approach for developing indicators for monitoring the right to adequate food and the highest attainable health, in this case for a selected age group and dietary concern. Engesveen, this year's Abraham Horwitz lecturer at the 32nd Annual Session of the SCN, demonstrates the logic and potential strength of a role and capacity analysis in developing both process and outcome indicators for implementing and monitoring policies and programmes to promote the right to food and related rights, but also brings up questions of feasibility in using it under various circumstances. Her contribution will no doubt be important in the evolving debate and practice of applying the Voluntary Guidelines.

In sum, the reader will find a rich and well-composed selection of inputs that increase his/her understanding of the Voluntary Guidelines, both in terms of content and significance. It will also stimulate future debate on the practical use of the Voluntary Guidelines and the accumulated experience to be exchanged while moving forward in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

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Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food

Overview of the process and outcome

Carlos López^a

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Council's adoption of a set of Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to food in November 2004, is the most significant event since the adoption of General Comment 12 in 1999 and the creation of the post of Special Rapporteur on the right to food by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 2000.

The process of elaboration of the Voluntary Guidelines and their final adoption are in many respects a groundbreaking step in the practical implementation of the right to food with repercussions on other economic and social rights. The Guidelines are the result of work carried out by States delegates in the framework of an Inter-governmental Working Group (IGWG) set within FAO, which had the active participation of international organizations and bodies and civil society organizations. The following paragraphs highlight dimensions that constitute a contribution to the process of implementation of the right to food.

Background: The World Food Summits and early work of human rights bodies

In the lead up to the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS), there were demands to strengthen methods of implementation of the right to adequate food. An early milestone was the work of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (later named the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights), within the framework of which Professor Asbjorn Eide carried out the first comprehensive study of the right to food in 1987.¹ As negotiations on the draft Rome Declaration and Plan of Action on World Food Security progressed in the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CWFS), the question of the right to food remained controversial and was resolved only at the last moment of the preparatory work for the Summit due to strong pressure from developing countries.

The Rome Declaration adopted at the WFS reaffirmed the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger. Objective 7.4 of the Plan of Action stressed the need to clarify the content of the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger and to give particular attention to the implementation and full and progressive realization of this right as a means to achieving food security for all.

To this end, governments, in partnership with all actors of civil society, undertook to:

"(e) Invite the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with relevant treaty bodies, and in collaboration with relevant specialized agencies and programmes of the UN system and appropriate intergovernmental mechanisms, to better define the rights related to food in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and to propose ways to implement and realize these rights as a means of achieving the commitments and objectives of the WFS, taking into account the possibility of formulating voluntary guidelines for food security for all."²

These results were considered disappointing by many governments and most NGOs. The NGO Forum at the WFS reiterated the call for a Code of Conduct on the Human Right to Adequate Food and a Convention on Food Security, and decided to start work on such a Code. The draft Code was finalised in mid-1997, and was subsequently endorsed by more than 800 NGOs and some governments.

The follow-up to the WFS was particularly intense within the UN human rights system with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the Special Rapporteur on the right to food and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) as key actors.

Between 1997 and 2001 the UNHCHR convened three international expert consultations on the various dimensions of the right to adequate food as a human right. FAO initiated contacts with the UNHCHR, which led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organiza-

^a Human Rights Officer with the Ad Hoc Unit on the Right to Food in FAO posted at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily of the organization in which he works. This article partially draws on the article by Isabella Rae, Julian Thomas and Margret Vidar, "The Right to Food as a Fundamental Human Right: FAO's Experience" presented to the ICSSR-WIDER-FAO Workshop on Food Security, Jaipur, India, 4-6 March 2005,



tions. FAO also participated in all expert consultations and hosted the second one jointly with UNHCHR. The first expert consultation took place in Geneva in 1997 one year after the WFS. In 1998, a second expert consultation was convened in Rome co-hosted by FAO. In both cases, experts worked towards a clearer and common definition of the right to food, with great success.³ In 1999, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) adopted its General Comment No. 12 on the right to food on the basis of the two previous expert consultations⁴ which is considered by many as the most authoritative interpretation of the normative content of the right to food spelling out some policy implications. In the same year, UNHCHR hosted in Geneva the annual session of the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition (formerly UN ACC/Sub-Committee on Nutrition), which for the first time focused on the right to food and its links between human rights and nutrition in a special symposium.⁵

UNHCHR and the Government of Germany convened the third international expert consultation on the right to food in Bonn in 2001. Once a definition of the right to food had been provided in General Comment No. 12, the focus then shifted to implementation. The conclusions of the third consultation set the stage for further attention to operational strategies to implement the right to food in practice, making this right the first among economic and social rights that moved on to an implementation phase.⁶

In 2000, the UN Commission on Human Rights established the post of Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.⁷ Jean Ziegler from Switzerland was appointed as the first Special Rapporteur, and his mandate renewed in 2003 for a period of three years.

The Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food and related activities

The World Food Summit: *five years later* (WFS: *fyl*) was convened in 2002, at a time of need to reinvigorate strategies to achieve the goal of halving the number of undernourished by 2015. "The concept of the right to adequate food was promoted as a way to empower the food insecure and make them capable of demanding responsible action from their governments, in furtherance of food security goals".⁸

In the Declaration "International Alliance against Hunger", adopted at the WFS: *fyl*, the heads of state and government reaffirmed "the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food," and invited the FAO Council "to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG), with the participation of stakeholders, to elaborate over a period of two years, a set of voluntary guidelines to support member states' efforts to achieve the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security" (Operative paragraph 10). At its 2002 session, the Council formally established the IGWG and instructed the FAO to provide assistance to it.⁹

IGWG members included FAO and the UN, with other stakeholders, including international organizations, regional institutions, NGOs and academic institutions. Following a FAO Council decision, a close working relationship was set up with UNHCHR, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and with other Rome based agencies: the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

In February 2003, at the very outset of the process, the UNHCHR held an international expert consultation, with the participation of some 20 experts, including treaty-body members, to prepare its own contribution. NGOs led by FIAN also held consultations at that time. The submissions from UNHCHR and the NGO coalition to the first session of the IGWG were amongst the most comprehensive and helped influence the first draft voluntary guidelines. In November 2003, UNHCHR convened a second informal meeting of human rights experts to discuss the legal issues in the introduction of the draft. The resulting proposal was submitted by some states on their own behalf contributing in this way to the final structure and content of the document's preface.

The IGWG held four sessions and an intersessional meeting during the two years of mandate. A Friends of the Chair meeting was also held to deal with unresolved issues. During its fourth session in September 2004, the IGWG completed its work with a set of Voluntary Guidelines, endorsed by the CWFS and adopted by the FAO Council in November 2004. Participation was broad with more than 80 government delegates attending IGWG sessions. Human rights stakeholders were allowed to attend all sessions and to speak at any time. The same rule applied to NGO/CSO representatives. Representatives of the CESCR and of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food attended the sessions and actively participated in debates. Delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross also attended several sessions and meetings. Those human rights experts made joint and separate statements at different times in the debates, and submitted communications to the Secretariat. The Special Rapporteur submitted five written contributions and the Chair of the Committee on ESCR sent two letters with the Committee's views. In addition, a broad group of NGOs and CSO participated under the umbrella of a North-South coalition led by FIAN international (see article by Windfuhr).



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CONTENT AND NATURE OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

The need for Voluntary Guidelines may not be fully understood by many. In an area where international treaties and general comments, adopted by relevant treaty-bodies, provide the strongest legal bases for action, why are additional voluntary guidelines needed? The answer lies in the character and nature of the Voluntary Guidelines which, although not legally binding, provide a rich and very detailed set of recommendations and an agenda for action for the progressive realization of the right to food. The value of the Voluntary Guidelines is in their operational character and orientation. In addition to that, they represent the agreement among governments on the policy implications of realizing the right to food.

In terms of content, the Voluntary Guidelines stress a wide range of human-rights principles including equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and rule of law, and the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, inter-related and interdependent. They also seek to strengthen good governance.

The Guidelines are structured into three main sections:

- Section I: Preface and Introduction, including the text of major international legal instruments and definitions of food security, the right to food and human-rights based approaches.
- Section II: Enabling Environment, Assistance and Accountability, and Guidelines 1 – 19 (see box following page).
- Section III: International Measures, Actions and Commitments.

The Voluntary Guidelines stress that individuals have a right to an enabling environment in which they can provide for their own and their families' needs, including for food. Healthy and educated persons who enjoy economic freedom and access to jobs and resources have little difficulty obtaining food. The availability and access to safe and nutritious food can be assured through self production or through the market. Well-informed consumers can make the right choices for optimum nutrition. Thus, a key attribute of the Voluntary Guidelines is its decisive view that the right to food for all populations is not limited to the provision of assistance, but includes their empowerment to claim and exercise their rights with freedom and autonomy.

However, the Voluntary Guidelines also recognize that vulnerable persons and victims of emergencies need special assistance. A section is, therefore, devoted to safety nets, to a definition of vulnerability and identification of vulnerable people for correct targeting, and to situations of natural and man-made disasters. The Guidelines also address legal systems, the monitoring of how the right to food is realized and the role of independent human-rights bodies.

The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines marks the first instance in which states agree on a common understanding of the content and meaning of the right to adequate food. The definition of the right to food is based on General Comment 12, but departs from it in some ways, in order to achieve consensus, while at the same time preserving intact the core definitions. In the Introduction, the Guidelines differentiate somewhat between those countries that have ratified the ICESCR and those that have not. The definition of food security is taken from WFS documents, thus building on existing consensus. The implications of a human-rights based approach are also spelled out in the introduction.

The agreement described above constitutes a major achievement, and was an important challenge to the negotiators who, at the outset, could not agree on how to refer to General Comment 12. Other challenges were the level of detail the Guidelines should provide. If, on the one hand, the document needed to be general enough to cover differing national realities, it also needed to be specific enough to offer practical guidance. Implementation at national level must take into account country specificity (e.g. geography, resources and culture) while respecting universal human-rights principles. No doubt, among differing country experiences, in the use of the Guidelines not all provisions are likely to be followed in practice. This does not necessarily detract from the Voluntary Guidelines' potential value as a tool to guide policies, institutions, law and on forms of recourse that should take place.

The Voluntary Guidelines are meant to support the realization of the right to food "in the context of national food security". This wording generated long debates, as many IGWG members stressed the importance of the international context, as it impinges upon national food security. The last section of the Guidelines constitutes the agreement reached to address these issues separately. The language in this part stems from agreed text in other fora, such as the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development, the Doha Declaration on a new "development round" in the World Trade Organization



Section II: Guidelines 1 – 19

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| 1: Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and the Rule Of Law | 10: Nutrition |
| 2: Economic Development Policies | 11: Education and Awareness Raising |
| 3: Strategies | 12: National Financial Resources |
| 4: Market Systems | 13: Support for Vulnerable Groups |
| 5: Institutions | 14: Safety Nets |
| 6: Stakeholders | 15: International Food Aid |
| 7: Legal Framework | 16: Natural and Human-Made Disasters |
| 8: Access to Resources and Assets | 17: Monitoring, Indicators and Benchmarks |
| 9: Food Safety and Consumer Protection | 18: National Human Rights Institutions |
| | 19: International Dimension |

(WTO) and resolutions of the UN General Assembly and FAO. The inclusion of this section constituted, in a certain sense, a victory for developing countries. They argued that, without this section, the Voluntary Guidelines could be read as being directed to them alone, even though in reality, they are addressed to developed and developing countries alike. But this inclusion also builds on the insight provided by General Comment No. 12 which sees the realization of the right to food in a given country as closely linked to an international enabling environment and action by other countries and the international community as a whole. Many countries would not be able to implement the right to food without international development assistance. Others will be hindered in their own efforts by external debt, an unfair trade environment, lack of international market access, and 'dumping' through agricultural subsidies. International food aid also plays an important role in food security, the donor policy aspects of which needed to be addressed.

The Voluntary Guidelines are quite comprehensive and detailed. Yet, there are still areas that remain unclear or are insufficiently developed. Questions remain about appropriate legislation to ensure the right to food and to provide recourse for possible violations. Experience is still lacking on how to undertake an impact assessment and monitor the relative effectiveness in the realization of the right to food in all its dimensions and, finally, how best to devise a strategy to rectify shortcomings. Perhaps the most noticeable insufficiency concerns accountability, which could limit the value of the Voluntary Guidelines as an empowering instrument. These gaps could be filled by using the Voluntary Guidelines always within the context of well-established and internationally-accepted human rights norms and principles. For instance, Guideline 7 on the legal framework is general and could be complemented by recourse to human-rights law: states do have the obligation to implement international legal obligations towards the right to food in their national legislation providing, when necessary, remedies and reparation. Earlier drafts of the Voluntary Guidelines presented stronger language and a separate sub-section on the issue of accountability, but neither survived the negotiation phase.

The role of markets and trade in the realization of the right to food also proved controversial. In the view of critics, "[t]he market orientation of the Guidelines is reflected in the call for a market system and for a market-oriented trade system", which "could undermine the view that human-rights law does not support or condone any particular economic system"¹⁰ and risks inserting an ideological agenda in the promotion of the right to food. The Committee on ESCR in its General Comment 3 (1990), noted that obligations under the Covenant "neither *requires nor precludes*" any particular form of economic system, and its principles cannot be described as being "predicated exclusively upon the need for, or the desirability of a socialist or capitalist system...or upon any other particular approach" (para. 8). The Voluntary Guidelines do not call for the establishment of market economies or free markets nor does it state that the realisation of the right to food requires or is to be realized exclusively within a certain type of market economy. In this sense it is perfectly in line with General Comment No. 3.

PARALLEL ACTIVITIES: INFORMATION PAPERS, CASE STUDIES AND PROJECTS

A number of activities were carried out by the FAO Ad Hoc Unit on the right to food, parallel to the negotiating process within the IGWG with a view to feeding information and expertise into the process. The Unit was established to provide secretarial support and assistance to the IGWG. A human-rights officer representing the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was assigned to that Unit. Parallel activities included the preparation of information papers, and descriptions of case studies and projects in several countries.



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Information papers were to help clarify issues relevant to the elaboration of the Voluntary Guidelines and were issued, mostly in a preliminary fashion, during IGWG negotiations.^b Case studies were undertaken to gather information on practical in-country experiences in implementing the right to adequate food with a view to providing inputs into the negotiations. These were carried out for Brazil, Canada, India, South Africa and Uganda. These studies revealed differences, strengths and trends. Some important conclusions were drawn from these studies and published as an information paper. ¹¹Julian Thomas' article in this issue of *SCN News* also provides a summary of findings.

Five projects were initiated during the Voluntary Guidelines negotiations and were extended in order to further FAO's work in this field. *Support to Brazil to monitor the operationalization of the right to adequate food* aims to support the work of the National Rapporteur on the right to food, water and land and establishes adequate follow-up mechanisms which will be set in motion once the post has expired. *Support to Sierra Leone on right to adequate food coordination* is the follow-up of a symposium on the implementation of the right to food (Freetown May 2003) which recommended the establishment a Right to Food Coordination Committee and Secretariat to ensure better coordination between government, donors and other stakeholders and to monitor progress towards the President's pledge to end hunger by the year 2007. *Support for Honduras seminar on right to adequate food* about the implementation of the right to food in Honduras (October 2004). *Support to elaborating guidelines to monitor the implementation of the right to adequate food at country level* drafts general operational guidance on monitoring the progressive realization of the right to adequate food at country level by the end of 2005. Finally, the project *Support for right to food panel book* is expected to result in an important awareness-raising and educational tool to reach young audiences, as well as, to appeal to adult comic-book readers around the world.

Follow-up and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food

Follow-up and implementation will have as its leading actor FAO, which was established in 1945, and acquired the status of specialized agency in 1946 with the mandate of: "raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples under their respective jurisdictions; securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products; bettering the condition of rural populations; and thus contributing towards an expanding world economy".

In 1965, almost simultaneously to the adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the FAO Constitution was amended, with the addition, "and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger" as part of FAO's mandate. The Organization now views the right to food as central to its mandate.¹²

Although many declarations and statements adopted within FAO have recognized the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger, little effort has been made to operationalize the right to food. Since 1995, however, there has been increased political will to change this situation. The mandate given by the WFS in 1996 proved catalytic, and there is now a wider understanding of the concept and its implications.

The value of the Voluntary Guidelines is that they have moved beyond the normative content to a more operational approach. The Guidelines offer a framework within which to address food security: human rights and the empowerment of people. This framework has important advantages in defining goals (the realization of rights), obligations of duty-holders and rights of rights-holders. Accountability is essential in that it provides tools to ensure the consistency of efforts to improve food security over time and of ensuring effective monitoring.

While the right to food has long been recognized, little efforts have in the past been devoted to providing insights on its implementation. In that sense, implementation of the right to food is a relatively recent concept.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER HUMAN-RIGHTS BODIES

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Louise Arbour, has established the *implementation* of norms and standards as the strategic approach of her office in the promotion and protection of human rights.¹³ But effective implementation of the right to food faces many obstacles at national and international levels. For that reason the High Commissioner has set a strategy of effective country engagement, stronger leadership and building partnerships. Practical instruments such as the Voluntary Guidelines will prove useful in this strategy given its focus on practical guidance for the implementation of the right to food.

^b The papers can be found on the webpage www.fao.org/righttofood



A strategy that focuses on implementation requires, first and foremost, collaboration with governments. The Voluntary Guidelines offer a good start as they were elaborated and adopted by governments. UNHCHR and concerned governments could use the Voluntary Guidelines' recommendations as a basis for their dialogue and joint work. UNHCHR provides technical advisory services and resources to countries at their request through technical cooperation agreements that include activities on capacity building at national level, and in particular for national systems of protection of human rights (including the judiciary and national human rights institutions). The Voluntary Guidelines provide a list of issues that may give greater focus to some of those activities on the right to food and related rights. UNHCHR also works with other UN agencies, programmes and funds present in each country to mainstream human rights wherever feasible. Planning and strategy documents of the United Nations are to be anchored in human rights; the Voluntary Guidelines could help identify areas of co-operation among agencies as well as in priority setting.

Other UN bodies with mandates on the right to food will certainly play important roles in the follow-up to the Guidelines. The Special Rapporteur on the right to food already uses the Voluntary Guidelines in his country visits as a guide for monitoring the different aspects of the realization of the right to food. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights could also find the Guidelines useful in the monitoring of country reports *inter alia* regarding levels of realization of the right to food. The Voluntary Guidelines could also serve as an agenda for constructive dialogues between the Committee and the countries concerned and in the formulation of questions and recommendations on priority areas for governments to attend to in future.

FAO's Plans

Implementation of the right to food implies a complex set of tasks. Effective enjoyment of the right to food depends on a variety of systemic, social and political factors that cut across a number of sectors which help determine how people produce, purchase and utilize food.

The principal activities envisaged by FAO to contribute to such a process are contained in a new programme aimed at building FAO's capacity to support national efforts to realise the right to food. They are grouped as follows:

INTERNALIZING AND MAINSTREAMING THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN FAO

In response to the UN Secretary General's request to all UN bodies to "strengthen human rights-related United Nations actions at the country level", FAO will strengthen its efforts to mainstream human rights, in particular the right to adequate food and the Voluntary Guidelines in its entire programme of work and to establish partnerships with various stakeholders in this regard.

NORMATIVE ACTIVITIES

Further normative work has to be done on issues covered in the Voluntary Guidelines in order to inform policy-makers at all levels and to strengthen the quality of FAO's technical assistance.

COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Awareness-raising about the entitlements of rights-holders and the obligations of duty-bearers is central to the implementation of the Guidelines. FAO will, therefore, actively promote the Voluntary Guidelines and seek feedback on their application. Information will be directed to different audiences, such as governments, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society etc.

SUPPORT NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

An increasing number of FAO member nations are approaching the Organization for support in fulfilling these commitments.

As FAO embarks on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines, special attention will be paid to partnerships—new and old—in this endeavour. Interested governments are already supporting the work through financial assistance and advice. FAO will strengthen and expand its cooperation with human-rights bodies and with food and agricultural organizations. FAO will also seek to use inter-agency mechanisms such as the United Nations Development Group and the SCN to ensure that the right to food is mainstreamed within the UN system as a whole. FAO will engage actors from civil society and international NGOs from both the human rights and development sectors.

Conclusion

The Voluntary Guidelines are a potentially useful tool to mobilize political will and resources to



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achieve the goals of the World Food Summit towards the eradication of hunger and malnutrition. Their greatest contribution is the focus on empowering people to claim their rights and on establishing accountability of those responsible for taking action at the national level. The Guidelines can also help governments design appropriate policies, strategies and legislation.

The World Food Summit committed States to halving the number of hungry and malnourished persons by the year 2015. The first Millennium Development Goal is to halve the proportion of those suffering from extreme hunger and poverty by the same date. Without a fundamental change to a paradigm that stresses the mobilization of an entire society and that enhances the rights of the hungry and poor, these goals will not be reached. The Voluntary Guidelines may prove to be a crucial tool in achieving that objective.

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The Voluntary Guidelines in the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Jean Ziegler with Sally-Anne Way and Christophe Golay^a

The post of Special Rapporteur on the right to food was established by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2000 with the following mandate: (a) to seek, receive and respond to information on all aspects of the realization of the right to food, including the urgent necessity of eradicating hunger; (b) to establish cooperation with governments, intergovernmental organizations, in particular the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), on the promotion and effective implementation of the right to food, and to make appropriate recommendations on the realization thereof, taking into consideration the work already being done in this field throughout the UN system; and (c) to identify emerging issues relating to the right to food worldwide.

By United Nations resolution 2001/25, the Commission requested the Special Rapporteur to also pay attention to the issue of drinking water and to mainstream a gender perspective in the activities relating to the mandate. In 2003, the Commission extended the mandate for a further three years (resolution 2003/25).

In carrying out his mandate, the Special Rapporteur coordinates with and engages governments, international intergovernmental and NGOs working in fields relevant to the realization of the right to food. The United Nations human rights bodies and the Rome-based food agencies are primary partners. But the Special Rapporteur has always understood and exercised his mandate in a way to help the voice and concerns of civil society and NGOs to be heard within international forums. Civil society's role in monitoring, promotion and protection, and in holding governments accountable, is crucial for the realization of the right to food.

Given the nature of the mandate, the Special Rapporteur was involved in the process of elaborating the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food by a Working Group within FAO. The UN Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2001/25 requested the Special Rapporteur to contribute to the review of the implementation of the World Food Summit 1996 Declaration and Plan of Action. He also responded to the request of the World Food Summit: five years later 2002 Declaration, which called for the collaboration of the Special Rapporteur. In addition, the decision of the FAO Council, establishing the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) also requested his collaboration. Pursuant to these invitations and mandate, the Special Rapporteur and his team, attended all sessions of the Working Group and some sessions of subsidiary bodies, submitted various proposals and comments to the draft texts and held meetings and coordinated with governments and civil society organizations. His submissions and comments can be found in the webpage of the mandate (www.righttofood.org) and in his reports to the Commission on Human Rights and to the General Assembly during the year 2004 and 2005.

Voluntary Guidelines: a ground-breaking initiative

The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines by consensus within the IGWG and subsequently by the FAO Council signals a stronger commitment on the part of governments towards a more effective implementation of the right to food in their respective jurisdictions and at the international level. This is an important step for adopting the Voluntary Guidelines, as governments have agreed on an internationally accepted understanding of the right to food and its implications for national and international economic, social and legal policies. This marks significant progress.

One important contribution of the Voluntary Guidelines could be found in the field of law and reaffirms concepts and definitions long-cherished by the human rights community. The definition, adopted by governments in the Voluntary Guidelines (see paragraphs 16 and 17 of the Introduction), closely follows the definition adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comment No. 12. It also follows the interpretation offered by the Committee that states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food, which has important implications for

^a Jean Ziegler is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food since the year 2000. Sally-Anne Way and Christophe Golay are researchers on the right to food at the Graduate Institute of Development Studies, University of Geneva and form part of the Research Unit on the Right to Food that assists the Special Rapporteur.



the acceptance of this framework across all economic, social and cultural rights. Paragraph 17 states that:

...States Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) have the obligation to respect, promote and protect and to take appropriate steps to achieve progressively the full realization of the right to adequate food. States Parties should respect existing access to adequate food by not taking any measures that result in preventing such access, and should protect the right of everyone to adequate food by taking steps so that enterprises and individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food. States Parties should promote policies intended to contribute to the progressive realization of people's right to adequate food by proactively engaging in activities intended to strengthen people's access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security. States Parties should, to the extent that resources permit, establish and maintain safety nets or other assistance to protect those who are unable to provide for themselves.

This is the first time that governments have, in practice, endorsed one of the Committee's General Comments and this will have a deep impact on international law, enhancing the legal nature of those states' obligations with regard to the right to food.

The Guidelines are also ground-breaking in that an international dimension, related to the right to food, is recognized in international trade, food aid and embargoes, for example. This is important for it extends the understanding of the right to food beyond the traditional relation between a state and the people living within its borders towards a greater recognition of "extraterritorial" obligations (see my report to the Commission on Human Rights, 2005). This set of guidelines also addresses questions of non-state actors, encouraging direct responsibility for the right to food and improved regulation of markets to ensure food security.

The Voluntary Guidelines also show how the right to food can be incorporated into government strategies and institutions. They show how the key human rights principles—non-discrimination, participation, transparency, accountability and access to justice—can be incorporated into a rights-based approach to food security. The Voluntary Guidelines are also the first instance in which governments agree on the defining elements of a human-rights approach to food security policies (see paragraph 17 in the Introduction). They also call on states to promote "broad-based economic development that is supportive of their food security policies" (Guideline 2.1), to "pursue inclusive, non-discriminatory and sound economic, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, land use, and, as appropriate, land reform policies" (Guideline 2.5) and to incorporate the right to food into poverty reduction strategies. They also urge States to "take account of shortcomings of market mechanisms in protecting the environment and public goods" (Guideline 4.10) and that, particularly for women (Guideline 8.3) and vulnerable groups:

...States should respect and protect the rights of individuals with respect to resources such as land, water, forests, fisheries, and livestock without any discrimination. Where necessary and appropriate, States should carry out land reforms and other policy reforms consistent with their human rights obligations and in accordance with the rule of law in order to secure efficient and equitable access to land and to strengthen pro-poor growth. Special attention may be given to groups such as pastoralists and indigenous people and their relation to natural resources" (Guideline 8.1).

Especially worthy of attention from the nutrition community is Guideline 10 that provides appropriate and even compelling guidance for states to tackle what is known as hidden hunger. Malnutrition could cause severe short- and long-term impairments, particularly in children. Greater care for the nutritional component of food is thus necessary for the effective realization of the right to adequate food. Guideline 10 enjoins states to take measures regarding dietary diversity and healthy eating and feeding patterns; to promote breastfeeding in accordance with mainstream international recommendations and to pay special attention to the nutritional needs of vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, lactating mothers, HIV-affected people and others.

The Voluntary Guidelines also call on states to set up mechanisms to inform people of their rights and improve access to justice for the right to food (Guideline 7). For the Special Rapporteur, greater recognition of the right to adequate food at the national level and assuring access to justice for all, with priority for the poorest and most vulnerable, would significantly improve the realization of the right to food. The Voluntary Guidelines, therefore, have the potential to have a substantial impact in the struggle for achieving the right to food.



The broader political significance of the guidelines is the most valuable outcome of the process of developing the Voluntary Guidelines. It was the first time that governments came together to debate the meaning of economic, social and cultural rights. It was also the first time that governments came together to fully debate the meaning and content of the right to food, even during an extremely difficult political and economic juncture. The Voluntary Guidelines process has also taken human rights discussions outside of human rights circles. As the NGOs have noted: "The Voluntary Guidelines have introduced the human rights discourse to a broader audience within the United Nations and within government bureaucracies beyond the departments responsible for human rights."^b It has had a particularly significant impact within FAO, and, therefore, contributes to the UN Secretary General's goal of mainstreaming human rights throughout the UN system. However, it is essential that the Voluntary Guidelines now be used as a practical instrument to guide government policies and programmes in order to have a real impact on hunger and food insecurity in the world.

An instrument for monitoring and accountability

The text of the Voluntary Guidelines has been agreed upon by governments from both the North and South, and as such is useful and applicable to all countries irrespective of their level of development and income. Right-to-food related problems exist in all countries, including developed ones where rising rates of malnutrition and even undernourishment generate concern. Of course, recommendations and, in general, the agenda set in the Voluntary Guidelines have to be adapted to the specific circumstances of each country, hence the justification for the flexible character of several of the guidelines.

Accountability of governments and other duty-holders in relation with the right to food is of crucial importance for the realization of that right. Guideline 17 proposes the establishment of mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of progress made in the realization of the right to food, including the conduct of "Right to Food Impact Assessments" in order to identify the impact of domestic policies, programmes and projects on the realization of the right to food of the population at large and vulnerable individuals in particular, and as a basis for adopting the necessary corrective measures. Clearly the objective of the monitoring is not only to produce information addressed essentially to the administration services of public ministries, it is also to inform citizens and their representative organizations as well as to provide a basis for holding public officers and political leaders accountable for what they have or have not done in relation to the right to food.

The agenda proposed in the Voluntary Guidelines could also serve for international monitoring and accountability. The Special Rapporteur's role could be, in this regard, instrumental. In a recent visit by the Special Rapporteur to Guatemala to assess the degree of realization of the right to food in that country, the Voluntary Guidelines were used to direct the interactions among officials and other partners. The Special Rapporteur requested the Government to furnish information on the issues addressed in General Comment No. 12 and the Voluntary Guidelines. The information so provided by the Government addressed those aspects of the right to food in great detail allowing a better understanding of the situation and the formulation of corrective measures. Those will constitute the core of the report of the visit to be presented at the 2006 session of the Commission on Human Rights. During the same visit, the text of the Voluntary Guidelines was also shared with national donor representatives who were given encouragement to align their activities with the document's subjects and proposals. A similar approach will be followed during subsequent country visits. The fact that all governments have endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines provides a strong common ground for dialogue.

An agenda for international action and cooperation

The fact that the subject of international commitments and actions are assigned to a separate third section in the Voluntary Guidelines may erroneously suggest that those commitments are secondary or even collateral to the realization of the right to food. The Special Rapporteur would argue the contrary: the inclusion of the international dimension in the text reinforces its relevance as "essential" for the realization of the right to food. Article 11 on the right to food of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, speaks of international cooperation as essential and commits all States to jointly act to ensure a fair distribution of food resources in the world in accordance to needs. This clearly calls for collective action as well as individual state action concerning the food security situation beyond national borders.

The realization of the right to food within each country is influenced by international policies and events, providing the environment in which national efforts either succeed or fail. Issues such as international assistance and cooperation, external debt, food aid and international trade rules and policies

^b NGO caucus 'Final Evaluation: No Masterpiece of Political Will', issued 10 July 2004.



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are instrumental in the realization of the right to food in each country.

The next few years will show how the commitments, assumed by governments by adopting the Voluntary Guidelines, translate into concrete strategies and programmes with a human-rights approach. Rather than feeding the poor and hungry, this approach requires us to give them justice and to respect their right to feed themselves. In this approach, international organizations have also a clear responsibility. United Nations programmes, specialized agencies and coordinating bodies have a role to play in assisting countries in putting the Voluntary Guidelines into practice. As Rousseau wrote, "*Entre le faible et le fort, c'est la liberté qui opprime et c'est la loi qui libère*".^c The Voluntary Guidelines are a key tool to promote normative development.

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^c Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 1762. Translated: "Between the weak and the mighty, it is liberty that oppresses and it is the law that liberates."



Civil society groups working on the right to adequate food

A User's guide to the Voluntary Guidelines

Michael Windfuhr

FoodFirst Information and Action Network

Civil society groups were the major driving force behind the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to adequate food.^a Without the untiring work of human-rights organizations and other civil society actors, the legal understanding of the right to food and nutrition would still be very rudimentary as before the 1996 World Food Summit.

The 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conference proved decisive in the recognition of economic, social and cultural rights by highlighting the interrelatedness of all human rights. The 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) presented an opportunity to advance the legal interpretation of the right to adequate food. Today, nine years later, much has been achieved. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has since developed a legal interpretation of the right to food (General Comment No. 12) in 1999. In November 2004, the FAO Council unanimously adopted the Voluntary Guidelines.

The great achievement of the WFS Declaration and Plan of Action and in follow-up work particularly by the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines was the focus on government participation. This is vital as the absence of political will—as emphasized by FAO this since 1996—is responsible for the worldwide problem of hunger and malnutrition. Government policy must change in order to reduce the number of hungry and malnourished. Thus, a rights-based approach is essential. Holding governments accountable is at the core of this approach.

The rights-based approach was long limited by the lack of legal clarity and ineffective standard setting. Civil society organizations (CSOs)^b had to do much advocacy and lobbying during the “standard-setting” process. It is their conviction that a rights-based approach will be a crucial new tool. With these new legal instruments—the General Comment 12 and the Voluntary Guidelines—standard setting has come quite far. Today's challenge is for CSOs to make effective use of these instruments.

This article argues that a rights-based approach has distinctly needed potential which is missing in conventional development strategies. It explains why CSOs are investing so much energy in this rights-based approach. The article reviews the history of the understanding of the right to adequate food and examines achievements with the Voluntary Guidelines from a civil society perspective. It also suggests what can be done nationally and internationally. It concludes by reflecting how CSO thinking can best be used and bolsters the new instrument in the implementation process.

Rights-based approach: What does this mean? What is its added value?

At the core of a rights-based approach is the idea that people can legally claim respect for human rights from their governments through entitlements. A careful look into the core causes of hunger and malnutrition reveal the importance of the quality of governance. A rights-based approach does not replace other development policies, but is a necessary complement to achieving long term success.

Global statistics on the hungry and malnourished are needed to identify individuals most affected. Recently, the United Nations Millennium Development Project's Task Force on Hunger developed a typology of hunger. It showed that close to 80% of the world's hungry live in rural areas. The majority of those at risk are smallholder farmers, largely dependent on agriculture. In fact, half of the hungry are peasants mostly living on extreme small pieces of land, lacking adequate access to resources such as land, water and seeds. Of these, two thirds live on poor soils and in difficult environments (e.g., moun-

^a While the full title is: “Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security,” I will use here for practical reasons the form “Voluntary Guidelines on the right to adequate food”.

^b The term civil society organizations is used as an umbrella term for different types of civil society organizations. Normally one can differentiate social movements (grassroot organisations) from NGOs, which are seen as technical or political support organizations to social movements. NGOs are often highly specialized single issue organizations. In the UN-accreditation, NGOs is used as the name for all CSOs.



tainous areas or those prone to drought or flooding and mud slides). Additionally 22% are landless families surviving under precarious working conditions as landless labourers. As well, 8% can be found in rural communities engaged in fishing, hunting and herding activities. About 20% are urban-based and constitute the fastest growing group.

The key typology finding is that hunger and malnutrition are deeply entrenched in politically and geographically marginalized groups living in relatively remote areas. Fighting hunger and malnutrition requires tackling the problems of discrimination and marginalization of those affected. Small-holding farmers on marginal lands often lack access to secure land titles, credits, agricultural extension services, local markets and to information from agricultural research. Landless families also lack access to land or to jobs making them unable to produce or to buy adequate food. Hunger is therefore less a production problem as often argued, but rather one of securing access to such productive resources. The role of government is important, not in production but in the creation and securing of an enabling environment.

Human rights treaties spell out governments obligations towards all their citizens. Civil society organizations working with a rights-based approach can follow basically two directions in their work: either work with the rights-holders or with the duty-bearers. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of possible CSO activities:

CSOs can inform rights-holders about their rights, conduct training and education work, help develop skills on how to document cases of violations of economic, social and cultural rights, guide local groups of victims in the use of legal or other recourse procedures at the national level, etc.

Secondly, work with duty-bearers in training government officials or legal personnel, including lawyers and judges. The work can also direct organizations, as independent human-rights institutions, ombudsman systems, etc. The publication of cases of violation can help government institutions re-examine policies that unwittingly contribute to such violations. Lobbying and advocacy work can help to propose or amend legislation that impacts on food strategies.

Agenda and standard setting: the right to food at international level

While work prior to the Vienna Human Rights Conference concentrated on achieving greater recognition of economic, social and cultural rights in general, international NGOs in favour of the right to food used the 1996 WFS as an opportunity to put the subject on the top of the international policy agenda. During the preparation for the WFS, a new idea was put forth by the Jacques Maritain Institute (IJM), the World Alliance on Nutrition and Human Rights (WANAHR), and FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN), namely to promote a new normative and quasi-legal instrument in the format of a Code of Conduct on the right to adequate food. At the time there were three reasons in favour of a legal instrument with a voluntary character: (1) it fitted the format in which FAO typically brings new issues into legal texts (2) a code of conduct can direct itself to different actors and responsibilities, thus both governmental, non-governmental and private actors; and (3) international legal experts had observed that the format of a binding international convention on the right to adequate food would not likely be taken up by governments: developing a convention on one of the economic, social and cultural rights could be seen as a step towards the proliferation of a series of new human rights instruments, thus the chances of survival of that idea among governments was judged as extremely limited.

The World Food Summit process

The collective push by international NGOs for having the right to adequate food recognized by Member States at the WFS and for the development of an International Code of Conduct on the human right to adequate food, proved successful.

The first success was achieved during the parallel NGO Forum, a gathering of more than one thousand civil society organisations from the world over. The WFS was asked by the Forum to seriously take up the issue of the right to food. Moreover, the final declaration of the NGO Forum—"Profit for a few or food for all"—demands two new legal instruments from FAO: a code of conduct on the right to food and a convention on trade and food security.^c The first idea received tremendous support and a draft text was prepared by FIAN-International together with the two other NGOs mentioned above, the Jacques Maritain Institute and WANAHR and a group of international law experts within a broad

^c The final declaration and other documents of the Parallel NGO forum from 1996, as well as the documents from the second NGO/CSO forum to the World Food Summit: *five years later* event in 2002 can be found on the website of the International Planning Committee (IPC), the umbrella structure of those NGOs/CSOs that work together with the FAO: www.foodsovereignty.org



international civil society consultation process concluding with a conference in Geneva in May 1997.

The second success was that the WFS of 1996 was moved to put the right to food high on the political agenda of governments and of the FAO: fulfilling the right of every person to be free from hunger, and to provide access to productive resources for people to feed themselves implies essential obligations of governments.

The third achievement was the attention given to the right to food in the WFS Plan of Action, with Objective 7.4 asking the High Commissioner for Human Rights to clarify, together with the FAO and others, what is the right to food and to develop “voluntary guidelines for food security for all”. Another five years were needed of intensive lobbying governments up to the World Food Summit: *five years later* (WFS:fyl) to change the objective of the voluntary guidelines from “food security” to the “right to food”.

With this objective in mind, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) issued its General Comment No. 12 on the right to food in 1999. The CESCR in elaborating the General Comment No. 12, took many ideas from the draft Code of Conduct on the right to food. Although general comments are not binding, they represent authoritative interpretations of UN expert bodies, to be used as legal points of reference. The General Comment No. 12 was a major achievement in the process of standards setting for the right to food. The NGOs/CSOs after that sought nevertheless an instrument for adoption by Member States to which governments themselves would have ownership and that could increase their commitment to the necessary policy changes. NGOs/CSOs present at the NGO Forum parallel to the World Food Summit: *five years later*, in June 2002, therefore backed the demand for a Code of Conduct.^d One of the few concrete results of the WFS:fyl was the setting up of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) under the FAO Committee on World Food Security to develop voluntary guidelines in support of countries’ implementation of the right to adequate food.

The Inter-governmental Working Group on the right to adequate food

The NGOs and CSOs were well prepared to help influence the IGWG political process. They organized themselves as the human rights working group of the International Planning Committee, the umbrella network of civil society organisations working with the FAO, comprising a broad range of different civil society actors—from farmers and fishermen organizations to development aid NGOs and human rights organizations. Before each IGWG meeting, this human rights working group met in Rome for several days to elaborate common positions and distribute these to the worldwide net of NGOs and CSOs interested in the right to food and with government representatives.^e

Civil society organizations participating in the process observed how difficult the negotiations were. Very few governments were fully supportive of the process, while many others tried to water down the text to a level at which any meaningful commitment to action and change would have been nullified. Some of the language remained weak up to the end. The CSOs called the text “no masterpiece of political will”. Nevertheless the CSO community was finally satisfied with the results in so far as first, the Voluntary Guidelines are reiterating the standards set in the interpretation of the right to adequate food achieved with General Comment No. 12 and that they were adopted unanimously and second, that they will be a very useful tool for governments and civil society organisations that would like to better implement of the right to adequate food and nutrition. The Voluntary Guidelines constitute the first instrument containing a detailed interpretation of one of the economic, social and cultural rights.

What has changed with the Voluntary Guidelines?

The Voluntary Guidelines have allowed a mainstreaming of the rights-based approach among governments and within FAO. This process represents only a beginning. FAO now has a clear mandate while governments have been given a tool-box with which to work on the right to adequate food, nationally and internationally. For CSOs, the Guidelines serve as a useful instrument to challenge inactive governments. More specifically, it should be asked what has changed with the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines?

^d The final NGO/CSO evaluation of the voluntary guidelines was titled: “No masterpiece of political will”. The text can also be found on the FIAN web-site: www.fian.org.

^e FIAN-International, which functioned as a secretariat for the CSO-process, had set up its own list-serve for civil society organizations interested in the process. Currently the list covers more than 300 particular interested CSOs from all part of the world. All the documents and statements the NGOs/CSOs developed before each of the session of the IGWG can be read and downloaded from the FIAN-homepage: www.fian.org



The Voluntary Guidelines describe what governments can and should do in several policy areas if they want to implement the right to adequate food. The definition of this right goes beyond simply having access to food and underlines the importance of access to productive resources. States are reminded that they have obligations under international law to use the maximum of available resources in this respect to all people living in their territory.

The Voluntary Guidelines require that governments elaborate a national strategy whether as an overall right to food strategy or as an integration of the right to food in existing poverty or food-security strategies. The Voluntary Guidelines describe the five necessary elements of such a national strategy, a precondition for effective implementation of the right to adequate food: (1) an analysis of the causes of hunger; (2) an assessment of existing legislative and policy frameworks and a review of problematic legislation or areas; (3) a screening to ensure that all government policy measures do not lead to violations of the right to adequate food and that the state is progressively engaging the maximum in its resources; (4) a setting up of effective monitoring mechanisms by governments to check if national policies are supporting the implementation of the right to food and to measure overall progress in coming years; and (5) that governments must set up effective recourse procedures which allow victims of violations of the right to adequate food to claim their rights and demand meaningful remedies. The Voluntary Guidelines contain many provisions that explain how these elements could be part of an integrated national right-to-food strategy. Governments are not asked for their business-as-usual response, but to undertake any necessary changes at all five stages of the implementation strategy.

The 18 guidelines dealing with government responsibilities at the national level are convincing. They regroup recommendations for government policies. Some are specific on access to resources, economic development policies, national strategies, food safety etc. They are quite detailed as the following description on Guideline 10 will show. A strong element of the Voluntary Guidelines is Guideline 10 on nutrition. No previous instrument on the right to food has as yet been so explicit on nutrition issues. The notion of adequacy covered several aspects of the quality of food such as the cultural acceptability of food and the safety of food (free from adverse substances). The concept of nutrition in the Voluntary Guidelines goes further to include "dietary diversity, healthy eating habits and food preparation, as well as feeding patterns including breastfeeding". Governments are asked to ensure that "changes in availability and access to food supply do not negatively affect dietary composition and intake." Ten subparagraphs describe government obligations precisely as to what they can do (best practices) to ensure implementation of this right.

It is often asked if the voluntary nature of the Voluntary Guidelines reduces its potential force to catalyse political will for policy changes. Most members of the FAO are already legally bound to implement the right to food. A special human rights treaties on one of the ESC-Rights would not have been possible. Therefore, it was preferable, that the document's voluntary nature has helped guarantee first its acceptance, which is even more important as it has been universal. The large majority of FAO member states are already legally bound to implement the right to adequate food by being a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, where the right to adequate food appears in Article 11. For this group of states, the Voluntary Guidelines serve as an important orientation of national policies and measures. They do not create new binding legal obligations. For those countries which are not yet States Parties to the ICESCR, or which do not intend to become so in the foreseeable future, the Guidelines are not binding, but also for them the Guidelines provide a text full of ideas for best practices and a toolbox for improving national policy making. That CSOs can also use the Voluntary Guidelines for monitoring governments performance and for holding governments accountable is probably the single most important factor that may contribute to overall success.

From standard-setting to implementation: current plans and ideas of CSOs

The CSO community involved in the process met again in June 2005 in Berlin where the German Government hosted an international expert workshop "Policies against hunger IV: implementing the Voluntary Guidelines" (see page 71, Programme News). During a pre-conference meeting one discussed the best ways to make use of the Voluntary Guidelines in the coming months and years. All were aware that civil society demands to use the Voluntary Guidelines could be decisive for any meaningful follow-up work with the text, because any international agreement only becomes influential if accepted by governments or if its use is demanded by civil society groups in a way that governments have to respond.

In Berlin, there was agreement that civil society follow-up work must start first and foremost at the national level. The Voluntary Guidelines are an excellent tool for a broad, substantive education process. One of the meeting's priorities was educational activities for rights-holders as the human right to adequate food is still barely known. The value-added of international law in national political or legal



struggles needs to be explained. Education material needs to be developed and training courses at the national level must be organised. Education and training work is to be directed towards civil society groups, both human rights organizations and social movements. The varied nature and content of each of the guidelines make them fit for use by a range of specific target groups.

A useful way to promote the Voluntary Guidelines would be as a tool to monitor government compliance with their obligations. They can serve as a tool to monitor the quality and adequacy of a government's interventions and whether different proposals in the subparagraphs of each guideline are taken up by governments. If so done, the VG can help to examine whether the measures taken are adequate to achieve stated objectives. It was proposed to gather this information in the form of 'shadow' reports to be published regularly which serve as watch-dog over government action. The monitoring should be guided by the five elements of the national implementation strategy mentioned above: Do governments assess the hunger situation and the problems of the different vulnerable groups? Do they examine whether their current legislation and administrative procedures contribute to violations? Do they plan to revise their legislation and policy measures? How do governments monitor the impact of their own interventions and do they provide access to resources?

It was highlighted that monitoring must carefully differentiate among various sectors of government activities. Although national legislation might be quite suitable, local corruption or ineffectiveness may render the law ineffective. Monitoring should, therefore, be specific about problems at the local, regional, or national level. Finally, problems caused by international conditions must be revisited. The documentation of violations and the identification of those responsible will be an essential element of effective work. To be specific about types of obligations that can be derived from each guideline and subparagraph and what constitutes a violation, it was decided in Berlin that the CSO community should develop a legal commentary on the Voluntary Guidelines. FIAN-International will develop such a commentary in the second half of 2005.

Effective monitoring of government performance can serve as a basis for lobbying and advocacy work with governments because the Voluntary Guidelines have been accepted by governments worldwide. CSOs should begin gathering examples and best practice cases at all levels of national activity and make these known to other CSOs in other countries. It was agreed that a web-site will be set up by FIAN to provide space for a regular exchange of ideas and experiences in the use of the Voluntary Guidelines.

CSOs must also insist that the government in question—the primary duty-bearer—promotes the right to adequate food and that it actively informs and educates the public about the Guidelines, e.g. in schools and in public institutions. Besides spreading the information and making it available nationwide, governments should train their own staff in ministries and administrations at local, regional and national levels on how to best understand and implement the Voluntary Guidelines.

Given that NGOs came from the world over to Berlin, it was proposed that regional civil society networks be contacted to engage them in disseminating information on the Voluntary Guidelines. For example, international NGO/CSO networks shall similarly be contacted to reach out to national CSOs, such as the IPC-network, the NGO constituency of the SCN, and the newly established network on economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR-Net).

At the same time, the Voluntary Guidelines need also to be promoted at the international level. The CSO community has to monitor and push the FAO to begin meaningful follow-up work. Incorporating a rights-based approach into its own work represents a new commitment for the Organization. As the Voluntary Guidelines touch on a wide range of policy areas, they are a relevant tool also for several international organizations beyond FAO: other food and hunger-related organizations, such as the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, as well as agencies such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, etc. The human rights system has yet to adopt and use the Voluntary Guidelines systematically. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has however already announced that it will use the Voluntary Guidelines as reference when examining States Parties' performance on the right to adequate food.

It was pointed out in Berlin that the rights-based approach is weak in the current debate on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as the Sachs report did not use such an approach. The Voluntary Guidelines offer an excellent tool to integrate economic, social and cultural rights into the implementation work on the first of these MDGs, that is, the reduction by half of the percentage of poor and hungry by 2015.

In order to support all these ideas the NGO/CSO community decided in Berlin to jointly prepare sev-



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eral publications and to translate them into different languages. Information on publications and training methods and tools will soon be available on the new website.^f

The main challenges for the coming months will be to get the Voluntary Guidelines' message across to government actors at the national level to use them for monitoring the work of judges, members of national human rights commissions or in national human rights and civil society organizations. A focused human rights training and education programme is needed at all levels.

Unfortunately the current level of violations of the right to food or its non-implementation in many countries may not only be due to the fact that governments and power brokers are not well informed about the Voluntary Guidelines. There are often vested interests that hinder reform. Such power structures can be budged only when civil society actors work together. The successful fulfilment of human rights is, by its very nature, a conflictual process in which legal tools are essential, but fortunately not the only requirement for success.

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^f Please consult the homepage of FIAN-International for information on the start of the new Voluntary Guideline website (likely in October 2005). www.fian.org



Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food

The perspective of a development agency

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Introduction

For the first time in history, governments have agreed on the contents of an economic, social and cultural right and provided practical orientation for its achievement. The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines^a by the FAO Council in November 2004 represents a landmark event for the development of an economic, social and cultural right and for strengthening a human rights based approach to food security.

This article aims at contributing to the current discussions on the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. It examines the ground-breaking character of the Voluntary Guidelines, their significance as a tool for development and humanitarian aid, and examines options for future action. It is written from the perspective of a development agency, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which is part of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. SDC's mandate^b includes, among others, poverty alleviation; ensuring sustainable development; empowering the disadvantaged; supporting human rights, the rule of law, and democracy; aiding victims of natural disasters and armed conflict, resolving conflict and ensuring peace.

SDC focuses its activities on five closely linked topics^c: crisis prevention and management, good governance, income generation and employment, increased social justice, and the sustainable use of natural resources. Each objective contributes to the overall objective of sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions. All of its activities are geared towards reducing poverty and dismantling the causes of structural conflicts.

Based on its mandate and activities, SDC attached high priority to the negotiation process leading to the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines in 2004. It saw this process as an opportunity for closer partnerships and fruitful cooperation with countries in the South and North, as well as with civil society organizations, in pursuing the common goals of hunger and poverty eradication.

Human rights in development cooperation

The concept of human rights has evolved greatly throughout history. From the perspective of development cooperation, several major events since the 1990s have had a crucial impact. At the level of normative development and understanding of human rights, the Vienna World Human Rights Conference in 1993 affirmed the universality of human rights and the interdependence among civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, thus confirming the convergence of human rights and development. The significance of poverty, as an obstacle to full enjoyment of human rights, was equally recognized. Subsequently, at the level of the international political environment, the end of the Cold War provided new opportunities to address the economic, political and social structural problems of developing countries. It became generally accepted that the respect of human rights, democracy and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Since the reforms initiated by the United Nations Secretary-General in 1997, integrating human rights has also become a major task for the whole of the United Nations system. Human rights have become a priority for organizations and agencies dealing with development cooperation. Today, it is widely recognized that pursuing human rights is a development objective and a means of poverty eradication.

In a further important step taken in 2002, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights developed a set of Draft Guidelines for a human-rights based approach to poverty reduction strategies. These Draft Guidelines indicate that policies, programmes and projects aimed at poverty eradication

^a The full title of the Voluntary Guidelines, as adopted by the FAO Council is *Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security*.

^b See Federal Law on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid of 19 March 1976, as well as Federal decree of 24 March 1995 on cooperation with countries of Eastern Europe.

^c See *Strategy 2010* of SDC, Bern, 2000; and *Creating the prospect of living a life in dignity, Principles guiding the SDC in its commitment to fighting poverty*, SDC, Bern, 2004.



should rest on the following principles:

- empowerment of poor people
- linkage to national and international human-rights norms and standards
- accountability of duty-bearers at the national and international levels
- participation of all stakeholders, particularly the poorest
- equality and non-discrimination, implying special attention to vulnerable groups.

These global developments offered new opportunities to include human rights as an integral part of development cooperation. In February 1997, SDC adopted its own guidelines on *"Promoting Human Rights in Development Cooperation"* as a practical tool for mainstreaming human rights in its work. These guidelines underline the impact that human rights can have on development. They stress that combating poverty contributes to improving the status of the poorest in society, thus better fulfilling their rights. Promoting human rights and respecting basic freedoms gives human beings, especially disadvantaged people, more means to improve their situation and participate in public decision-making. The guidelines offer a methodological process for increased SDC involvement in the field of human rights and propose concrete actions for operational implementation, covering such issues as positive action, political dialogue, human rights as a multisectoral concern and other operational issues. At present, an important debate is taking place within SDC on revisiting its own guidelines, in order to adapt this important tool to the most recent developments with respect to the human rights-based approach to development cooperation.

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food

The present discussion will focus on some key issues and areas of concern contained in the Voluntary Guidelines from the particular perspective of a development agency.

PIONEERING ROLE

The Voluntary Guidelines represent a ground-breaking document for several reasons. First, they are the result of intergovernmental negotiations and provide a common understanding of what the right to food is and what strategies should be adopted to realize this right in the context of national food security. It is the first time that the substance and meaning of the right to food has been discussed and defined in the context of an intergovernmental negotiation.

Second, the Voluntary Guidelines are also unique in that they are the result of contributions from experts in such diverse fields as agriculture, development cooperation and human rights. The multidisciplinary contributions from these various fields led to an increased degree of complexity in the negotiations. They represented a special challenge and, at the same time, a true value-added by dealing with development in such a comprehensive manner. This multidisciplinaryity should be maintained as the international community moves on to implement the Voluntary Guidelines.

Third, it is the first time the right to food was discussed in detail at FAO and not just exclusively in the context of the human rights community. The issue was thus brought substantially closer to both a universal and an operational level, where poverty reduction policies and food security policies are designed and implemented.

Fourth, the uniqueness of the Voluntary Guidelines comes from their human-rights approach to food security, making it possible for human rights to become an integral part of food security, development and other policies. They also have the potential to integrating issues (as food security and development policies) within human rights debates. Policy areas covered in the Voluntary Guidelines complement and reinforce each other and represent a contribution towards increased coherence among policies.

The Voluntary Guidelines constitute a major break through in the development of social, economic and cultural rights. They provide practical orientation and recommendations in about 20 areas of intervention, ranging from economic development policies, legal framework, access to resources and assets, food safety, nutrition, education, financial resources, natural and man-made disasters, monitoring and human-rights institutions. In these Voluntary Guidelines, it is not the right of the individual person to be fed by the state which is central, but rather the right of every human being to feed himself or herself, by his or her own proper means and in dignity. Thus, the emphasis is on an enabling environment for which very comprehensive recommendations are spelled out.



RELEVANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID

The Voluntary Guidelines include a number of topics which, from SDC's perspective, have particular relevance for development cooperation and humanitarian aid and which, accordingly, have received highest attention throughout the negotiation process. These topics relate to international commitments (the Plan of Action of Rome, the Millennium Declaration), international human rights instruments, the definition of the right to food, the multistakeholder approach, gender, access to resources and assets, land and water, international food aid, complex emergencies, monitoring and reporting, justiciability. This section will concentrate on four of these priority areas.

a) Definition of the right to food

For the Voluntary Guidelines to become a useful tool, it was crucial that countries agree on the definition of the right to food. Consequently, this was one of the priority areas to which SDC paid particular attention during the negotiation process. Furthermore, it was essential that the Guidelines reflect the principles and elements which characterize a human rights-based approach, as mentioned in Section 2 above. Among these elements are the different levels of responsibility of the state to respect, protect, and fulfill (facilitate and provide) the right to food.

From SDC's point of view, one of the major accomplishments of the negotiation process in the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines was the agreement on a definition of the right to food, and the fact that this definition retains the main elements of the definition contained in General Comment No. 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). As the Voluntary Guidelines enter the implementation phase, it is important that the original reference to General Comment No. 12 is maintained.

Water is an integral part of food. Unfortunately, the right to water, as developed in General Comment No. 15 of the CESCR, is not explicitly mentioned in the Voluntary Guidelines. Guideline No. 8c on water, however, does recognize that "water in sufficient quantity and quality for all is fundamental for life and health". As the Voluntary Guidelines are implemented through national strategies and programmes, it is important that the right to water be included as integral part in realizing the right to food.

b) Pro-poor approach

The Voluntary Guidelines are a practical tool to reduce hunger in the world. As indicated in their purpose and in accordance with the human-rights approach to food security, they clearly focus on the poor and the most vulnerable groups. During the negotiations at FAO, this was one of the most important areas from the development cooperation perspective and Switzerland intervened repeatedly in this sense.

The Voluntary Guidelines clearly promote a pro-poor approach, with recommendations to improve the livelihood of and empower the most vulnerable persons and groups of society; this approach is reflected throughout the text. For example, Guideline 4: Market systems, gives coherent orientations combining well-functioning market systems, the focus on poor and vulnerable groups as part of this market system, and safety nets as last resort when markets cannot meet the basic needs of all. Other guidelines specifically focus on the poor, as for example Guideline 13: Support for vulnerable groups, Guideline 14: Safety nets, and Guideline 8: Access to resources and assets.

SDC's Agricultural sector policy^d adopts a pro-poor approach identifying the strategic options in the area of food security:

- SDC emphasizes food security, relying on income generation, improved domestic food production in low-income food deficit countries and on trade;
- in food security and agriculture, SDC takes a long term perspective, moving up the aid continuum to emphasize prevention and research over relief and cure; and
- because of the importance of basic food for poor countries and in light of its own experience, SDC maintains emphasis on food crops. It does not exclude non-food commodities.

c) Access to resources

Access to resources will most probably be a central issue during future implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. Guideline 8: access to resources and assets, contains orientations which refer to the different levels of obligation of states, namely to respect, protect and fulfill. Among the many impor-

^d Agricultural sector policy, SDC, Bern, 1999.



tant recommendations, is the call to states to take steps so that members of vulnerable groups can have access to opportunities and economic resources, to carry out land reforms and other policy reforms in order to secure efficient and equitable access to land and to strengthen pro-poor growth, to promote women's full and equal participation in the economy, to give special consideration to the situation of indigenous communities and to protect ecological sustainability. The specific reference to the promotion of agricultural research and development, as well as the recommendation regarding the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture are important elements of the Voluntary Guidelines.

SDC's Agricultural sector policy contains the following policy orientation concerning access to resources:

- SDC concentrates its work in the area of access to resources, access to knowledge and access to genetic resources;
- In land and water use, emphasis is given to policies which provide security of land and water use, thereby encouraging sustainable land and water management; and
- Work on plant genetic resources is concentrated on the national and international policy level, and on ethics and equity issues. This includes access to traditional and improved plant genetic resources and regulation of intellectual property rights.

d) Food aid

Food aid is a very complex issue. It was not possible, in the limited context of the Voluntary Guidelines, to address all its aspects. Some recommendations are nevertheless included in Guideline 15: International food aid and in Section III: International measures, actions and commitments. The Voluntary Guidelines reflect the main principles for designing and implementing sound food aid strategies and programmes, such as needs-based, not disrupting local food production, avoiding the creation of dependence, exit strategy. They also contain reference to normative elements of international humanitarian law, which applies without restrictions to all parties in a conflict, such as unimpeded access to populations in need and unimpeded access for humanitarian agencies involved. Two further elements in the Voluntary Guidelines merit mention in this context, namely the recommendation to take into account long-term rehabilitation and development objectives in the recipient countries and the specific mention of the respect for the universally recognized humanitarian principles.

The design of food aid policies must be guided by careful assessments of availability of food, potential effects on prices, food safety, nutrition needs, as well as by cost considerations and impact on food habits. Food aid policies must follow a "do no harm" strategy.

Bearing in mind that the ultimate objective of food aid is the elimination of the need for food aid, Switzerland is of the firm opinion that international food aid should follow three main principles, namely a) be directed exclusively to emergency needs (natural disasters, armed conflicts and population displacement); b) be provided to the maximum extent possible in cash, with purchases made through open tendering; and c) be untied and provided in fully-grant form.

Options for future action

The true value of a tool comes through its use; similarly for the Voluntary Guidelines. The global focus now must be on their implementation. Governments and human rights, development and humanitarian actors, as well as civil society are particularly challenged to make good use of this invaluable tool.

This applies to SDC, which is currently revisiting its own guidelines "Promoting human rights and development cooperation", taking into account the most recent developments in the international context. In the meantime, its own guidelines remain relevant for SDC's continued engagement in this area, including for issues on the right to food and those concerning the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. The following options for operational implementation have been identified in the SDC guidelines:

1) Positive action: developing programmes and projects which promote human rights:

- build on local ownership
- collaborate with governmental and non-governmental partners, depending on the situation in the country concerned; support state institutions
- exploit opportunities in a flexible manner for individual projects, developing coherent programmes for key countries.



- 2) Political dialogue: Introduce human-rights issues into political dialogue with recipient countries:
 - make use, through bilateral contacts, of Switzerland's representatives in addressing human-rights concerns
 - use donor coordination institutions for promoting human-rights concerns
 - integrate human-rights concerns into discussions on bilateral agreements.
- 3) Differentiated human-rights conditionality: using rights conditionality cautiously and as a last resort:
 - alternative, positive approaches, such as adapting and supplementing existing programmes and projects, or selecting other channels, are always preferable to disengagement
 - assess arguments for and against termination of some or all programmes and projects.
- 4) Mainstreaming human rights: Integrating human rights as a transversal element through all sectors of development cooperation:
 - integrate human rights in country and sector programmes and in their evaluations
 - recognize human rights risks within projects, and plan countermeasures
 - foster the participative element in programmes and projects, permitting those concerned to defend their rights
 - make use of human-rights potential in all sectors.

5) Capacity building: promote human-rights competence and expertise within SDC.

A key to successful implementation of a human-rights based approach is the attitude towards the persons targeted at by a specific activity: these persons are rights-holders. Operational activities must be designed and measured based on their contribution to the realization of these rights.

Conclusion

The UN Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals reaffirm the basic right of all human beings to participate in the economic, social and political processes of society. This includes their right to freely, actively, and effectively participate in shaping society, to take part in decision-making processes, and to share the fruits which development brings. This also means freedom from want and freedom from fear, recognizing the strong interdependence which exists between development, security and human rights as reflected in the report of the UN Secretary-General *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*.

The Voluntary Guidelines constitute a valuable instrument to fight against hunger and poverty, and to bring humanity closer to the vision of a world in which all people can live in prosperity, peace, freedom, and security, and a world which will also provide future generations with sufficient resources for their own development.

This paper has described why the Voluntary Guidelines represent an achievement. More importantly, if they are to have any impact, they must be the beginning of an intensified, more focused human-rights based effort on achieving food security for all. Implementation is key. The Voluntary Guidelines imply an important paradigm shift from charitable activities to the rights inherent in every human being, from assistance to empowerment of the poor. This paradigm shift is of paramount importance for achieving the goal of halving the number of persons suffering from hunger and malnutrition by 2015 and for realizing the development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration.

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Poverty Reduction Strategies

How can the Voluntary Guidelines help?

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Introduction

This paper aims to suggest how the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of Food Security can contribute to the reduction of hunger and malnutrition in country poverty reduction strategies (PRSs). It will also demonstrate that the Guidelines can help meet key challenges in the PRS process. This paper first reviews the global poverty challenge and how a human rights approach strengthens PRSs. The case is made for using the Voluntary Guidelines to develop a shared understanding of the hunger challenge and to address it in the context of PRSs. Next, the implications for PRSs are highlighted and proposals are made on how the use of the Voluntary Guidelines can tackle bottlenecks in PRS processes. Finally, recommendations are put forth on how to make the Guidelines more practical and user-friendly.

Poverty reduction: the central global development challenge

Government, business and civil society leaders regard poverty reduction as the crucial global development challenge of our time. The Millennium Declaration represents the commitment to reduce poverty through a series of interrelated goals and specific targets by the year 2015. Business leaders voted poverty reduction as the number one priority for global action at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Civil society leaders launched the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2005. The GCAP, a coalition of civil society organizations, calls on global leaders to fulfil their commitments regarding trade, aid and debt cancellation, and for transparency and accountability from all governments in efforts to eliminate poverty and to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In his thought-provoking book, *High Noon*, JF Rischard¹ also ranks poverty as global problem number one among some 20 inherently global issues. He defines an inherently global problem as one that can only be solved within a framework of collective global action by all nations. He argues that poverty is THE global challenge, for moral and ethical reasons, as a matter of justice and balance. It is simply untenable that less than 20% of the world's people consume 85% of the goods and services produced. Furthermore, tackling poverty is inextricably tied to other global challenges, such as environmental degradation, conflicts and health.

Hunger and malnutrition are stark reminders of how deep and widespread poverty remains. Despite remarkable progress in addressing some dimensions of poverty, around 800 million people remain hungry, and one in three young children in developing countries still suffers from undernutrition; much remains to be done. How can a human rights approach, and particularly the Voluntary Guidelines, help galvanize action?

Human rights approach to strengthen poverty reduction strategies

To have lasting impact, PRSs must be based on deeply held values and widely shared norms. Though often not explicit, notions of justice, fairness, equality, participation and freedom from want underlie most country PRSs. A human rights approach makes the values and norms underpinning PRSs, explicit. It frames poverty reduction as a matter of the realization of rights and the meeting of obligations, rather than as charity, benevolence or economic expedience.

The framework for human rights, which lays out norms and values now accepted as fundamental, are codified in the international human rights system. It provides a powerful base from which to demand action for the wellbeing of poor people. This framework, known as the International Bill of Human Rights, consisting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), is widely endorsed, at least in principle. There are also international conventions protecting the rights of specific vulnerable groups, including women (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) and children (Convention on the Rights of the Child). To date, 80% of states have ratified at least four of the seven major human rights conventions. All countries have ratified at least one of these conventions. A human rights approach can therefore be used to re-



mind government actors of their responsibility to place poverty reduction at the center of national policy and to assist poor and marginalized groups to claim their rights.

Voluntary Guidelines support a common approach to poverty reduction

The Voluntary Guidelines can facilitate achieving common understanding, dialogue and action on hunger, malnutrition and food security in the context of PRSs. By consistently promoting and using a rights-based framework, and ensuring that stakeholders comprehend the concepts and approaches within it, a rights-based strategy could help build coherence in the food security and nutrition sector.

The guidelines specify that both political and civil rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other, must be respected, protected and promoted. Good governance, democracy and the rule of law provide the framework for more specific economic and sectoral strategies. Freedom of expression, information, assembly and association are considered essential to achieving the right to food. Guideline 2.4 of the Voluntary Guidelines proposes a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing hunger and malnutrition, including direct measures to ensure access to adequate and safe food. Indirect measures to improve the livelihood security of the poor, a prerequisite for long-term food security, are also needed. The Guidelines cover all aspects of the food system, including access to markets and resources, with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable groups and special situations such as emergencies. Guidelines 2.5, 2.6 and 8 in particular, highlight the broad range of economic and sectoral policies needed to ensure sustainable food production and livelihood creation, especially for poor people and women. The Guidelines also stipulate direct and indirect actions required to overcome hunger and malnutrition, from education and increased awareness, to broader economic policies and strategies to ensure access to resources.

The Voluntary Guidelines recommend that action must be based on a thorough analysis of current conditions, starting with the nutrition and food security status of the population. They also suggest that this analysis be broken down on the basis of geographical location, gender, ethnicity, and class so that the needs of vulnerable groups get priority attention. The analysis should focus on the coverage, scope and impact of existing policies and programmes, and review the institutional arrangements to design, implement, monitor and evaluate them. Thus, a rights-based analysis, which stipulates the rights and duties of different stakeholders, provides a basis for sound comprehensive planning.

Resource constraints often hamper the full realization of human rights, including the right to food. According to the conceptual framework on Human Rights and Poverty Reduction,² the progressive realization of rights is a more realistic aim and poverty elimination a long-term goal. However, progressive realization cannot be used as an excuse for inaction; hence, states should immediately act on rights not directly dependent on economic resources and reallocated resources from nonessential items. The Voluntary Guidelines call for drawing up clear action plans and target dates for the progressive realization of all rights, and clear and appropriate indicators, to monitor progress and rights over time.²

Food and nutrition plans should not appear complicated, or costly. There is great need for more specific voluntary guidelines on priority setting and quick action to provide good practice examples from countries with successful rights-based experiences.

Voluntary Guidelines: a tool for achieving poverty reduction

In addition to building consensus on tackling hunger and malnutrition, the Voluntary Guidelines help advance the poverty agenda by dealing with challenges in implementation. A recent review of current PRS processes in several countries highlighted a number of these challenges.³ Three key issues were noted: i) ensuring country ownership of policies and strategies, ii) clarifying the responsibilities and accountabilities of states and development partners, and iii) promoting broader participation and empowerment of poor and vulnerable groups. Adopting a human-rights approach could prove helpful to furthering these aims.

ENSURING COUNTRY OWNERSHIP OF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

A key challenge in poverty reduction is to assure that strategies and their formulation are undertaken essentially by countries themselves. Imposed requirements by donors have led to contradictions. Countries may attend to the paperwork, rather than to developing local strategies. Stakeholder groups also tend to have very different expectations and perceptions of the impact of participatory processes.³

A country's ownership of PRSs may be linked to its prior international human rights commitments, with PRSs relating directly to international human rights treaties ratified by states. These treaties represent commitments and are legally binding for all branches of government. Since treaties are ratified voluntarily, the human-rights approach is not imposed on countries. Furthermore, the international



community has an obligation to support countries in their efforts to meet their obligations, and should avoid interventions that could hinder national efforts.

The Voluntary Guidelines provide references, in the international instruments, which apply to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. For example, the Guidelines refer to Article 25 in the UDHR, which highlights that a person has the right to, “a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family [sic], including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services....” This right is further elaborated in the ICESCR Articles 2 and 11, the ‘right to be free from hunger’ as are States Parties’ obligation to take measures to improve the production, conservation and distribution of food, disseminate nutrition information and ensure a sustainable and equitable distribution of food globally.

Nutrition and food security leaders and advocates should review a signatory state’s actions and enter into dialogue with decision-makers about their plans to realize the right to adequate food, thereby mainstreaming a focus on the hunger and malnutrition agenda for achieving the aims of PRSs.

SPELLING OUT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF STATES PARTIES AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

At country level, PRSs serve to operationalize the responsibilities and accountabilities agreed to in the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus 2002. Developing countries committed themselves to improving policies and governance in support of poverty reduction, whereas industrial countries agreed to increase their support through more effective aid and improved trade.

A human-rights approach, as noted, reminds governments and other social partners of their commitments. While recognizing that states have primary responsibility for ensuring the realization of rights, the Voluntary Guidelines propose a coordinated approach to food security. The Guidelines focus on a state’s prime responsibility to respect, protect and promote rights. Section III of the Voluntary Guidelines (international measures, actions and commitments) proposes how the international community should support national efforts, and calls for partnerships and coordinated action among states, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations.

The structure and functioning of partnerships and factors for effective partnerships need further elaboration by those concerned. The Voluntary Guidelines can help develop assessment tools to review current institutional arrangements and make recommendations for effective collaboration.

PROMOTING PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF POOR AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The right to participate in public affairs is enshrined in international human-rights law. By emphasizing participation and empowerment as a basic right, the Voluntary Guidelines can help highlight that the process is as important as achieving the target itself.⁴ The Voluntary Guidelines note that basic rights (freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and right to information) are essential building blocks to empower the poor and enable their full participation economically, socially and culturally.

Guidelines 3.8 and 3.9 call on states to consult with stakeholders, including small-scale and traditional farmers, women and youth organizations, and civil society organizations so that poverty reduction strategies take their food security needs into account, and that they participate actively in the preparation and implementation of such strategies.

The human-rights approach demands special attention to discriminated groups. Progress needs to be measured in terms of advancement for such groups, not just at the collective level. Thus ensuring that girls and boys have equality in adequate nutrition and health, may call for special measures to analyse trends in their nutritional status. Where conflicts of interest are deeply entrenched, conscious effort is necessary by civil society organizations on behalf of marginalized groups. The state has the obligation to create an enabling environment for grassroots activity to empower poor and marginalized groups; specifically, Guideline 13 calls on states to establish monitoring systems, to conduct assessments to identify groups discriminated against, and to regularly monitor the impact of policy measures on such groups. Finally, the guidelines suggest that states may consider providing food assistance directly to women, to strengthen their decision-making capacity and ensure that household needs are met.

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction strategies

Monitoring and evaluation, an essential feature of a human rights approach, imply obligations which require accountability. Monitoring and evaluation are also seen as a cornerstone of effective PRSs, as they provide vital information for action. The Voluntary Guidelines refer specifically to monitoring and evaluation, for example, in proposing that states carry out “Right to Food Impact Assessments”, based on agreed indicators. Where feasible, benchmarks should be set for the progressive reaching of targets,



as those included in the MDGs. In addition, the Guidelines stress the importance of indicators of political and social participation, discriminatory practices, and progress carrying out legal and regulatory reforms deemed essential.

The Guidelines can strengthen monitoring and evaluation of poverty strategies through broad requirements for rights-based monitoring and evaluation systems. There is urgent need to develop appropriate indicators, benchmarks and measurement approaches. A case study approach, involving teams from different countries and regions, would help ensure that indicators and targets are based on local needs while also facilitating cross-country comparison and shared learning. By refining the Guidelines, and reporting on progress, accountability under the Voluntary Guidelines could provide a model for monitoring other obligations as part of PRSs.

Conclusion

If the Voluntary Guidelines are to be adopted nationally, capacity building is an urgent priority. Human rights advocates, technical experts, and donors, as well as government officials, need a sound understanding of political processes, local understanding of rights, and local nutrition and food security dialogue. With such knowledge, as well as sound understanding of human rights principles, the Guidelines are more likely to be adapted for effective use at the country level.

Country efforts would be facilitated if donors and all agencies participating in policy dialogues and programme design and implementation were to agree on the language of the Voluntary Guidelines while providing guidance for countries. The next step should be a coordinated action-learning initiative with country teams elaborating the Guidelines for country-specific requirements and then revising the global guidelines based on country experience.

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Now to Business

Engaging the Private Sector in the Right to Adequate Food

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If we are serious about promoting the right to food then we must explore all mechanisms for harnessing the power of the private sector toward that end. Not only has the number of 'transnational corporations' risen ten-fold since 1970, but their financial turnovers dwarf that of many national economies. Their involvement in the food sector is, therefore, fundamental. Today, supermarkets share over 50% of global food sales. Those sales involve more and more commercial processing, with processed food sales now accounting for about three-quarters of the total world food sales. This market is being consolidated in the hands of fewer and fewer companies, with the largest 50 accounting for almost 30% of the global packaged food retail sales. This is not a phenomenon limited to the industrialized world. In China, for example, food industry sales took off from under 100 billion yuan (€9.2bn) in 1991 to well over 400 billion yuan (€37bn) just ten years later. Around the world, corporations increasingly comprise the food chain.

Such power commands attention. Civil society has often questioned the role of corporations in harming nutrition. Chemical flavours and fast food, mad cows and baby milk marketing—the issues may differ around the world but a common concern has been the use and abuse of the power that corporations have today and the varying degrees of independence of public institutions from that power. On the other hand, some believe that this power can provide an opportunity if enlisted in support of nutrition objectives. They point to growing corporate interest in developing a good reputation with staff, consumers and investors, and in being able to innovate products and services that are socially and environmentally sustainable.

Reasons for and against

There are numerous examples of the involvement of corporations in food and nutrition related work, including partnerships aimed at delivering and fortifying food, and advocating healthy eating. The 'Moving the World' partnership between TNT, an express delivery and logistics services firm, and the World Food Program (WFP), was launched in 2002, with the aim of supporting WFP's fight against world hunger through knowledge transfer, on-the-ground logistical support and advocacy work. TNT's in-kind and financial commitments (more than US\$ 12 million in 2005) have generated 27 projects in some 60 countries, most recently in tsunami-affected areas of South East Asia. TNT has offered its logistical expertise to improve WFP's infrastructure (particularly storage facilities), to provide direct support in emergency operations and to help bring WFP's air operations up to desired standards. Moreover, the company has supported WFP's goal of attracting more corporate funding; TNT employees have raised funds and volunteered to work in-the-field within the framework of a school feeding support initiative. Not being a food company itself, TNT has fewer internal issues to deal with in relation to the right to food. Many food companies have begun addressing these issues, with Unilever being a leader in this field, having developed, for instance, a series of indicators to measure progress in sustainable agriculture, and looking at issues including biodiversity, energy and water usage, and their impact on the local economy.

Yet, some question NGO, UN and wider public sector engagement with corporations in development work, as there may be situations when the interests of corporate partners diverge from the formers' mandates. To realize the goal of adequate food for all, systemic changes in the pattern of food production must be made and consumption must be re-examined. The core mandate of many UN agencies is norm setting and consequently this should not be sidetracked or compromised. Some suggest that the rationale for corporate engagement with NGOs and the public sector is to generate a more corporate-friendly regulatory and policy environment. Yet, if engagement with corporations increases their influence upon health policies, this threatens the priority of public over commercial interests.

Others agree that we must not side step the systemic challenge of how everyone can attain adequate

^a I would like to thank Anja Meinecke for research assistance on this article.



food, and in order to do so that we need to consider the core businesses of food-related companies. However, they question whether traditional approaches to public policy deliberation and regulation are effectively influencing normal business practices towards positive nutrition outcomes. Where is the political will? The resources? They suggest embracing those companies who are interested in taking a lead on food and nutrition issues is a sensible approach.

The fact is that all these points of view are valid. The corporatization of the global food chain is both beneficial and problematic. Specific food-related projects with companies can be helpful, but at times can be used to undermine regulatory interventions. The core business of food-related companies must be examined in order to address the challenge of ensuring the right to adequate food for all, and regulation is needed to do this; but that is not enough, what is also needed are new innovative approaches.

It follows that the international community working towards the right to adequate food needs to develop a holistic approach in interactions with the private sector. The first step must be to elaborate a common vision for the role of the private sector in supporting adequate food. That vision could be of a future where all entrepreneurship supports a well-nourished world. The right to adequate food provides a way of understanding this objective. As an international actor, a company such as Unilever could be expected to integrate UN declarations on the right to food and organize their activities correspondingly. However, a small food stall in Delhi could not be expected to know of these international legal instruments, but the very existence of the right to food could ultimately influence the world's understanding of its contribution. The vision could be one of a future where international companies both recognize and actively support the right to adequate food, within the sphere of their operations and influence, while all entrepreneurship operates in ways that help achieve this right, whether knowingly or not.

This vision is supported by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food: "While only States are parties to the Covenant and are thus ultimately accountable for compliance with it, all members of society—individuals, families, local communities, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, as well as the private business sector—have responsibilities in the realization of the right to adequate food." FAO's Voluntary Guidelines further elaborates that, "States should encourage the development of corporate social responsibility and the commitment of all market players and civil society towards the progressive realization of the right of individuals to adequate food in the context of national food security."

Developing a holistic approach

Subsequent to this, a range of activity should unfold constituting a holistic approach. First, the right to adequate food needs to be translated into something more practical for the food industry to apply. A wide range of voluntary initiatives on corporate responsibility, both amongst businesses and civil society, integrate international standards in their own codes of conduct. In labour rights, for instance, the Ethical Trading Initiative and Social Accountability International make heavy use of ILO conventions. Leadership from the UN system, specifically members of the SCN involved in establishing standards, should spell out what the right to adequate food means in concrete terms for businesses. General Comment No. 12 recognizes this, stating that, "the private business sector—national and transnational—should pursue its activities within the framework of a code of conduct conducive to respecting the right to adequate food, agreed upon jointly with the Government and civil society." How the private sector is engaged in this process of norm development is a crucial challenge, which is dealt with below.

A second element to a holistic approach with the private sector should be to encourage more international corporations to recognize the relevance of the right to adequate food within their own operations. This could involve their endorsement of the standards setting process. As such, these would be voluntary commitments, and not replace regulatory and judicial processes which hold companies to be accountable for abuses of the right to adequate food. Therefore, the third aspect of the holistic approach would be to support the effectiveness of national and intergovernmental regulatory and enforcement mechanisms. Technical assistance for government departments, along with innovations in international accountability mechanisms, will be necessary.

The fourth area of work involves enlisting the support of the private sector in promoting the right to adequate food. This would involve identifying areas of mutual interest, thinking creatively about projects with different types of companies, and experimenting with new partnerships. Some companies, not directly involved in the food industry, yet with an interest in improved nutrition (e.g. health in-



insurance and logistics companies) might make particularly suitable partners. A potential corporate partner involved in the food industry poses particular challenges for their public sector partner organizations. Adequate policies will need to be adopted, implemented and monitored, to ensure that the integrity of public-benefit institutions is not compromised.

Multi-stakeholder processes

Each of these areas of activity could involve a variety of participants from governmental, intergovernmental, civil society and private sectors that have a stake in the issues being addressed. As such, these could be described as multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs), a concept that has become very popular in the international policy sphere in the last 10 years. It is no surprise then that the Voluntary Guidelines say that “States are encouraged to apply a multi-stakeholder approach to national food security to identify the roles of and involve all relevant stakeholders, encompassing civil society and private sector, drawing together their know-how with a view to facilitate the efficient use of resources.” This approach would appear to be a suitable vehicle for the SCN to coordinate processes alluded to in the Voluntary Guidelines. However, the SCN does not currently have a defined way of involving the private sector in its work. In addition, there are specific challenges for UN-organized MSPs, especially when these touch upon the development of norms and standards. The SCN will need to keep this in mind as it moves forward. Therefore, before applying MSPs to engage the private sector on the right to adequate food, it is important to review the arguments for and against all forms of MSPs that are managed by intergovernmental organizations.

MSPs first became popular outside the intergovernmental sphere. There are four key, but poorly understood, arguments on non-state actors being engaged in global policy processes (including dialogues and specific projects). The first argument relates to democratization and to NGOs with grassroots connections. Inter-governmental processes do not represent all persons affected by decisions on regulations and interventions. Many governments may also not be fully democratic. Others, if electoral democracies, may not have a majority mandate; even where they do, minorities are not always well represented (e.g. certain ethnic groups or social classes may be excluded from representation in the government). Organizations having a voice in global policy processes and connections to vulnerable citizens can contribute to the democratic potential of these processes. This argument would favour certain NGOs having a voice in policy debates, although, not a vote. It is also an argument against involvement of large corporations in policy processes, as they already wield significant influence in national politics. Corporations legally represent private owners and have a responsibility towards shareholders, a small but privileged group of people. However, the other key arguments for non-state actor involvement also apply to companies (the ‘political internal’ rationale).

The second argument on non-state actor involvement is that the technical quality of dialogues and activities can be improved by involving people with varied resources, knowledge, skills, experiences, values and assumptions. This is an argument for engaging companies, as well as NGOs, in dialogue. However, balancing this technical aspect with the political issue, described above, requires regulating the nature of corporate participation in policy dialogues and their influence over the outcomes of those dialogues (the ‘practical internal’ rationale), as well as other activities.

The third argument relates not to the quality of the initiatives, but to the impact on the participants themselves. Participation in a public policy dialogue or in a joint project may have a democratizing impact on participants. To understand the concerns of others and to focus on the collective interest in deliberations or joint projects may enhance the awareness and democratic commitment of individual participants. This suggests that the involvement of all non-state actors, including companies, can serve as a catalyst for their own change, thus reaping benefits beyond a single initiative. However, this is a contested hypothesis. Steps should be taken to promote commitment and learning from corporations, in relation to expressed intention of an initiative, and to evaluate the ‘political external’ rationale.

A fourth argument for non-state actor participation in inter-governmental initiatives is that the outcomes, such as standards and policies, often concern non-state actors. Thus, their participation might increase their ownership or feeling part of outcomes, and thus enhance their commitment to implementation (the ‘practical external’ rationale). These four rationales or arguments are summarized in Table 1.^b

^b Another rationale that is increasingly mentioned is derived from theories of ‘communicative rationality’ where dialogue that is unconstrained by concerns for money or power can lead to higher levels of understanding. As policy dialogues never occur in a power vacuum, and strategic interests shape the contributions of participants in dialogue, this theory is not a justification for MSPs.


Table 1 Basic Alleged Benefits of Multi-stakeholder Processes

| | Internal | External |
|------------------|---|---|
| Practical | <i>Increasing diversity of skills and resources</i> | <i>Increasing ownership of outcomes</i> |
| Political | <i>Increasing representivity of views</i> | <i>Increasing public mindedness</i> |

Many MSP managers and proponents do not articulate these rationales clearly, with MSPs often just assumed to be effective. The arguments described here demonstrate that MSPs must be managed in order to reap the benefits while reducing the associated risks. A tension exists between the benefits of increased corporate involvement for practical reasons, and political reasons. There are downsides of corporate involvement in terms of their political objectives of increasing their influence.

MSPs are not faultless, however. Some argue that the alleged benefits of MSPs remain largely unproven, and can, instead, be counter productive. As noted earlier, a key concern is that they facilitate corporate lobbying which can lead to a regulatory take-over of governmental and intergovernmental institutions. Thus, they may not serve the public interest as they should. Another criticism is that the positive aspects of MSPs are often exaggerated when in reality they only account for a small part of the private sector. Others question the accountability of MSPs to their supposed beneficiaries, and whether the issues and actions they consider important are the most relevant and appropriate. Others argue that the outcomes of MSPs, such as codes and standards, are not often well implemented.^c

Despite these concerns, some NGOs and intergovernmental bodies have embraced MSPs without first clarifying their political and ethical basis and defining their vision for the private sector and their strategies for attaining that vision. It is an essential first step for the SCN and its constituencies to define its vision of the private sector's relationship to the goal of nutrition, and then re-design its procedures to be able to engage corporations while upholding the independence and integrity of its work. This is no simple task, but one that must be taken up and won, for the millions of people who lack the food they need to reach their full potential.

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^c See Richter (2004) and Bendell (2004) *Barricades and Boardrooms*, UNRISD, PP13.



**Voluntary guidelines to support the
progressive realization of the
right to adequate food
an important tool for realizing the
Millennium Development Goals**

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Presented at the SCN's 32nd Session, March 2005, Brasilia, Brazil

As food and water are essential for human survival, the right to adequate food is of fundamental importance. Without sufficient food, such concepts as the right to life, freedom of association and assembly are meaningless. The lack of adequate food has direct bearing on all other fundamental rights. It is, therefore, of great concern that an estimated 798 million people in developing countries, 34 million from countries in economic transition and 11 million in industrialized countries are undernourished.¹

In order to appreciate the importance of food and nutrition in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) let us look at the true meaning of the right to food. State parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966) recognized the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate food and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The Covenant carries with it the obligation to undertake steps to ensure the fundamental freedom from hunger.^a

The implications of this right have since been elaborated^b to help states implement the Covenant (i.e. food must be regularly available in adequate quantity and quality; it must be safe, and acceptable within a given culture). Most societies and cultures view the right to food as having the means to feed oneself or one's family, rather than the right to be fed. It is this basic view that may be a reason for weak state interventions for the eradication of hunger in its fullest sense.

Meeting food needs cannot be successful unless states accept to make quality food available and accessible to all. Food can be home-grown or available through a well functioning market system. Although food may be available, it may not be accessible to all since many have neither the necessary land to grow it themselves nor the income to purchase it in the market. This is the aspect of the right to food, which many governments find difficult to meet. This means that vulnerable groups (including the landless, children in poor households, the elderly, the sick, victims of natural disasters and armed conflict, etc) are always at risk and often suffer unduly. Food must also contain nutrients necessary for sustaining health. It should be safe, free from contaminants and safe from adulteration, and poor environmental hygiene.

The Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food is a significant landmark achieved after 20 months of difficult negotiations involving representatives of governments, civil society and human rights organizations. A point of contention was that not all governments were prepared to accept the binding nature of economic, social and cultural rights, regarding these as not fundamental human rights, and, therefore, not enforceable. Another major area of controversy was the influence of the international political and economic climate and its impact on policies and programmes particularly in developing countries. While the Guidelines were addressed to national governments, many states and organizations in developing countries insisted that the role of industrialized countries be spelt-out. This was met with resistance.

The Guidelines are the fruit of a joint effort by all parties acknowledging the right to adequate food and what is expected of governments. Based on the principles of General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food, which legally defines this right, the Guidelines outline in practical terms how countries can fulfil their obligations towards eradicating hunger. The Guidelines spell out how to empower people to feed themselves, but where this is not feasible, the Guidelines suggest how to create safety nets

^a Article 11 of the ICESCR.

^b See General Comment No. 12



The following Voluntary Guidelines are relevant to the MDGs:

- MDG 1 Poverty and hunger: all the Guidelines are relevant
- MDG 2 Primary education: Guidelines 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11-14, 16-19
- MDG 3 Gender: Guidelines 1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16-19
- MDG 4 Reducing child mortality: Guidelines 2, 5, 7-11, 13, 14, 16-19
- MDG 5 Improving maternal health: Guidelines 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19
- MDG 6 HIV/AIDS and other diseases: Guidelines 1, 2, 3, 5-8, 10-14, 16, 17, 19
- MDG 7 Environment: Guidelines 1-4, 7, 8, 11-13, 16, 17, 19
- MDG 8 International cooperation: Guidelines 1-12, 15, 18, 19

for vulnerable groups. Above all, it calls upon States to provide a national legal basis for this fundamental right.

While the meaning of the right to adequate food is accepted in principle, its implementation still requires concerted advocacy at both the national and international level. The Guidelines can serve as a blue print for civil society organizations to monitor government programmes. Where the right to food is legally recognized at the domestic level, the Guidelines can also be a useful tool to assist the judiciary or relevant tribunals. Where policy or legislation is absent, it can help States in the process of formulating relevant policy or laws.

Guidelines as a tool for realizing the Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs are development priorities and targets agreed to by world leaders at the Millennium Summit held in New York in 2000. They “Commit the international community to an expanded vision of development, one that vigorously promotes human development as the key sustaining social and economic progress in all countries.” They are commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress. These goals also spell out targets that are to be achieved by the year 2015. For example, the MDG on extreme poverty and hunger sets the target of reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty at 28% by 2015.

The first seven MDGs are mutually reinforcing, while the eighth goal on global partnership aims at enhancing the achievement of the other seven goals. Overall, the eight goals aim at reducing poverty in all its forms, in particular: eradicating hunger, achieving basic education, promoting gender equality, empowering women, reducing child mortality and ensuring environmental sustainability.

As for food and nutrition, the MDGs are particularly crucial for the achievement of the first six goals. Undernutrition leads to ill health, weakens people and can completely undermine human productivity. Hunger and ill-health are clear impediments to the eradication of poverty. Infancy and early childhood malnutrition can seriously impair adulthood, perpetuating a cycle of inherited poverty. The MDG on achieving universal primary education is unattainable unless children are healthy. Mental capacity to learn and attend school is greatly impaired by undernourishment. Sick and hungry children are unlikely to enrol or remain in school after enrolment. In the *5th Report on the World Nutrition Situation* studies are quoted that confirm that undernutrition in infancy and early childhood adversely affects school enrolment rates and behavioural development.² To achieve the universal primary education goal, states must integrate availability and accessibility of adequate food into educational policies and programmes.

The MDGs seeks to progressively achieve economic, social and cultural rights essential for an adequate standard of living and human development. Food and nutrition remain the keystone of economic and social rights. Having recognized adequate food as a right, the international community should accept to integrate food and nutrition issues within the economic, social and human development agendas. In this respect the Guidelines can be a valuable tool.

The Guidelines offer practical guidance to states on a rights-based approach, including equality and non-discrimination, respecting rights of vulnerable groups, and accountability by governments (see box above). Emphasis must be on the indivisibility and inter-related nature of human rights to enhance chances of realization.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT, ASSISTANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Guidelines address states on the necessity to create an environment allowing people to manage their affairs. A proper environment results from good governance, democracy, respect for human



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rights and the rule of law.

The Guidelines put stress upon broad-based economic development policies that provide for food security policies, preceded by consultations and assessments to spell out process and responsibilities; safety nets are needed for the vulnerable, and assistance offered in production and self-sufficiency. The Guidelines are relevant to policy formulation and implementation. Guideline 3, for example, explains how to design and implement strategies to review legislation, policies, administrative measures and current programmes. With a view to determining the effectiveness and availability of resources, strategies should have targets, benchmarks and timeframes and identify institutional responsibilities. Vulnerable groups should be specifically targeted.

POVERTY AND HUNGER REDUCTION

The first MDG targets the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, consistent with the Millennium Declaration^c calling upon governments to spare no efforts to free men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions of extreme poverty. Regular access to adequate food will contribute towards poverty eradication.

Guideline 8 on access to resources and assets, underscores the obvious fact that poverty will not be eradicated unless people are empowered to create income or assets for themselves. It calls upon States to facilitate sustainable, non-discriminatory and secure access of resources. It emphasizes the importance of protecting resources that are crucial for people's livelihoods, such as land, water, forests, fisheries and livestock. The Guidelines call upon states to promote and protect security of land tenure, including security of access, control, ownership and use of land by women, the poor and the disadvantaged. Peasants and small scale farmers should be assisted in increasing agricultural outputs through applying agricultural research results, sharing knowledge about proper land exploitation and production resources.

Guideline 8 identifies the importance of earnings from labour to fight poverty and hunger. Good labour policies that guarantee fair pay for an adequate standard of living are often ignored by many states pursuing policies of economic liberalization.

ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Ensuring that children everywhere, girls and boys alike, complete a full course of primary education sets the foundation for individual development. The Guidelines call upon states to strengthen and broaden primary education opportunities, especially for girls, women and other underprivileged persons (Guideline 11). In a broader perspective, the Guidelines stress the importance of proper and regular food for children from infancy, which reduce the number of drop-outs and improve learning capacity.

IMPROVING MATERNAL HEALTH, REDUCING CHILD MORTALITY AND COMBATING HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

These important goals focus on one of the most disturbing challenges in today's world and call into play, particularly in the developing world, emphasis on health services and the need for change. The crucial role of food and nutrition here cannot be ignored in promoting maternal and child health.

The Guidelines aim to promote healthy eating habits, feeding patterns, breastfeeding, and dietary diversity (Guideline 10). They, therefore, specifically ask states to address the food and nutritional needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

MDG seven states that environmental sustainability is connected to sustainable development whose principles should be integrated into national policies and programmes. These principles should reflect the need to reverse environmental damage. Guideline 8 encourages states to develop those national policies, legal frameworks and supporting mechanisms which protect ecosystems to ensure production for future generations and protect soil fertility, reduce pollution and promote sustainable fisheries and forestry. Environmental education is essential to sensitize the population to these issues.

DEVELOPING A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

Whilst MDGs 1 to 7 are key development goals, MDG 8 on global partnership aims to assist in meeting other goals. Although achieving the MDGs is the responsibility of national governments, international politics and economic conditions nonetheless influence what happens at state level. International trade and financial systems inevitably impact on what poorer nations can do to achieve the

^c United Nations Millennium Declaration, September 2000.



MDGs. Assisting least developed countries through greater access to markets for their products and debt relief are some of the means by which the international community can greatly help.

The role of the international community in promoting food and nutrition was one of the difficult areas while negotiating the Voluntary Guidelines. In section three of the Guidelines, developed countries are called upon to assist developing countries in attaining the MDGs. Based on Article 56 of the UN Charter, the Guidelines urge the international community and the UN System to take actions in supporting national development efforts. All unilateral measures that may negate or impede full economic and social development in other countries are to be avoided. The Guidelines also call for technical co-operation between developed and developing countries to support the right to food.

The Ugandan Experience

Prior to 2002, policy-makers in Uganda failed to recognize access to adequate food as a human right despite ratifying the ICESCR in 1986 and the Ugandan Constitution in 1995. The right to food was treated as incidental in other policy areas and not recognized in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. Following a national seminar on the right to food in 2002, and a presentation to the Cabinet, the National Food and Nutrition Policy recognized adequate food as a human right, calling for a rights-based approach in its realization (see article by Julian Thomas for more detail).

The challenges following the adoption of a rights-based approach to food and nutrition policy were many. They included: 1) the difficulty of formulating a framework law with clear financial implications for establishing a safety net system; 2) the difficulty in defining vulnerability in terms of who would be eligible for governmental assistance under a safety net system and the challenges of avoiding abuse of the system, and 3) how to design practical, affordable rights-based strategies. What Uganda still needs are: an investment plan for food and nutrition, a viable framework law, a monitoring programme, a revision of government policies, and a comprehensive concept of human rights (including the right to food) in economic and human development.

Conclusion

The Voluntary Guidelines for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food are certainly a useful tool for realizing the MDGs. Implementing the Guidelines would strengthen food and nutrition issues as components of policies and programmes for the MDGs. Pursuing a food and nutrition agenda, as contained in the Guidelines, would progressively lead to the realization of a broad range of development goals. It is important for states to remember that a well-fed population works better, produces more thereby reducing poverty. Realizing the right to food for mothers and children leads to better educational outcomes, so vital in the fight against poverty, and the other ills that the MDGs have targeted. Better feeding for infants and children reduces mortality and improves their human development. The burden of disease is better dealt with and negative impacts minimized when people can benefit from their right to adequate food. Conclusively, food and nutrition are a foundation for the attainment of the MDGs and the Guidelines as a broad mechanism for attaining the right to food is a good tool.

The challenges to implementing the right to food will, if not tackled successfully, may adversely affect the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The first challenge is for states to accept that food and nutrition constitute a human right and are not merely a well-meaning aspiration. States have not only a moral but a legal obligation to protect their citizens. Where food and nutrition are recognized as a right, it follows that it should be integrated within a comprehensive policy that caters for all, including vulnerable groups. Uganda has for example has recognized that adequate food is a human right. Current efforts are being undertaken to develop an investment plan that will encompass all aspects of the right to food. This is challenging, but if successful, will be in favour of Uganda's poverty eradication action plan which, in a way, may be more ambitious in some of its targets than those of the MDGs.

A food and nutrition agenda in development can be more effective if its realization is supported by a legal framework. In some countries, such as South Africa, the importance of food and nutrition as a right in development is acknowledged in its Constitution. Such legal recognition empowers citizens to claim their rights and reminds governments of their obligations. The challenge however, is to come up with appropriate legislation particularly regarding vulnerable groups.

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Integrating food and nutrition interventions into national development plans

**A synthesis of lessons learnt on accelerating
progress towards the Millennium Development Goals
and realizing the right to adequate food**

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Introduction

In preparation for its 32nd Session, the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) carried out case studies in Brazil, Bolivia, Angola and Mozambique looking at how adequately food and nutrition programmes are included in national development plans in order to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and how to strengthen them in the context of realizing the right to adequate food. The case studies looked at both process and outcome, not only to diagnose each country's situation, but also to better understand the key issues involved. A workshop was held in Brazil in August 2004 to launch the process and another in November to review the experience gained. This paper is a synthesis of the lessons learnt by the consultant team.

In each country, a three-step process consisted of assessment, analysis and recommendations for action. The assessment was done by a small core group of nutrition professionals. The second stage was carried out by a wider group through participatory group work facilitated by the core group. The analysis focussed on how to strengthen the food and nutrition content of national development and poverty reduction plans aimed at meeting the MDGs. The wider group that undertook the analysis both involved those managing and delivering programmes, together with representatives of civil society groups involved in or affected by the issues concerned.

To come to a common understanding among the broader set of development actors, a series of information texts and lectures were shared during the inter-sectoral analysis workshop. This common understanding covered the importance of nutrition for achieving the MDGs, the concept of food and nutrition security (which includes three elements: availability, access, and utilization), the importance of protecting foetal and infant growth in the context of the life cycle, and examples of the terms respect, protect and fulfil (facilitate, provide), used to describe governments' obligations for realizing the right to adequate food.

Outcomes

Assessments revealed an enormous amount of misinformation on nearly all the key food and nutrition indicators. The terms 'hunger' and 'malnutrition' have different meaning to different actors. Consequently key messages often lack consistency or are contradictory. The first MDG defines 'hunger' by the adequacy of energy intake and malnutrition by child underweight. These terms exclude 'hidden hunger', which affects a far greater proportion of the population, and obfuscates the problem of overweight and obesity, which in all four case studies increasingly coexist with stunted growth, especially in poor urban populations. Food and nutrition professionals need to re-appropriate the words 'hunger' and 'malnutrition' and try to re-educate the development community to use indicators appropriately. The right to adequate food must be equated with being free from hunger and malnutrition (including overt and hidden hunger and undernutrition and overnutrition). In all case studies the problem definition was presented in terms of the proportion of the population whose needs were being met, not as the proportion of the population whose right to adequate food was being violated.

There is also a lack of common understanding of food and nutrition among development actors around issues of vulnerability. Discussions tended to concentrate on individuals socially and economically vulnerable, with little reference to biological vulnerability. There is also little common understanding of the importance of maternal nutritional status and its links to suboptimal foetal growth and development—henceforth the potential for stunting, impaired child development potential, reduced



adult earning capacity, or increased risks of obesity and chronic disease later in the life cycle. There was no notion whatsoever in any country that increased risks of chronic diet-related noncommunicable diseases were likely in the future unless due attention was paid now to nutrition security (improved maternal nutrition and infant feeding) and to diet quality, not just quantity.

The capacity building objectives of the case studies were only partially met. In each country, the participatory analysis did help a cross-sectoral group of food and nutrition actors to better understand the importance of such interventions for achieving the MDGs. However, it did not clarify just what food and nutrition inputs were. In fact, on the contrary, the organization of all the food and nutrition inputs (into levels of causality related to the MDGs) made it harder to categorize and classify these food and nutrition inputs. Despite these limitations, the exercise was still considered to be extremely useful in revealing the gaps, showing areas of overlap and similarity, and for better understanding the general lack of coordination between food security and nutrition security activities. The human rights aspects of food and nutrition programmes served more to help participants become familiar with human rights concepts than to generate a clear understanding of whether such programmes contributed to respecting, protecting and/or fulfilling the right to adequate food.

The case studies reveal that while poverty reduction and MDG achievement are high priority in all four countries, present efforts are not sufficient in national development plans. There is a generalized lack in linking food and nutrition security actions. Little or no priority is given, in any of the national development plans, to periods of high biological vulnerability or for maternal nutrition in particular. The dominant "nutrition in development paradigm" seems to be that hunger and malnutrition are caused by poverty and ignorance, and they will improve if livelihoods (economic growth and incomes) and education services improve. The idea that a solution for hunger and malnutrition can be a platform for accelerating development, is not commonly understood by the development actors. The exception perhaps is Brazil where the Zero Hunger programme, which has enormous political priority, has shown a demonstrable effect on reducing poverty and may have additional effects on hunger and malnutrition. The Zero Hunger programme could be considerably strengthened if the linkages between food and nutrition security activities were better articulated, in a more decentralized approach. A strengthening of the Zero Hunger programme seems to have been sparked by the Brazilian case study, and is ongoing.

In order to try to organize the various food and nutrition interventions in a logical fashion, a policy framework was developed according to life cycle stages. All four case studies revealed no common understanding about what programme components are needed to ensure the achievement of both food and nutrition security outcomes. Direct food and nutrition interventions are those that should be developed by the state in addition to creating a supportive macroeconomic environment. The five food- and nutrition-intervention policy areas are: food production, food processing and fortification, food supplementation, micronutrient supplementation, and education for dietary change. These are the "direct" actions related to adequate supply and consumption of energy and nutrients. They are consistent with the "availability", "access" and "utilization" aspects of food and nutrition security used in all four case countries.

The results of the case studies demonstrated that the institutional and legal frameworks for realizing the right to adequate food were best developed in Brazil, while still having a long way to go to reach all. Although all four countries are signatories to human-rights covenants that include the right to food, and three have incorporated some provision related to the right to adequate food into their constitution, the actual respect, protection and fulfilment of this right remains elusive in all four countries. There is still a lack of clear definition and understanding of the content of this right at the national level, let alone clear justiciable provisions on the right to food, as such, at district and community levels. In order for this right to be realized, a clear definition of these entitlements is a fundamental first step. The creation of a comprehensive food and nutrition policy, as proposed in this synthesis, should contribute towards this. Once these components are established, and responsibilities apportioned, the attribution of obligations should be an easier task.

The Brazilian experience, with its National Food and Nutrition Council, is one that the other three countries would do well to try to emulate, with recent events in Bolivia signalling an opportunity in this regard. Without such a high level national coordinating body, it will be difficult to create a sufficiently articulated set of food and nutrition policies and programmes to allow the realization of the right to adequate food (i.e. to be free from hunger and malnutrition in all their forms), as well as, accelerating achievement of the MDGs.

The realization of the right to adequate food will also depend on how community participation and



mobilization aspects of this overarching policy framework are orchestrated at the municipal level through a decentralized approach. Without such community participation, the low coverage of any food and nutrition interventions will preclude reaching the poorest and most socially discriminated. Therefore, there is an urgent need to re-examine concepts of hunger and malnutrition and to establish a common vision and language among all relevant sectors and actors. As part of such a thrust, the use of child growth measurements also needs to be revisited looking at aspects of both overnutrition and undernutrition. In parallel, a meaningful set of messages needs to be developed, capable of mobilizing the poorest of the poor to participate in their own development and to realize the right to adequate food, including institution of recourse mechanisms in case of violations of this right.

Conclusion

The challenge for the SCN and case study teams is how to build on and sustain the momentum gained. The process begun has indeed been a very rich one and is ongoing in all four countries. The international nature of the SCN presence has certainly raised the profile of food and nutrition issues, and the participatory, capacity-building approach has opened up debate and provoked a cross fertilization of ideas among multisectoral groups. The SCN's Strategic Plan outlines the intention of working through the UN Development Group to strengthen the capacity of UN country teams to develop more adequate Common Country Assessments and UN Development Assistance Framework processes. Further input was expected into the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes, such that their food and nutrition content would be strengthened. However, this never materialized, and PRSPs continue with poor food and nutrition components in most countries (see article by Milla McLachlan). The SCN should address these problems and seek ways to strengthen the food and nutrition content and conceptualization of these various UN assessments and planning exercises. The four case studies represent a beginning, but the question is "how".

The recommendations for country follow-up actions help explore requirements and opportunities for SCN support at the country level. The Bolivian study, for example, identifies a coherent rights-based food and nutrition policy and strategic implementation plan in the context of the food and nutrition council, as a key priority. Mozambique and Angola have similar priorities, but the urgency of their case is compounded by two factors: firstly, the severity of hunger and malnutrition; and secondly, their serious lack of trained human resources in food and nutrition sciences. Brazil's challenges centre around the decentralization of food and nutrition security interventions, as well as the articulation of various dimensions of the right to adequate food, so that it becomes justiciable. How could the SCN, both collectively and through its individual members be effectively mobilized for that purpose?

More generally, beyond the case studies examined in this synthesis, the UN agencies involved in promoting food and nutrition activities, acting alone and together through the SCN, can take lead roles in helping governments create the overarching policy and legal frameworks for realizing the right to adequate food. No single agency may have the breadth of expertise or mandate to cover such a broad spread of programme areas, while the SCN mandate may facilitate such a task. In addition, a UN system-wide communication and partnership-building strategy is urgently needed to create a common vision among the UN agencies on how to promote the realization of the right to adequate food. Also, agreement needs to be brokered on the appropriate terminology and language for a single set of monitoring and evaluation indicators of progress. The SCN and all of its constituents should seize the opportunity provided by the approval of the FAO Council of the Voluntary Guidelines for realizing the right to adequate food and make their realization the backbone of future efforts worldwide.

Finally, the lack of adequate human resources trained in food and nutrition is perhaps the most serious problem encountered and is a serious constraint in Mozambique and Angola. The training of food and nutrition development actors to help orchestrate and facilitate such an approach will require considerable attention to ensure that curricula used are up-to-date and intrinsically clinical and dietetic in orientation. Even Brazil, despite having a large contingent of nutrition professionals and many degree courses in food and nutrition related subjects, still lacks sufficient numbers of professionals in the system. The SCN should explore ways, through its membership, to contribute to the continued capacity-building efforts in all four countries, with emphasis on capacity building in public health nutrition and in realizing the right to adequate food.

Full country case-study reports can be found at www.unsystem.org/scn/

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Implementing the right to adequate food

An overview of five case studies

conducted by FAO

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Introduction

This paper provides an overview of five case studies conducted in late 2003 and early 2004 to gather information about practical in-country experiences with different policies, programmes and mechanisms that are conducive to the realization of the population's right to adequate food.

The purpose of these case studies was to assess: i) the extent to which a rights-based approach has been applied in activities related to food security; ii) how the implementation of this approach can be improved; iii) the extent to which the country's experience is replicable; and iv) whether practical lessons learnt could be used as input in the formulation of the Voluntary Guidelines^a. Emphasis was thus placed on describing examples of the practical implications of implementing a right-to-food approach rather than on an exhaustive analysis of the topic, including a literature review.

Case studies were conducted in Brazil, Canada, India, South Africa and Uganda because of their experience in pursuing, either explicitly or implicitly, a right to food approach to national food security.

National consultants carried out the case studies, at times using a workshop to validate findings. National case study reports were discussed in a meeting of all national consultants and FAO staff to examine and draw conclusions from this exercise. These conclusions were reflected in an information document prepared for the purpose of the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG). This overview draws heavily on the latter document which can be obtained from www.fao.org/righttofood.

Policy framework

AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT AND CENTRALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The importance of an enabling policy environment to achieving the right to adequate food is stressed in all the case studies. Although the countries studied have a variety of policies on food, there are some commonalities and lessons to be learnt as to what constitutes an enabling policy environment for the right to adequate food.

Public policies considered from a human rights perspective translate into a development approach in which the obligation to achieve universal human rights for all is the starting point. This in turn calls for a focus on those whose rights are not fully realized, and on their participation in formulating, implementing and evaluating policies, rather than on having a top-down approach.

Public policy that recognizes the principle of indivisibility and interrelatedness of all human rights views the right to adequate food as related to other rights (e.g. the right to water, health, work, housing, and other economic, social and cultural rights) as well as to civil and political rights (e.g. freedom of assembly, information and association). It also recognizes the over-arching right of non-discrimination.

Policy-makers at the international level and in the countries in the case studies, are increasingly aware and accepting of the centrality of human rights to development and of the significance of a rights-based approach to food and nutrition security.

In South Africa, for instance, the right to food is enshrined in the Constitution and the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is mandated to monitor the implementation of this right. Brazil is in the process of building an institutional structure that incorporates a vision of human rights, including the right to food among the principal objectives of the country's food-security policy of Zero Hunger (*Fome Zero*). The Indian Constitution is construed as protecting the right to food as an integral

^a Such practical information was sought to contribute to the work of the Inter-Governmental Working Group (IGWG) on the draft Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.



part of the right to life. And in Uganda, measures to restore and promote constitutionalism, democracy, human rights, peace and stability, and efforts to advance decentralized, participatory governance are helping the emergence of an enabling political, social and economic environment for the right to food. An international environment supportive of human rights has played a significant role in this.

INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED NATIONAL PLANS

The development of an overarching and integrated food security policy based on human rights principles is central to the achievement of the right to adequate food at country level. An essential starting point of such policy is a thorough socio-economic analysis of the people whose right to food is violated or not realized, where they are located, and why they are vulnerable.

The Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) represents the most coherent departmental statement on food security policy in South Africa to date and reflects a rights-based approach to addressing food insecurity, although the cross-sectoral parts of the strategy still need further articulation.

Experiences from the countries also show that, for optimal effectiveness, national right to food and food security plans should reach across governmental departments, including finance and justice. This has proven difficult to achieve in practice. A highly decentralized federal state such as Canada presents complex issues of governance in terms of achieving priority attention for food security, the development and implementation of an integrated food and nutrition policy, and an adequate and secure social safety net informed by the human right to adequate food. As a result, Canadian food policy tends to be fragmented, despite a food security policy formulated in the follow-up to the World Food Summit, which recognizes the right to adequate food.

Such fragmentation could be overcome by developing an integrated national food and nutrition policy and a national action strategy with the goal to optimally nourish the population. Ideally, the plan would include the full participation of relevant ministries, including federal and provincial justice departments, and representatives of civil society and the food industry, and would set benchmarks, targets, time frames and accountability. It would also need to be costed and have appropriate funding mechanisms in place.

Social policy has tended to be fragmented also in Brazil. However, the Zero Hunger Programme is making a major effort towards better institutional coordination. Direct income transfer programmes are being unified under the *Bolsa Familia* programmes, under which low-income families are eligible for the monthly benefits of various programmes, on a case by case basis.

While coordination has its advantages, the case studies generally showed that decentralized control over right-to-food programmes, which encourages citizens' participation in decision-making and provides for greater exercise of their rights and obligations. It tends to reduce corruption. There were examples where misuse of public funds was contained through control either by central government or NGOs.

Balancing the components of food security

Food policies should balance the four components of food security: availability, stability, access and utilization. This is not always easy. For example, until recently, the food security policies of South Africa and India, may have over-emphasized the availability of food by concentrating on increased food production for national self-sufficiency without paying sufficient attention to other factors hindering people's access to food.

In India, food policies since the 1960s have aimed at boosting food and agricultural production while attempting to ensure access by the poor to a minimum quantity of food grains through the public distribution system. The growth strategy in agriculture has emphasized subsidies to inputs such as power, water and fertilizer while neglecting investment in rural roads, irrigation and rural power. The Government of India's National Agricultural Policy (2000) and related programmes have attempted to remedy these shortcomings.

South Africa's current food security policies, in contrast to the policies of national self-sufficiency of the apartheid regime, recognize that sufficient food production and food availability at national level is not the only requirement for food security. Other factors such as the failure of livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food, may contribute to food insecurity despite national food sufficiency. This points to the importance of enabling people to feed themselves, and, where this is not possible, to put into place strategies, plans and programmes to deal with food insecurity.

Planning is required to balance economic growth and trade policies with right to food policies. This



can be illustrated in Uganda, which has a policy environment broadly oriented towards pro-poor development objectives. The principal development policy framework, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), seeks to balance economic growth with poverty reduction objectives; however, to date, more attention has been paid to the growth pillar than to targeted interventions or redistribution. The Plan for Modernization of Agriculture and the Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP), both of which have food and nutrition security as a major objective, seek to redress this imbalance.

While economic growth and pro-poor development policies can be complementary, under certain circumstances, economic growth policies can jeopardize the realization of the right to food for some. In Uganda, for example, the Government's drive to promote foreign investment to stimulate economic growth, has allegedly threatened, in some cases, to deprive small-holder farmers of land, their key source of food and livelihood.

Policies for promoting privatization of social services, such as agricultural extension, need public regulation so that they do not have a negative impact on the right to food. In Uganda, for instance, agricultural extension has been renamed the agricultural advisory services with a simultaneous shift towards private service provision. Farmer groups are expected to articulate their needs, and demand and receive services from private service providers. Care will have to be taken to ensure that small-holder farmers can access and afford these services.

THE NEXUS BETWEEN FOOD INSECURITY AND INEQUALITIES

Non-discrimination and substantive equality are fundamental principles to be promoted in rights-based food security policies. Equitable access to resources and assets such as natural resources, including land, is very important for the right to food in rural areas.

This can be seen in South Africa where land dispossession was a key feature of colonialism and apartheid. It has remained a critical and often contentious issue in the new democratic dispensation. Many people in the former homelands lack secure tenure rights or legal title to land they have inhabited and worked on for generations. This is a direct legacy of colonial dispossession, racist legislation and communal tenure. Since the establishment of democracy in South Africa, a number of laws and policies have been adopted in an attempt to re-balance land ownership and protect tenure rights.

Brazil also has a legacy of unequal access to land that is proving difficult to redress despite efforts by the National Institute of Land Settlement and Reform, which was instrumental in settling 372,866 families between 1995 and 1999. Lessons learnt in Brazil show the need to develop public policies that encourage the economic improvement of the most vulnerable groups including improved access to land and credit, and to tailor them to the particular needs and circumstances of vulnerable groups. As in many countries, however, policies to guarantee the right to food for the most vulnerable groups have not always succeeded.

While economic growth is central to achieving food security, social transfers are also needed to realize human rights. For example, even in a food secure country such as Canada, which has been at the top of country rankings for the Human Development Index (HDI), economic growth policies have not completely ensured the right to food for its most vulnerable citizens. Structural changes and tight fiscal discipline in the 1990s, are said to be at the root of the deterioration in social services, which in turn has led to more reliance on private benevolence, such as food banks.

Legal framework

The right of all to adequate food enjoys some degree of legal protection in each of the countries studied. This legal protection takes different forms, but each country has some way in which individuals and, in some cases, groups can claim adequate food as a right rather than as a matter of benevolence.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION

In some countries, the right to food is written directly into the constitution, while in others the courts have interpreted the constitution as protecting the right to adequate food. Different countries also have different types of legislation that protect this right and various legal mechanisms by which individuals and/or groups can claim it. In some countries the right is justiciable; i.e. subject to court jurisdiction. A legal basis for the right to food can be found in the constitutions of several of the countries examined by the case studies.

This is strongest in South Africa whose Constitution directly makes provision for the right to food with three explicit references. It: i) requires the State to take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to progressively realize everyone's right to access to sufficient food and



water; ii) provides the right for every child to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services; and iii) makes provision for every detained person and sentenced prisoner to have adequate nutrition. The Constitution of South Africa also states that “the Bill of Rights applies to all law, and binds the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and all organs of state” (section 8); and imposes the obligations on the State to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the provisions of the Bill of Rights. These detailed constitutional provisions provide an enabling environment for the progressive realization of the right to food and can be invoked in a court of law.

Even without such a strong constitutional framework with a clear justiciable right to food, support for this right and for its justiciability can be found in the constitutions of other countries.

A legal basis for the right to adequate food is present in the Constitution of Brazil, which contains several provisions that either directly or indirectly require the State to respect, protect and fulfil citizens’ right to food. The 1998 Constitution established a nationally uniform minimum wage “capable of providing for the basic vital needs of housing, food, education, health” among others (art. 7). It stated that the family, society, and State had the duty “to guarantee the child and adolescent the right to life, health, food, education...” (art. 227). In 2003, a constitutional reform included the right to food as being a part of the social rights for every citizen. The new text reads: “As defined by this Constitution, social rights include education, health, food, work, housing...” (art. 6).

The Constitution of India distinguishes between: i) fundamental rights, which are primarily civil and political, and which are justiciable; and ii) social, economic and cultural rights, which are not. However, the right to life (a fundamental right) has, over the years, come to be interpreted as encompassing the social, economic and cultural rights contained in the Constitution as Directive Principles of State.

While the right to food is not explicitly written into the Constitution of Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), as interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada, does protect internationally recognized economic, social and cultural rights. The Supreme Court has also recognized the rights of Aboriginal peoples to continue traditional food gathering.

Irrespective of the existence of constitutional protection of the right to food, States that have ratified the relevant international human rights instruments accept to incorporate this and other human rights within national law.

CASE LAW AND JUSTICIABILITY

A constitutional framework that can be interpreted to protect the right to food provides a basis for legal provisions that promote the progressive realization of this right, as well as a yardstick against which legislation and policies can be measured.

In India, for instance, the Supreme Court has issued a number of Interim Orders in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) case the central premise of which is that the right to food flows from the right to life guaranteed in the Article 21 of the Constitution. This case is awaiting final judgment. Another effect of the Interim Orders has been to transform provisions of various schemes and programmes established by the Indian States and the central Government to the status of a legal entitlement for the populations concerned. These orders have: i) stressed the utmost importance of provision of food to aged, infirm, disabled, destitute women and men, pregnant and lactating women and destitute children, especially when they or their family members do not have sufficient funds to provide food for them; ii) given direction to the States to see that all the public distribution system (PDS) shops are functioning; iii) ordered the States to implement food-for-work programmes in all scarcity areas; and iv) ordered implementation of the food-based schemes, including mid-day meals in schools.

Elements of the right to food can also be found in federal and provincial laws of Canada, and in policies on agriculture, food safety, nutrition and health and the welfare state. Notably, in 2002, Quebec passed an Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, which commits the government to: “facilitating dignified access, for persons living in poverty, to a food supply that is both sufficient and nutritious, at reasonable costs...” (2002, c. 61, s. 9). Canada’s Action Plan for Food Security (1998) recognizes the links between poverty and domestic food insecurity.

The Parliament of South Africa has conducted public hearings on food security and called on the Government to submit a Food Security Bill, which has been drafted by Government, but not yet submitted.



BEYOND LEGISLATION

Legal and constitutional recognition of the right to food is important but not sufficient to ensure its implementation, even if it is a justiciable right. Other elements need to be in place, including the rule of law, good governance, accountability, and people's participation. Efficient, accessible and workable legal mechanisms for claiming the right to adequate food are needed.

An example of a potential legal mechanism can be found in Brazil in the public civil suit. This is the most important judicial instrument in Brazil for protecting rights. It not only protects individuals' rights, but makes it possible to enforce collective rights, including the right to food. Although individual persons cannot request a public civil suit, it can be claimed by a state or municipality, an NGO, a public or mixed enterprise or directly through a government ministry. Although the public civil suit has not yet been used for the right to food, it has the potential to be used in this regard.

An independent judiciary capable of exercising its responsibility is also crucial in guaranteeing the right to food. In its absence, reform of the judiciary would clearly be warranted. Because of their particular historical and socio-economic situations, South Africa and Brazil, for example, need to redress racial and gender imbalances in the judiciary at all levels.

Training of judges and lawyers on human rights, the right-to-food and international conventions and increased exchanges with national and international human rights organizations would be called for. The case study on Brazil noted that its judges need greater knowledge of human rights norms and the obligations of the judiciary at the international level. This applies to most judiciary systems throughout the world.

All three spheres of government—executive, legislative and judicial—should be clear as to their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to adequate food. The South African Constitution is very clear on the responsibility of each of the main branches. In Brazil, on the other hand, the awareness of the judiciary of its obligation to protect the economic rights of the most vulnerable is not clear. Judges generally consider dealing with the vulnerability of particular social groups to be the exclusive province of public policy. Hence compliance with international treaties and programmatic norms is considered to be an activity proper to the executive branch. Canadian courts have been reluctant to recognize economic and social rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS AND MECHANISMS

National human rights institutions also have a prime role to play in monitoring the implementation of the right to food, as well as in receiving complaints from groups and individuals. Several countries have human rights commissions or similar mechanisms that play important roles in ensuring the right of all to adequate food. National human rights organizations are most effective when they are fully autonomous and have authority to issue recommendations.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is a constitutionally entrenched body mandated to promote respect for, and to monitor and assess the observance of human rights. The Commission has a broad mandate that covers the full range of human rights and recognizes the universality, interdependence, interrelatedness, and indivisibility of human rights. It is an independent and impartial body that reports directly to Parliament, and is established in accordance with the Paris Principles.

Brazil has a Special Secretariat for Human Rights, which, however, lacks the full autonomy and pluralism required by the Paris Principles. This weakness has been partially compensated for by the *Ministério Público*, an autonomous governmental body for the defence of individual and collective rights. The Brazilian Department of Justice, in collaboration with NGOs, has established the position of a national rapporteur on the right to food, water and rural land, whose function it is to monitor the realization of these rights.

Uganda has an independent constitutional body, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC). This Commission has brought the issue of the right to food before the Government's Constitutional Review Commission, suggesting that the right to adequate food be given the status of a fundamental, justiciable right. The influence of the UHRC can be explained both by its constitutional mandate and its application by a proactive group of commissioners and staff.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India is also an independent and autonomous body. Over more than a decade, the Supreme Court of India and the National Human Rights Commission have been parties to a civil society debate that has led to a substantive transformation from a perspective of benevolence into a perspective of human rights. Prompted by a civil society submission



concerning the situation of the right to food in the State of Orissa, the NHRC has been instrumental in gaining recognition that destitution and chronic distress, rather than mortality alone, are proof of starvation; and that starvation constitutes a gross denial and violation of the fundamental right to be free from hunger. The Supreme Court has appointed two commissioners to look into persisting grievances regarding violations of rights that are not amenable to established procedures of redress.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The country studies showed that civil society can play a crucial role in putting pressure on all spheres of government, as well as in assisting vulnerable groups to empower themselves to claim their rights and improve their access to recourse mechanisms, including the courts.

In South Africa, for example, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), a broad social movement, brought a case relating to socio-economic rights, in particular the right to health care, to the South African Supreme Court and was instrumental in shaping the Government's decision to act.

In India, the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) filed a case regarding the right to food in Rajasthan. The pressure brought to bear on central and State Governments by non-governmental organizations in this Public Interest Litigation has had positive results in many states, but in others the Interim Orders of the Supreme Court have been partly or totally ignored. This points to the need to examine the federal level organization and funding of social programmes.

Institutional framework

ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES, COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Implementing right-to-food policy and legal frameworks requires effective institutions at all levels. The cross-sectoral nature of the right to food requires efforts of coordination across government ministries and offices at the national, sub-national and local levels. Clarifying the allocation of roles and responsibilities between the different sectors and levels of government leads to better accountability and more effective action.

In Brazil the right to food is the guiding principle of the country's food security policy, *Fome Zero*. It is institutionally enshrined in the new Ministry for Social Justice that incorporates the former Special Ministry for Food Security and Combating Hunger (MESA) as a secretariat in the new ministry. Another cornerstone of the institutionalization of the right-to-food approach in Brazil is the re-creation of the National Food Security Council (CONSEA) as a forum for civil society participation.

Accountability is central to an effective institutional framework for the implementation of the right to food. The State must establish mechanisms to ensure the accountability of those who are responsible for the implementation of this right.

In South Africa, the Government has proposed the establishment of food security officers at the local level who would report to the "cluster" of social sector ministries. The draft Food Security Bill also foresees the establishment of a Food Security Council which would play a pivotal role in policy coordination.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

An important lesson learnt from the case studies is that right to food-policy-needs to be accompanied by an implementation strategy with clear, quantified targets and benchmarks, as well as the allocation of institutional responsibilities and accountability. Furthermore, implementation needs to be monitored and evaluated according to rights-based indicators.

A useful starting point would be a national audit of all policies, programmes and other initiatives geared towards the realization of the right to access adequate food in order to help identify which elements are working effectively and, if not, why, as well as to provide a basis for corrective action.

Operationalizing the right to food: some key issues

AWARENESS BUILDING AND EDUCATION

Awareness building is key to operationalizing the right to food. Citizens must be aware of their rights while public servants must be instilled with a clear consciousness of obligation. This is possible only through appropriate policies on information and education that also encourage people to take advantage of their rights.

In South Africa, one of the functions of the South African Human Rights Commission is to educate the people of South Africa about their human rights. In Brazil, the National Rapporteur's Office for



the Right to Food, Water and Rural Land conducts research on the exercise of the different rights, and writes national reports, aimed especially at policy makers. The NGO, Right to Food Movement in India, has organized a number of events, including public hearings, to inform the general population about the right to food.

Awareness building is needed at all levels, including that of the media and the voluntary and the corporate sectors to counterbalance the tendency among some to consider hunger and food poverty as a matter of charity and not as a political issue of social justice and human rights.

Awareness building can be institutionalized in the educational system through inclusion of nutrition and basic human rights education in primary and secondary school curricula and in relevant higher education curricula (e.g. professional education: agricultural, health, nutritional and environmental sciences and business, education, law, social work and social policy). Civil servants responsible for implementing the right to food could benefit from in-service training. Community education, especially geared towards vulnerable groups is another way to contribute to the improvement of food and nutrition security at the local level.

In South Africa, a number of universities and academic institutions conduct research on food insecurity and vulnerability, and on the right to food.

CAPACITY BUILDING

All the case studies showed that there is a critical need to build capacity in order to ensure that policies are implemented. Duty bearers and rights holders often lack the capacity to use the instruments available for the realization of the right to adequate food. Capacity development using a rights framework requires targeting both rights holders and duty bearers. It should be directed at communities and households as well as to those in the public and private spheres.

IDENTIFYING THE VULNERABLE AND TARGETING BENEFITS

An overriding challenge that emerges from the country experiences is that inadequate attention is given to identifying those whose right to food is not realized. No matter how much emphasis is given in the stated policy to reduce poverty and food and nutrition insecurity, mechanisms to identify those who are food insecure and to understand the reasons for their vulnerability are needed.

Implementation plans are generally vague in defining target groups in sufficient detail to be operationally relevant. This is not so much a question of technical obstacles linked to data and analytical capacities as it is a question of a fundamental approach to development. Strategies and action plans must be based on a thorough socio-economic assessment of different groups of people, in order for national food security plans to identify the food insecure and vulnerable groups. Vulnerability mapping can be useful in this regard. A human-rights approach, through its constant concern with those whose rights are not realized or violated and why, is a powerful tool to sharpen the focus on people.

In identifying vulnerable groups, there is a need to address those with HIV/AIDS and other chronic diseases so that holistic food and nutrition plans can be developed for and with people living with these diseases.

MONITORING AND INDICATORS

Indicators for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food would make it possible to measure the extent to which policy and legal and institutional frameworks are effective. An initial step in formulating such indicators and benchmarks is coming to a common understanding and consensus of rights-based indicators and benchmarks. Process indicators are needed, as well as progress indicators, in order to measure effectiveness of elements such as legal mechanisms, judiciary reform, and the participation of CSOs.

In South Africa, the judiciary has provided invaluable guidance on what progressive realization of some of the economic and social rights entail. However, commonly understood indicators of progress in service delivery are still needed, and the State needs to set clearer goals and objectives. The setting of targets with clear deliverables is key and should be done in consultation with vulnerable groups. This would assist the South Africa Human Rights Commission whose job it is to monitor the progressive realization of these economic and social rights by State organs.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

There is a growing recognition of the importance of a participatory approach and the inclusion of civil society in designing and implementing food-based schemes. The case studies revealed that civil society plays significant roles in operationalizing the right to food in many countries. Community based or-



organizations and NGOs are at times more successful than central or State administered programmes in reaching the poor. Civil society also plays a significant role in monitoring the implementation of the right to food in several of the countries examined.

Civil society organizations have played an essential role in promoting the human right to food in Brazil. One of the most important initiatives was the creation of the Brazilian Food and Nutrition Security Forum (*Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional*, or FBSAN) in 1998. This is a network of organizations, social movements, individuals, and institutions now comprising over 100 organizations with representation in all of the country's states. The overwhelming importance of the civil society movement was obvious in the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidency as the majority of CSOs and NGOs backed his Zero Hunger (*Fome Zero*) food security programme.

In India, 2001 witnessed a major landmark in terms of people's awareness of and participation in anti-poverty programmes, particularly regarding distribution of food to the needy. Following monsoon failure for the third successive year and the incapacity of several state Governments to provide food to poor drought-affected people, a number of NGOs and public spirited citizens launched the people's Right to Food Movement in India. This movement has spread in many states, particularly those with a high concentration of poverty and starvation. The movement has created an awareness of legal entitlements among disempowered citizens and has also helped to improve accountability in the official machinery and local power structures dealing with social programmes.

Civil society across Canada plays an important role in advancing the priority of food security and the debate about the human right to food. However, despite a recommendation by the National Action Plan that the sector also perform a national monitoring function, it is financially too weak to do this. Civil society organizations are more prominent at provincial and local levels where they advance the right to food and food security through the activities of charitable food networks, alternative community food projects, voluntary-cooperative-public partnerships, food security networks, farm organizations, and food policy councils, as well as conduct research, public education and policy advocacy.

Conclusions

Human Rights are, above all, about empowerment and accountability. A rights-based approach shifts the focus from technocratic to political solutions and to greater equality in power relations and wealth/income distribution. It emphasizes state obligations rather than political will when addressing food insecurity, poverty and the empowerment of rights holders. Enabling policy and legal and institutional frameworks are important to achieve the right to food.

Public policies considered from a human-rights perspective translate into a development approach in which the obligation to achieve universal human rights for all is the starting point. This in turn calls for a focus on those whose rights are not fully realized, and their participation in formulating, implementing and evaluating policies, rather than a top-down approach.

The development of an overarching and integrated food security policy based on human rights principles is central to achieving the right to adequate food at country level. It is not always easy for food policies to balance the four components of food security: availability, stability, access and utilization. Sufficient food production and food availability at national level is not the only requirement for food security. Policies must also take into consideration the importance of livelihoods and equitable access to resources to guarantee access to sufficient food. Planning is required to ensure that economic growth and trade policies are supportive of poverty reduction and right to food policies. When people cannot feed themselves by their own means, programmes need to be put in place to address the inability of the poor to have access to adequate food.

Legal protection of the right to food is essential. This takes different forms in different countries. In some countries the right to food is written directly into the Constitution, while in others, the courts have interpreted the Constitution as protecting the right to food. Different countries also have different types of legislation that protect the right, and various legal mechanisms by which individuals and/or groups can claim it. In some countries claims relating to the right to food can be brought to the courts.

Legal and constitutional recognition of the right to food is important but not sufficient to ensure its implementation, even if it is a justiciable right. Other elements need to be in place, including the rule of law, good governance and accountability. Efficient, accessible and workable legal mechanisms for claiming the right to adequate food are needed. An independent judiciary capable of exercising its responsibility is crucial in guaranteeing the right to food. Judges and lawyers need to be aware of rights provisions in this regard. National human rights institutions have a prime role to play in monitoring



the implementation of the right to food, as well as in receiving complaints from groups and individuals.

Implementing right to food-policy and legal frameworks requires effective institutions at all levels. The cross-sectoral nature of the right to food requires efforts of coordination across government ministries and offices at the national, sub-national and local levels. Accountability is central to an effective institutional framework for the implementation of the right to food. The state must establish mechanisms to ensure the accountability of those who are responsible for the implementation of this right.

Right to food policy needs to be accompanied by implementation strategies with clear, quantified targets and benchmarks, as well as the allocation of institutional responsibilities and accountability. Strategies and action plans must be based on thorough socio-economic assessments for national food security programmes to target the food-insecure and vulnerable groups. Indicators for the progressive realization of the right to adequate food would make it possible to measure the extent to which policy, legal and institutional frameworks are effective.

Awareness raising, human rights education and capacity building are needed on a large scale to realize the right to food. In the long run, these measures will help lead to a shift in the perception of governments and civil society so that economic, social and cultural human rights become an intrinsic part of societal values.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of a participatory approach and the inclusion of civil society in designing and implementing programmes to facilitate or provide access to food. Civil society contributes significantly to operationalizing the right to food in many countries by advocating for policy change, by monitoring implementation, and by helping groups and individuals and groups to claim their rights.

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9th Dr Abraham Horwitz Lecturer
Strategies for Realizing Human Rights to Food,
Health and Care for Infants and Young Children
in Support of the Millennium Development Goals
Role and capacity analysis of responsible actors
in relation to breastfeeding in the Maldives

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Introduction

The general theme of the 9th Dr Abraham Horwitz lecture was "National Anti-Hunger Strategies: What can we learn from country-ownership of the fight against hunger and malnutrition?" This paper deals with theory and practice regarding anti-hunger strategies in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the realization of human rights to food, health and care for infants and young children with a focus on breastfeeding. Specifically, it discusses experiences from a role and capacity analysis of responsible actors in relation to breastfeeding from a human rights perspective in the Maldives.

Breastfeeding, MDGs and human rights

Any anti-hunger strategy for infants and young children must include breastfeeding as a critical component. Breastfeeding is in itself, a factor that will contribute to the achievement of the MDGs, as documented by the SCN through its Working Group on Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding in New York in 2004.¹ The MDGs on the other hand, must be anchored in human rights, as reflected in the preceding Millennium Declaration.²

The uniqueness of breastfeeding is that it provides infants and young children with one complete food which ensures health and where care is the mode of delivery. Optimal breastfeeding practices, therefore, contribute to the realization of infants and young children's rights to adequate food [Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Art. 24.2(c), International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Art. 11.1] and the highest attainable standard of health (CRC Art. 24.1, ICESCR Art. 12.1).^b At the same time mothers have human rights that can be used to claim conditions that will enable them to breastfeed successfully, such as the right to appropriate post-natal care [CRC Art. 24, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Art. 12.2] and the right to paid maternity leave (ICESCR Art. 10, CEDAW Art. 11.2(b)). Figure 1 summarizes these relationships. The specific relevant articles found in these conventions are numerous and comprise the rights of infants and mothers respectively, as well as the obligations of states (see Box 1 on page 65).

Human rights imply corresponding duties

With any human right, there is a corresponding set of duties held by *duty-bearers*. The specific duties are (by necessity) not spelled out in more than very general terms in the human rights conventions, and must therefore be specified on the basis of human rights norms and principles as well as international norms^c for best practice. Generally, 'human rights norms' encompass the various conventions themselves, as well as the relevant 'general comments', issued by the respective human rights treaty bodies

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^b Whether infants have an explicit *right to be breastfed* may be a controversial question as such a notion implies that mothers have a *duty to breastfeed*. This is a complex issue that will not be specifically addressed here.

^c The term norm is here used as the desired standard; an aspiration towards which one should strive. It should not be confused with the concept of norm as typically used by social scientists, i.e. meaning what is common to the social group in question.

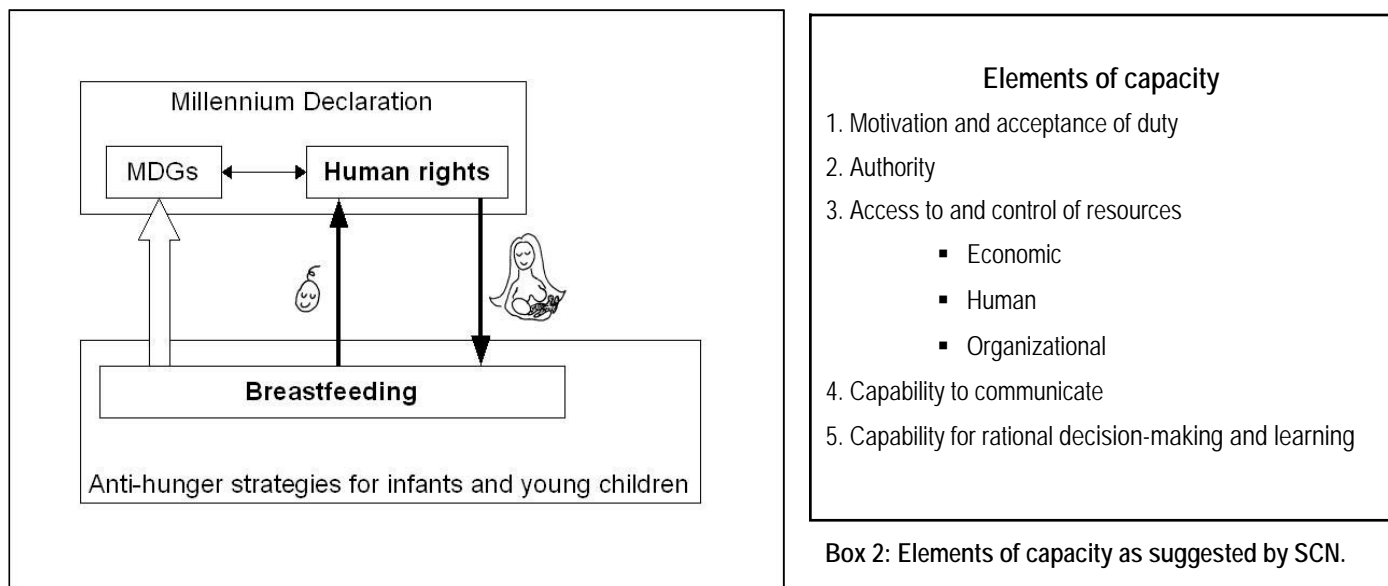


Figure 1: The relationships between breastfeeding, MDGs and human rights.

to clarify the content of certain articles in those conventions.^d

For breastfeeding, there exist a number of international norms and 'model plans'. The most comprehensive one is the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding³ from 2003 ('the Global Strategy') which endorses previous standards such as the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes⁴ ('the WHO Code'), the Innocenti Declaration,⁵ the International Labor Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention,⁶ and the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative⁷ (BFHI) which is based on the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. The Global Strategy is human rights-based (para. 3); it spells out the specific obligations and responsibilities of a range of actors in society (paras. 35-48) and requests that States allocate responsibilities among them (para. 37).

Methodology

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research used a methodology developed within UNICEF⁸ and suggested by the SCN through its Working Group on Nutrition, Ethics and Human Rights at the 28th Annual Session of the SCN in Nairobi in 2001 for monitoring the realisation of the rights to food, health and care.⁹ The methodology has been further developed within UNICEF in various publications by Urban Jonsson and others,^{10,11} as part of a human rights-based approach to development programming. It provides a theoretical framework in terms of a 'role and capacity analysis'—which has to be specifically operationalized for different situations.

The first part of the research was to develop specific indicators based on the framework, second to field-test these indicators in a case study carried out in relation to a review of hospitals declared Baby-Friendly in the Maldives. The field-test, in turn, contributed to a refinement of the indicators (Figure 2, next page). The indicators are normative, meaning that they were formulated to indicate the ideal situation, through a combination of human rights principles and international norms for breastfeeding policy and practice. In the case study, these normative indicators were compared to the situation in reality measured by performance, in order to identify gaps.

The focus of this paper is on experiences using this particular methodology, and particularly how it was operationalized to yield indicators. For this one particular finding, low rates of exclusive breastfeeding among mothers of newborns (51% of the newborns in the study sample had already received food or drink other than breastmilk) was pursued to illustrate how the analysis can enhance understanding of the reasons for failure to meet duties. The paper does not attempt to give a full picture of the breastfeeding situation in the Maldives.

ROLE AND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Who are the duty-bearer(s) in a given situation? Through a role analysis responsible actors or duty-

^d In the case of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) the term used is 'general recommendations'.

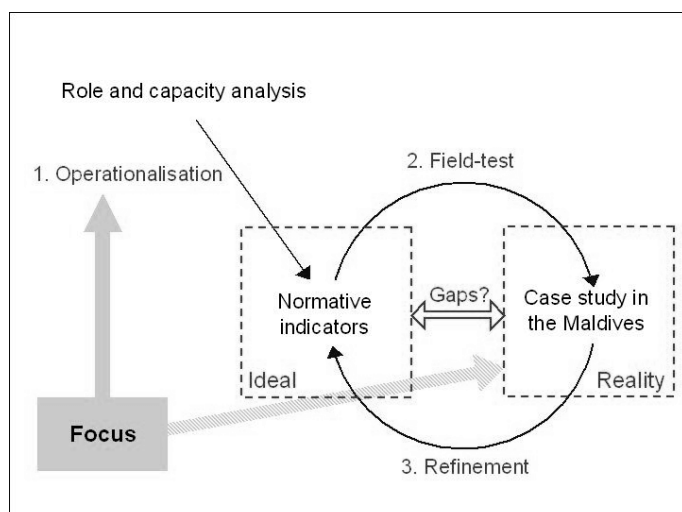
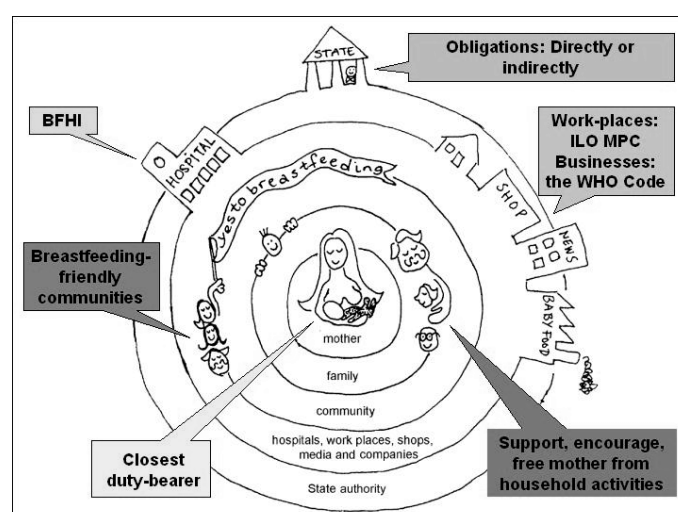


Figure 2: Overview of the research project.

Figure 3: Role analysis of duty-bearers (adapted from Kents' 'rings of responsibilities')²¹

bearers at various levels are identified. After identifying who they are, it is necessary to determine their particular obligations and responsibilities, and assess their performance in meeting them.

For breastfeeding, a range of responsible actors can be identified (Figure 3). The mother is the closest duty-bearer to her infant. She needs active support from her surroundings to practise optimal breastfeeding. The husband and the family thus have responsibilities to support and encourage the mother by building her confidence and freeing her from household chores. Communities have responsibilities to create breastfeeding-friendly communities, such as those in the Gambia as described by Semega-Janneh in the 2nd Dr Abraham Horwitz Lecture in Oslo in 1998.¹² Work-places are responsible for ensuring that working mothers receive paid maternity leave in line with the ILO Maternity Protection Convention. Businesses, shops and media have responsibilities to adhere to the WHO Code. Health care services have responsibilities to protect, promote and support breastfeeding, for example through implementing the BFHI. The state authority is obliged to implement measures towards the enjoyment of the rights, either directly, by working through public institutions such as governmental hospitals, or indirectly, by strengthening opportunities for non-state actors such as work places and communities.

In the Maldives case study, duty-bearers at three levels were considered: the mothers, the hospitals and the State.

A major assumption of the methodology is that failure to meet duties at any of these levels may not necessarily be due to unwillingness on the part of the duty-bearers, but rather to a lack of capacity to do so. A capacity analysis seeks to investigate why duty-bearers are not fulfilling their duties. Specifically, we are interested in identifying and assessing the gaps in capacity which hinder them.

The framework proposed by the SCN examines the following five elements of capacity: (1) being motivated to implement measures towards the enjoyment of the right and accepting the duty to do so, (2) having authority to take action, (3) having access to and control of the necessary economic, human and organisational resources, (4) possessing capabilities to communicate, and (5) possessing capabilities to make rational decisions and to learn from experience (Box 2, previous page).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Many of the readers will recognise the upper part of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 4 which is based on the UNICEF framework for understanding the causes of malnutrition.¹³ Here it is depicted in its normative version, pointing to optimal breastfeeding practices as an underlying condition for good nutrition among infants and young children.

For analysis at the basic level, the original UNICEF conceptual framework focuses on the presence or non-presence of relevant resources as well as the economic, political and ideological factors that influence their control and management. In the case of breastfeeding, factors at the basic level would, for example, be the existence of breastfeeding policies and whether or not maternity services are baby-friendly.

In a human rights-approach, it mandatory to apply certain principles such as participation and accountability. Participation requires the identification of specific duty-bearers who have an obligation

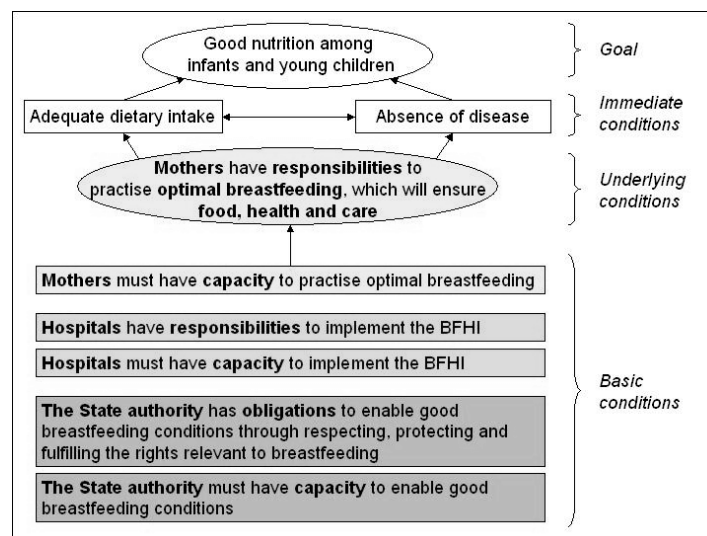


Figure 4: Conceptual framework for the role and capacity of three sets of duty-bearers.

or a responsibility vis-à-vis right-holders to perform in accordance with certain principles and standards (role analysis). Holding them accountable for this must be seen in light of their capacity to meet duties (capacity analysis).

The approach by which one focuses on performance in meeting duties and capacity to do so can be applied in the normative version of the conceptual framework, i.e. for identifying the conditions for optimal breastfeeding practices, the framework thereby becoming a tool for establishing a viable norm. In this way one may say that the ideal conditions at the basic level in the normative framework are when the identified duty-bearers can and are satisfactorily carrying out their duties. The human rights approach thus adds two dimensions to the normative nutrition framework by going beyond the question “are there certain factors in place at the basic level?” (i.e. presence of, for example, policies, programmes, etc.), to “are the duty-bearers taking action to ensure that such factors are present?” (i.e. duty-bearers’ role) and “can the duty-bearers take such action?” (i.e. duty-bearers’ capacity), thereby highlighting a critical human rights principle, namely accountability, for nutrition analysis. Also, this approach points to the concept of nested responsibilities as it becomes clear that the performance and capacity of duty-bearers at one level depends on the performance and capacity of duty-bearers at more distant levels. The conceptual framework for the role and capacity of three sets of duty-bearers is depicted in Figure 4.^e

The next step is to further operationalize each of the elements in order to create meaningful indicators. In the case study, the framework in Figure 4 served as a guide for developing normative indicators for the ideal performance and capacity of the three sets of duty-bearers, resulting in six sets of indicators:

- the *performance* of mothers in meeting their responsibilities to practise optimal breastfeeding, and
- their *capacity* to do so
- the *performance* of hospitals in meeting their responsibilities to implement the BFHI, and
- their *capacity* to do so
- the *performance* of the State authority in meeting its obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights relevant to breastfeeding, and
- its *capacity* to do so.

The total number of indicators developed in the study amounts to almost 250 and cannot be presented here. The next section shows a brief overview of the areas investigated under each of the six sets, illustrated by some selected examples from the case-study in the Maldives.

^eFigure 4 shows the nested responsibilities for only three sets of duty-bearers. The entire claim-duty pattern would of course be a more complex web.



Case-study

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Republic of Maldives is a small island nation in the South Indian Sea with a population of 275 000 scattered over 199 of some 1200 islands. Although graduated from status of least developed country in 2004, the Maldives is extremely vulnerable, geographically and economically, to shocks such as that of the tsunami last December. Malnutrition is rife, with underweight, wasting and stunting rates among children underfive years of 30, 13, and 25% respectively¹⁵—which are comparable to those of Sub-Saharan Africa. The breastfeeding rate of 97% is among the highest in the world, however, it does not reflect the degree of optimal practices and only 11% of mothers reported breastfeeding exclusively for six months in 2001. The Maldives is a country in transition which is increasingly adopting a Western lifestyle in many respects. The Department of Public Health (DPH) has expressed concern that formula feeding is starting to replace breastfeeding.¹⁶ Regarding human rights, the Maldives ratified the CRC in 1991 and acceded to the CEDAW in 1993.

SAMPLING

The findings presented in the examples below are based on interviews in maternity wards of six hospitals: 58 mothers of infants younger than 25 days of whom 49 were non-special care babies; 59 staff members of whom 14 were doctors (1 Maldivian and 13 expatriates); 45 nurses (32 Maldivians and 13 expatriates). At the State level, data was obtained from official documents, observations and discussions with governmental employees.

INDICATORS AND EXAMPLES

Indicators at the mother level

Performance

The CRC states that a mother has, as a parent, the "...primary responsibility for the up-bringing and development of the child..." where "...the best interest of the child..." will be the basic concern (Art. 18.1). She has in that respect, both "...responsibilities, rights and duties..." (Art. 5).

Mothers' performance in meeting their responsibilities to ensure their children good nutrition through optimal breastfeeding can be measured against the various aspects of such practices, that is: whether or not breastfeeding is initiated early so the baby may benefit from colostrum, whether or not the infant is breastfed exclusively for six months with continued breastfeeding for two years or beyond, and whether or not breastfeeding is unrestricted—with regard to frequency and duration of feeds.

Capacity

A mother's *capacity* to meet her responsibilities to ensure her child good nutrition through optimal breastfeeding practices, should be seen in light of her

1. *motivation* to breastfeed and her feeling of a responsibility to nourish her baby in the best possible way (motivation, for example, will be based on *inter alia* knowledge about the benefits of and recommendations for breastfeeding);
2. *authority* to make her own decisions about breastfeeding (e.g. that she is not separated from her infant and that she does not have to follow strict feeding schedules);
3. *economic, human and organizational resources* to practise optimal breastfeeding (e.g. time in the form of paid maternity leave for working mothers, skills and confidence, and a supportive network);
4. *capability to communicate* and seek help about problems that may arise (e.g. communication with professionals and with peers, freedom of opinion, expression and information,^f and participation^g in the planning and implementation of her health care); and,
5. *capability for rational decision-making and learning from experience* (which presupposes that her decisions are made on correct and non-misleading information).

^f See Universal Declaration of Human Rights Art. 19, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Art. 19, International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Art. 5(d)(viii), CRC Arts. 13, 17 and 24.2(e).

^g See ICCPR Art. 25, CEDAW Art. 7, CRC Art. 12. Participation in health and nutrition issues has also been emphasised in the Alma Ata declaration from the International Conference on Primary Health Care in 1978 which declares that "...people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care..." as well as in the General Comments No. 12 (on the right to adequate food) and No. 14 (on the right to the highest attainable standard of health) to the ICESCR.



Examples

In the case-study in the Maldives as many as 51% of the non-special care babies in the study sample had, despite their young age, already received food or drink other than breast-milk. One may question whether their mothers were motivated to breastfeed exclusively. *Motivation*, however, will depend i.a. on their knowledge about the recommendations for and benefits of breastfeeding. Among these mothers, 55% knew that exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for six months but only 31% planned to follow it. Further, only 14% could mention more than one benefit of breastfeeding. Both these findings indicate poor knowledge.

If we look at what these babies received and by whom, it becomes clear however that the mothers may not have had the authority to breastfeed exclusively. Of the non-special care babies, 24, 22 and 11% had received *Shaahade*,^h vitamin or mineral supplements, and glucose or dextrose water, respectively. The Shaahade was given by the family whereas the vitamin or mineral supplements were prescribed by doctors and the glucose or dextrose water was given by nurses. In addition it was reported that grandmothers liked to give the baby something to eat or drink, so they could later tell the child that they fed them when they were young. These actors constitute the mothers' *organizational resources* and should normally support optimal breastfeeding and hence in principle exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. The remainder of this analysis will look at factors at the hospital level and specifically why the health workers gave the newborns supplements and sweetened water.

INDICATORS AT THE HOSPITAL LEVEL

Performance

According to the CRC (Art. 24) and the CEDAW (Art. 12.2), mothers have the right to "... appropriate..." post-natal care. The BFHI is widely recognized as the norm for how hospitals should protect, promote and support breastfeeding. In that respect, a WHO publication from 1998 went so far as to declare that "... there is no excuse for maternity services not to have implemented the Ten Steps..."¹⁷ From the combination of these two points it follows that hospitals indeed do have a duty to become baby-friendly. Their performance can therefore be measured against the Global Criteria for the BFHI which sets standards on how the hospitals should comply with the Ten Steps, and on how they should protect mothers from marketing of breast-milk substitutes.

Capacity

Whether or not hospitals comply with the Global Criteria for BFHI depends on their capacity to do so. This capacity must be seen in light of:

1. *motivation* of hospital management and all staff to implement the Ten Steps and the *acceptance of duty* to do so (which is, for example, manifested in the existence, quality and use of hospital breastfeeding policies);
2. *authority* of the hospital to plan and initiate interventions to better adhere to the Ten Steps as well as the authority of individual staff members to support mothers to breastfeed (restrictions on how hospitals may promote breastfeeding can for example come from local traditions that are non-consonant with the Ten Steps; within the hospital, staff members in lower positions may feel that they do not have authority to contradict instructions given by staff in higher positions—even when these instructions do not comply with the Ten Steps);
3. *economic, human and organisational resources* available to the hospital (such as budget for salaries and for material, trained and experienced personnel, and internal and external organisational structures);
4. *capability of hospital staff to communicate* (with the central level, amongst themselves, and listening to mothers' views); and,
5. *capability to make rational decisions and to learn from experience* (on the basis of sound and regular monitoring and evaluation).

Examples

In light of the above aspects of capacity, one reason why health workers in the Maldives gave the newborns supplements and sweetened water might be that only 22% of staff members interviewed had received appropriate training, this in turn reflects a lack of adequate human resources in these hospitals. In this case, it is crucial that those who are trained should be given authority to make decisions. In

^h Shaahade is a religious rital where the newborn is given a little prayer in his or her mouth. The prayer is usually written in a thin layer of honey on a piece of cotton. It is a one time ceremony.



the Maldives, a high proportion of doctors and nursing supervisors are expatriates on short-term contracts who do not receive any special in-service training. They should nevertheless follow the hospital breastfeeding policy, integrate it and *accept it as their duty*. The breastfeeding policies in these hospitals varied considerably in quality, however. Further, not more than 42% of the staff members reported having received an orientation about it, an indication of inadequate *communication*. The poor policies and orientation routines might be a sign of a sub-optimal *motivation* to implement the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

The hospital breastfeeding policy should be based on the Ten Steps; Step 6 reads that "...new-borns should be given no food or drink other than breast-milk—unless medically indicated". Here one may raise the question of whether or not vitamin supplements and sweetened water really are medically indicated in the first days of life. In practice, the interpretation of what is "medically indicated" becomes a subjective decision by the individual paediatrician or other health worker with similar authority. In the Maldives, conflicts on this issue were frequent.

In all six hospitals, there was a total ban on bottles and artificial teats. Yet it was reported that such products were frequently used in paediatric wards where older infants were admitted.. It is not hard to imagine the difficulty in refusing a sick child his or her bottle despite the ban. In such a situation, rational decision-making may favour a happy child rather than a crying child.

One of the hospitals' organisational resources, the DPH, has been concerned with maintaining standards in the baby-friendly hospitals. The responses from the State are dealt with in the next section.

INDICATORS AT THE STATE LEVEL

Performance

A State that has ratified and which, therefore, is a party to a human rights convention is obliged under international law to implement measures toward the enjoyment of these rights. The level of obligation will vary according to different situations. Common human rights language interprets State obligations as the obligations to *respect*, *protect* and *fulfil* a given right, fulfil through *facilitation* or where necessary through *provision*. This categorisation of State obligations has been adopted by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its General Comments No. 12 on the right to adequate food¹⁸ and No. 14 on the right to the highest attainable standard of health.^{i, 19}

For breastfeeding specifically, this would mean that the State is, at the first level, obliged to *respect* existing good breastfeeding practices. At the next level, it is obliged to *protect* breastfeeding mothers from interfering third parties—such as aggressive marketing behaviour from infant formula companies. Further it is obliged to *facilitate* good breastfeeding conditions and environments, for example, through establishing policies or implementing programmes. For especially needy infants, such as prematures, the State may even have to *provide* alternatives of comparable quality such as mother's milk from human milk banks.

Capacity

The extent to which the State meets its obligations to fulfil the rights relevant to breastfeeding depends on its capacity to do so, which must be seen in light of its:

1. *motivation* to respect, protect and fulfil the rights relevant to breastfeeding and *acceptance of duty* to do so (which will be reflected in national legislation, policies and programmes on breastfeeding);
2. *authority* to make decisions which concern breastfeeding (i.e. that the State authority has delegated responsibility and political mandates to relevant institutions);
3. *economic, human and organisational resources* to implement its obligations (such as budgets for implementation of policies and programmes, availability of experienced and skilled staff, and arrangements for technical or economic support);
4. *capability to communicate* (internally within the State's own structures; externally with collaborating actors and, most importantly, with mothers themselves who are the problem-owners through establishing feedback mechanisms and ensuring their participation in decision-making); and,

ⁱ General Comment No. 14 on the right to the highest attainable standard of health includes a third subdivision of *promotion* under the obligation to *fulfil* (in addition to *facilitation* and *provision*). In this work, breastfeeding promotion is considered as one way in which the State may facilitate for optimal breastfeeding through providing information.



5. *capability for rational decision-making and learning from experience* (i.e. monitoring and evaluation of breastfeeding practices, policies and programmes).

Examples

In the Maldives, the DPH has responded to the problem of inadequate policies and has developed a standardized, comprehensive hospital breastfeeding policy of fifteen steps. This policy covers all the Ten Steps, but also includes some elements specific to the situation in the Maldives (e.g. that training should also be provided to expatriate staff). The Global Criteria for BFHI do not require hospital breastfeeding policies to be identical to the Ten Steps. The DPH was nevertheless **discouraged** from introducing this policy in the baby-friendly hospitals by one of their organizational resources, the nutrition section of the UNICEF headquarters at the time. This was based on fears that it could reduce the impact of the Ten Steps. Without the author taking a stand on this issue, one might question whether endorsement of the added elements might have contributed to a sense of country-ownership to the BFHI.

An internal organizational resource at the national level would be a continuing training programme on breastfeeding support for health workers. Generally speaking, the Maldives faces a lack of human resources as there are no universities or colleges offering postgraduate programmes. In this case however, there are several certified trainers for appropriate courses, thus the human resources are present, yet courses are not held regularly. This might be ascribed to a lack of economic resources at the national level, and perhaps also to a lack of motivation as “mothers breastfeed anyway”. Some of the challenges particular to the Maldives in providing training to all hospital staff are: high turn-over rates of staff requiring that courses are conducted often, frequent rotations among different wards requiring training of a large proportion of the total staff, a geography of scattered and sometimes inaccessible islands resulting in high transportation costs and difficulties in conducting training programs for more than one unit at a time, and small-sized individual units making it difficult to release staff members for participation in courses.

Reflections on the utilization of the role and capacity analysis

SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PARTICULAR CASE STUDY

Role and capacity analysis clearly brought out the multiple responsibilities of a range of duty-bearers for optimal breastfeeding. The example from the Maldives, though limited in scope, illustrates how this responsibility does not rest with mothers alone. **An analysis of their** capacity reveals that their breastfeeding success is highly dependant on the performance of other duty-bearers, whether close or distant. This is, for example, reflected in the preamble to the CEDAW, which states that “... upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole.”

Although the hospitals surveyed in this study had committed themselves to implement the BFHI, they did not have capacity for achieving full implementation. In developing countries, such as the Maldives, the State authority may have only limited capacity to provide technical or financial support, particularly in terms of economic and human resources. Under international human rights law, however, State Parties to the CRC may request or indicate their need for technical advice or assistance to UNICEF or other competent bodies through the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Art. 45(b)) and, therefore, have an authority in the form of a mandate to request assistance.

GENERAL USEFULNESS OF THE ANALYSIS

The role and capacity analysis is complex, yet not complicated. It is logically structured and well suited for this country setting. An evaluation based on the Global Criteria for BFHI is in itself a thorough and time-consuming process. The additional time and resources needed for the analysis at the hospital level were therefore marginal.

It must be emphasized, however, that the limitations to this particular example are fourfold. Firstly, it only examines duty-bearers at three levels. As indicated earlier many other actors could play an important role in supporting mothers in optimal breastfeeding. Secondly, it only focuses on mothers giving birth in the largest hospitals; the situation might be quite different on other islands. Thirdly, the example, although complex, only considers one of the aforementioned four aspects of optimal breastfeeding. Finally, the findings are only valid for the very first days after birth. Later in the breastfeeding period, interventions and programmes other than BFHI may be more important for creating enabling breastfeeding environments.

When monitoring the realization of nutrition-relevant human rights more broadly, the role and capac-

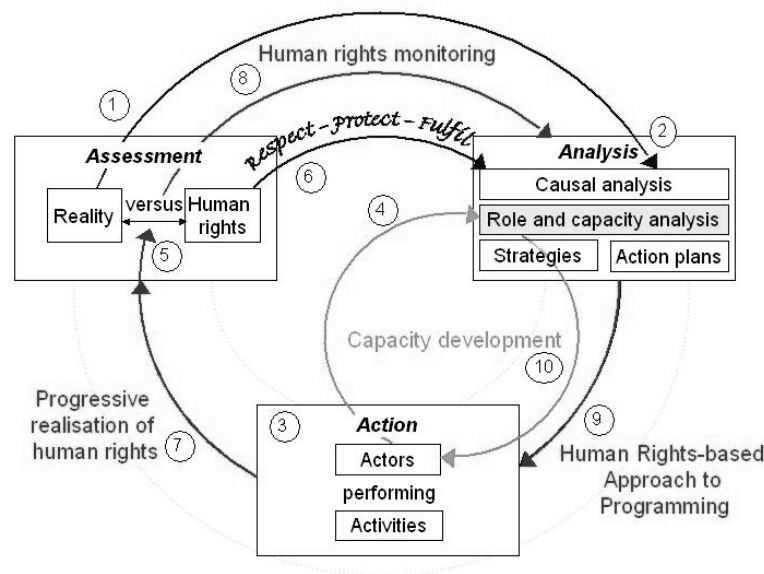


Figure 5: Role of the role and capacity analysis

ity of actors at other levels must be taken into account (e.g. families, communities, health clinics, work places, businesses and media). This might demand more time and resources not always available. The role and capacity analysis can nevertheless be applied to selected topics or actors on an opportunistic and strategic basis. For those who wish to utilize this methodology, it is recommended to have flexibility in data collection, both in sampling as well as in information gathering. The approach using questionnaires in the present study proved unnecessarily time-consuming and precluded gathering of information on related issues that may have come up.

Finally, this study looked at the underlying factors of failure to meet duties, this in terms of sub-optimal capacity. The role and capacity analysis could also serve to study 'best practices', identifying those capacities that appear effective in different settings. An inventory of such studies would be particularly useful for the further refinement and scaling-up^j of a human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP).

Conclusion: Potential inherent in role and capacity analysis

So, what conclusions can be drawn from this study? Has the analysis provided useful and has it showed its potential? Given the restrictions mentioned above, the answer is yes. Not only was it helpful to explore capacity in a structured manner, it also allowed for more openness during interviews, in cases of poor performance—perhaps because the duty-bearers felt that they were not being judged, but rather given the opportunity to speak out about their challenges, difficulties and their own unfulfilled rights.

Applying a role and capacity analysis could in fact encourage a series of activities, ensuring *local* ownership and commitment from a broad range of actors under the ultimate sponsorship and encouragement of the State authority. Through identifying duty-bearers and spelling out their roles and responsibilities, accountability is encouraged.

Accountability and ownership will also be nurtured through involving duty-bearers in the decision-making process. The analysis fits well into the greater picture of programming and policy-making, and specifically the so-called triple-A cycle of assessment, analysis and action.

This cycle usually involves an assessment of a real problem (Figure 5, step 1), followed by an analysis of its causes (step 2). This should lead to specific actions to correct the problem. Action on the other hand, always involves actors who are performing activities (step 3). A thorough analysis should, therefore, include a role and capacity analysis (step 4), to ensure that action plans are realistic. This could encourage specific actors to acknowledge their roles and responsibilities and programme planners to

^j Scaling-up should here be understood in the broad sense: quantitatively (e.g. geographical expansion), functionally (e.g. introduction of new activities), politically (e.g. moving towards empowerment and change in the socio-political-economic environment), or organisationally (e.g. creating new external links with other development actors).²⁰



ensure that their capacities are developed and supported so they indeed may meet their duties. Action should always aim to move the situation in reality towards one in which human rights are realised (step 5).

Even where specific problems are not yet identified, ratification of human rights conventions should encourage the formulation of national strategies and measures to respect, protect and fulfil these rights (step 6). The operationalisation of such strategies would clearly benefit from a thorough role and capacity analysis.

Although 'human rights' here are placed within the sphere of 'assessment', in contrast to the situation in 'reality', they are part of each step of the triple A cycle: action should lead to progressive realization of rights (step 7); an assessment of the reality in relation to human rights is a first step in the process of human rights monitoring (step 8); and, an analysis which includes a role and capacity analysis is a central step in HRBAP (step 9).¹⁰

Overall, whether in programming or policy-making, one must identify specific actors (be they right-holders or duty-bearers), together with their specific roles and capacities to perform those roles. Action must aim at strengthening and developing their capacities to claim rights and meet duties (step 10). Thus when we choose to talk about capacity development rather than 'competence building' and 'provision of resources' we should consider capacity in the broad sense as suggested by SCN. For example, as seen in the Maldives case study, training of health workers had limited impact when those who were trained were not given sufficient authority.

Box 1: Human rights relevant to breastfeeding

Infants have the right to...

- the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (ICESCR 12.1, CRC 24.1)
- adequate nutritious food (ICESCR 11.1, CRC 24.2(c))
- physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (CRC 27.1)

Mothers have the right to...

- health care services and appropriate post-natal care (CEDAW 12.2, CRC 24)
- education and support in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding (CRC 24.2(e))
- appropriate assistance in their child-rearing responsibilities (CRC 18)
- adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation (CEDAW 12.2)
- paid maternity leave or other equivalent, including job protection (ICESCR 10, CEDAW 11.2(b))
- safeguarding of the function of reproduction in working conditions (CEDAW 11.1(f))
- decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights (CEDAW 16.1(e))

States Parties are obliged to...

- ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (CRC 6.2)
- take appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality (CRC 24.2(a))
- combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care (CRC 24.2(c))
- ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding (CRC 24.2(e))
- ensure provision of health care to all children (CRC 24.2(b)) and institutions, services and facilities which conform with appropriate standards (CRC 3.3)



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Programme News

Helen Keller
International

Helen Keller International receives \$12 million grant from CIDA to reduce child mortality

HKI has been awarded a \$12 million grant from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Its purpose is to reduce under-five mortality by ensuring high and sustained vitamin A supplementation (VAS) coverage as the cornerstone of a low-cost, high-impact package of child survival interventions. Effective VAS has the potential to reduce mortality rates in children aged 6 to 59 months by an estimated 25%. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that over 42% of children are at risk of vitamin A deficiency (VAD) and that controlling VAD will prevent over 645,000 deaths per year. CIDA is one of the major enablers of VAS worldwide.

HKI has decided to use these CIDA funds to target nine African countries: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. The project will be carried out over three years in partnership with UNICEF. HKI and UNICEF are recognized leaders in advancing the right of children to survival, nutrition, and health, and have placed integrated VAD control at the center of these efforts.

HKI has been at the forefront of VAD research since the 1970s, when the agency collaborated with Dr Alfred Sommer of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health on his VAD studies in Indonesia. These groundbreaking studies led to the recognition of VAD control as one of the most cost-effective, high-impact child survival interventions in developing countries. VAD is also the leading cause of preventable pediatric blindness. Children need at least two high-dosage capsules of vitamin A per year to be protected from VAD and its consequences.

Improving the vitamin A status of children suffering from VAD reduces their risk of mortality from measles by an average of 50%, from diarrhoea by an average of 40%, and from all causes of mortality in children aged 6 to 59 months by an average of 23%.

HKI has been working to control VAD in Africa since 1986 when it undertook the first population-based assessments of VAD in West Africa with the governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger. HKI has played a critical role in supporting governments and other partners in integrating VAS into National Immunization Days (NIDs) for poliomyelitis eradication. As polio eradication nears, there is an urgent need to ensure that at least 80% of children aged 6 to 59 months receive twice-yearly doses of vitamin A through other strategies.

The Honorable Aileen Carroll, Canada's Minister of International Cooperation, expressed her commitment to VAS in stating, "Canada is a strong supporter of vitamin A supplementation programmes—these programmes can save the lives of millions of children. We are committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reducing child mortality by two-thirds, and improving children's nutrition in developing countries is a priority for reaching this goal." This grant from CIDA enables HKI to work with national governments, UNICEF, and other partners to ensure high VAS coverage in some of the most vulnerable countries in Africa, thereby assisting them to meet international commitments to reduce child deaths by two-thirds by the year 2015.

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Helen Keller International and UNICEF team up for children

Helen Keller International (HKI) and UNICEF are joining forces to combat malnutrition and blindness in children, two of poverty's most tragic health consequences. This cooperation will strengthen the reach of both agencies toward their common goal of reducing the global toll of child malnutrition, including the elimination of micronutrient deficiencies. Currently, one third of the world's children are malnourished, deprived of the minimum quantities of nutrients they need to safeguard their health and lives.

The joint agreement also increases collaboration on projects to prevent and treat child blindness and rehabilitate blind children. Joint UNICEF/HKI projects will support child nutrition programmes and will alleviate suffering due to childhood blindness, trachoma, onchocerciasis (river blindness) and cataracts. Building the capacity of governments, health systems, and communities to recognize and treat these problems will be a major joint focus.



One of the most far-reaching and immediate cooperative efforts in this partnership will be a drive to bring vitamin A supplements to children in nine African countries over the next three years, thanks to a recent grant by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Vitamin A is critical for building strong immune systems during childhood. In poor communities, vitamin A deficiency can cause blindness in children and seriously increase the risk of death from childhood illnesses like measles or diarrhea.

Mr Kul Gautam, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, welcomed the strengthened collaboration between the agencies, saying, "This link with HKI will help us to go further than before in bringing the benefits of good nutrition and healthcare to the most deprived children."

Ms Kathy Spahn, HKI's President and CEO expressed her enthusiasm for the agreement stating, "We are delighted to build upon the numerous productive programs we have in partnership with UNICEF with this new Global Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU will expedite future collaborations, which means that our staff in the field will be able to reach children in need more quickly with essential health services."

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ICRW

The Nutrition and Gender Initiative

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is the Secretariat for the Nutrition and Gender Initiative (NGI). It is a multi-year project in West Africa and South Asia with funds from the World Bank and the Government of the Netherlands. It is aimed at improving nutrition outcomes via a multisectoral approach and a focus on gender issues. It has a mandate to identify and develop strategies to tackle undernutrition throughout the life cycle, and to explore the extent to which reducing gender constraints and creating conditions for women's empowerment contributes to improving nutrition outcomes.

Low birth weight remains a widespread problem that has seen little improvement in recent decades in developing countries and there are few examples of effective interventions. Little is known about what is needed at the community level. Qualitative research can shed light on how to design new interventions to improve birth weight in the future. Consequently, the NGI is undertaking a three-site qualitative study in South Asia on low birth weight, and adolescent and women's nutrition in collaboration with the Centre for Health and Population Research in Bangladesh, the Foundation for Research in Health Systems in Gujarat, India, and the Institute of Health Management Pachod in Maharashtra, India.

The objective of the study is to understand the underlying socio-cultural factors that are implicated in mediating low birth weight and maternal malnutrition in the region. It seeks to understand, at the community level, the knowledge, perceptions, practices and expectations about women and girls' nutrition at key points in the life cycle, birth weight, women's social status, domestic violence in pregnancy, and how these could enhance or constrain uptake of services to prevent low birth weight and improve women's nutrition. This study will inform the NGI's future efforts in the region, in particular the design of community-based interventions and behaviour change communication strategies to prevent low birth weight and improve women and girls' nutrition.

As the findings are likely to be broadly consistent across study sites it may be possible to draw some general conclusions and recommendations on how to address women's malnutrition and low birth weight in South Asia. In May 2004, a common study protocol was developed by the NGI and its partners. Data collection is currently underway. Results of the study will be available in 2006. The main methods of data collection are focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and key-informant interviews.

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IFPRI's Food Consumption and Nutrition Division is developing a new initiative on agriculture and health. It builds upon IFPRI's tradition of exploring the linkages between agriculture and nutrition (e.g. cash-cropping and child nutrition, policy processes, biofortification and other food-based approaches to alleviate micronutrient malnutrition) and its more recent work on the linkages between HIV/AIDS, nutrition and agriculture.

The initiative is based on the precept that the agricultural sector can do more to improve nutrition and health, and the health sector can likewise do more to contribute to pro-poor agricultural development. Its overarching goal is to improve health of the poor, reduce malnutrition and food insecurity, and promote pro-poor agricultural development through improved coordination between the agricultural and health sectors in research, programmes, investments and policy formulation. More specifically, the initiative aims to:

- develop and communicate a unified conceptual framework to bring together the different (and bi-directional) links between agriculture and health, thereby improving the understanding of these linkages among researchers, policy-makers, programme managers and donors
- help coordinate work in the CGIAR on agriculture and health through the development of partnerships with the health sector and the creation of an institutional framework
- as a result of these activities, generate knowledge as a public good that enables researchers, policy-makers, programme managers and donors to design and implement research, policies, programmes and investments to improve the synergies between agriculture and health.

This initiative's first activity was a roundtable workshop: "Agriculture and Health Linkages: Towards Improved Co-ordination", held at IFPRI Washington DC on June 23-24, 2005. The workshop joined researchers from Consultative Group Centers, and professionals from academia, international organizations and the donor community, to discuss selected domains of agriculture-health linkages and develop next steps to move the initiative forward. Outputs of the workshop will be posted on the IFPRI website at in autumn 2005 at www.ifpri.org/themes/grp24/grp24overview.htm

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The Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage Project: Summing up its achievements

The Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage (TANA) project recently wrapped up three years of work on hunger in five Sub-Sahara African countries. The project created a network of leaders and advocates, well-positioned to promote an approach to combat hunger: linking agriculture and nutrition, while also accounting for gender. This approach was found to be greatly effective, but was not widely used at the outset of the TANA project.

As a new leadership network, connecting a wide range of actors and institutions, the TANA project had a remarkable degree of success during its three years. The achievements of this network and the project's conclusions and recommendations are detailed in a new ICRW report, "A Leadership Strategy for Reducing Hunger and Malnutrition in Africa: The Agriculture-Nutrition Advantage." It can be found on the project web site, www.agnutritionadvantage.org, and at www.icrw.org. The report details the reasons for the project's success:

Leadership Networks A leadership network can be a powerful strategy toward the adoption of a gender-informed approach to reducing hunger and malnutrition. Country teams were able to bring the project approach to the attention of development practitioners and policymakers largely because they were recognized leaders from a variety of organizations and agencies, and had access to decision-makers and communities. The leadership networks pooled their personal and professional assets, learnt from each other, engaged other influential experts and, in the end, influenced a broad range of audiences.

Evidence-based Advocacy The teams brought about change because they are widely respected and because they used their own case studies, empirical data, and relevant literature to present their case in a compelling manner to strategically chosen audiences. By framing project evidence in the context of national priorities, the teams showed how a linked, gender-informed approach could enhance the effectiveness of key policy initiatives and community actions.

Power of Participatory Processes Encouraging the participation of stakeholders ranging from technical specialists to those in policy and programme development, and resource allocation. In addition, input from communities helped put a human face on the benefits of a linked, gender-informed approach.

Action-oriented Solution The leaders went beyond the "why" to the "how" by providing decision-makers and other actors with specific measures for a linked, gender-informed approach. As a result, policy-makers and community members were able to take action towards changes in a relatively short time.

Capacity Strengthening and Learning The project's annual workshops strengthened team members' knowledge of agriculture and nutrition linkages, skills in using gender analysis as a planning tool, and leadership and advocacy skills. The workshops encouraged members to ask questions of, seek assistance from, and share information with other team members. The multi-disciplinary teams, including gender specialists, and their experience working with communities provided more opportunities for learning and applying knowledge and skills.

Gender Knowledge and Skills As a result of the TANA project, network members improved their understanding and use of gender analysis as a research and planning methodology. Using practical, hands-on learning was critical to moving the members from knowing about gender in the abstract to more concrete understanding of the role gender plays in the hunger problem and potential solutions.

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INACG

International Nutritional Anemia Consultative Group (INACG)

INACG has posted a number of publications from partner organizations on its website. These are helpful resources for managers of anaemia control programmes:

- *Focusing on Anemia: Towards an Integrated Approach for Effective Anemia Control*. WHO/UNICEF, 2004
- *Anemia Prevention and Control: What Works*. USAID, World Bank, UNICEF, PAHO/WHO, FAO, MI, 2003
- *Issues in Programming for Maternal Anemia*. Leslie Elder, MotherCare, 2002
- *Improving the Quality of Iron Supplementation Programs: The MotherCare Experience*. Rae Galloway, MotherCare, 1997

The report of the 2004 INACG Symposium, "Iron Deficiency in Early Life: Challenges and Progress", Lima, Peru, 18 November 2004 will soon be available at <http://inacg.ilsa.org>. Presentations from the symposium can be found at the same site.

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IVACG

International Vitamin A Consultative Group (IVACG)

IVACG, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and UNICEF, held the "Innocenti Conference on Micronutrients and Health: Emerging Issues Related to Supplementation" at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center in Florence, Italy, 17-20 April 2005. The meeting examined current scientific data and reports on emerging issues on the efficacy and safety of micronutrient supplementation in children, infants, and women of reproductive age. It also confirmed positive evidence on a limited number of micronutrient activities in the developing world. The meeting summary report is available at <http://ivacg.ilsa.org>

IVACG is pleased to announce that Dr Rainer Gross, Chief, Nutrition Section at UNICEF, has joined the IVACG Steering Committee. Dr Gross has had a long-standing commitment to improving the lives of children through the use of vitamin A. The Committee welcomes Dr Gross and the expertise he brings.

The report of the XXII IVACG Meeting, "Vitamin A and the Common Agenda for Micronutrients" in Lima, Peru, 15-17 November 2004, is available at <http://ivacg.ilsa.org>. Presentations from the meeting can also be found at the same site.

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Germany

International Workshop Policies against Hunger IV-Implementing the Voluntary Guidelines

For some years after the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996 there has been modest progress in reducing the number of the hungry and the hope prevailed that this trend could be improved. Unfortunately, the latest figures presented by the FAO show an opposite trend: progress in reducing hunger in the developing world has slowed down and in most regions of the world the number of hungry people is actually growing. World wide, latest estimates indicate that 852 million people live in the condition of chronic, persistent hunger, which is one-seventh of the world population. At the same time, it is clear that the world currently produces enough food to feed everyone.

The 1996 WFS put the right to food high on the political agenda of governments and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The right of every person to be free from hunger and to have access to productive resources to feed themselves is a challenge for the civil society and the governments. The emphasis on the right to adequate food in the WFS declaration was a great achievement because it focussed attention on what governments must do to end hunger and malnutrition.

After two years of negotiations the FAO Council adopted in November 2004 the text of "Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security". This instrument allows for real changes by not only identifying its potential to realize food and nutrition security but also by making concrete use of a rights based approach.

The workshop, held 14-16 June 2005 in Berlin, was the fourth conference of the series "Policies against hunger". The event was hosted by the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Federal Foreign Office (AA) in cooperation with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), German Agro Action (DWHH) and InWEnt (Capacity Building International).

The objective of the workshop was to elaborate recommendations how to apply best a rights-based approach to the problems of hunger and malnutrition. Based on the Voluntary Guidelines, the workshop:

- identify areas at national and international levels in which policy changes are needed to better implement the right to adequate food;
- clarify how best to set up national processes or strategies to combat hunger, or if such strategies exists how to meaningfully relate the rights-based approach to hunger and nutrition to existing strategies; and
- make proposals as to how the rights-based approach can best be integrated in the world wide endeavour to implement the Millenium Development Goals.

More than 120 participants came from all over the world. Among them were key players and policy experts from the human rights, as well as, the development practitioner's side. After a number of introductory statements, six sub-plenary working groups worked on how the Voluntary Guidelines can be implemented in different areas of politics like food and agricultural policies, safety nets, economic development, education etc. Recommendations on how to best consider the Right to Food in those fields were drafted and summarized in the final declaration. This declaration as well as all speeches, keynotes, group presentations, and the results of the intensive discussions can be found on the workshop's web-site at www.policies-against-hunger.de

ZINC supplementation: new diarrhoea treatment strategy

Zinc supplementation is a new addition (2004) to the diarrhoea treatment strategy and one that promises to greatly improve diarrhoea management. Evidence shows that zinc supplements given for 10-14 days reduce the severity and duration of diarrhoea episodes and, importantly, they also reduce the likelihood of the child having diarrhoea and pneumonia again in the following three months.

In May 2004, a WHO/UNICEF Joint Statement on the Clinical Management of Acute Diarrhoea was issued. It called for the adoption of new recommendations for zinc supplementation together with a new lower concentration oral rehydration salt (ORS) formula for the management of all diarrhoea. On behalf of USAID, MOST (the USAID micronutrient programme) is supporting the rapid scale-up of this high impact, child survival intervention in a number of countries. Inquiries made to MOST partners and to MOST country offices have resulted in a number of immediate possibilities, and plans to introduce the intervention are being developed in South Africa, DR Congo, Nicaragua, Tanzania, and Haiti.

South Africa MOST partner, Medical Care Development International (MCDI) is working with the KwaZulu Natal (KZN) Department of Health to launch a pilot project in Ilembe District in KZN Province. In this pilot, zinc supplementation will be incorporated within the existing Integrated Man-

USAID

agement of Childhood Illnesses protocol as a treatment for diarrhoea. Representatives of the national government have expressed great interest in the intervention and are supporting current efforts to register the dispersible zinc sulfate tablet (developed by French manufacturer NUTRISET) to enable the pilot project to go forward. The successful development of this tablet, which disperses in 30 seconds and disguises the strong zinc taste, has facilitated operationalization of this intervention.

In the interim, MCDI personnel are assisting the KZNI Department of Health in first, seeking approval to import a non-registered drug in the pilot study, and second, modifying IMCI protocols and training curricula for diarrhoeal diseases to include zinc in the treatment protocol. In South Africa, since zinc is to be used as a treatment for diarrhoea, it is considered a drug and therefore, at this time, community health workers are not permitted to provide zinc to mothers to administer at home. This requires the caregiver to visit a clinic to obtain the zinc from a clinic health care provider. When the approval to import zinc sulfate is obtained, MCDI will proceed, as planned, with orientation of physicians and supervisory clinic and community health worker personnel and pre-testing job aids and other communication materials.

DR Congo In February 2005, MOST helped formulate a five-year plan of action for the introduction of zinc supplementation as part of the protocol for treating diarrhoea. Initial steps in the plan include: formation of a zinc task force, review of existing training materials for the purpose of adapting them to include zinc, importation of the product (registration, securing duty free status, identification of suppliers), and application for technology transfer from NUTRISET to initiate local production. Funding is now being sought for plan implementation.

Nicaragua Project Hope is planning to introduce zinc supplementation into its Child Survival Project. MOST has translated the clinic-based guidelines into Spanish and will provide funds for the purchase of the zinc tablets.

Tanzania MOST participated in a joint planning visit to Tanzania with two colleagues from HARP, USAID's research programme in child health, to assess the potential for and plan activities related to introducing a zinc supplementation programme as adjunct therapy for diarrhoea treatment. The Government of Tanzania is supportive of the notion of including zinc supplementation as part of the treatment of diarrhoea. Representatives of the government are giving careful consideration to safety issues and long term costs.

Haiti In response to Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP) interest, MOST is working with the Ministry and the University of Port-au-Prince to pilot test the new clinic and community health worker guidelines that include zinc in treatment protocols. Two target areas of high diarrhoeal disease prevalence have been targeted: the children's ward at the University hospital and a rural health center in a sub-district of Port-au-Prince. Technical assistance will be provided to the MSPP to train 24 health care workers from each clinic, zinc guidelines for community health workers will be translated into Creole, and an evaluation protocol will be developed and implemented to track counseling skills, caregiver understanding of treatment protocols and appropriate use. MOST will work with NUTRISET and a local commercial distribution company to facilitate registration and importation of the dissolvable zinc tablets.

Another component of MOST's support for zinc intervention is to increase the accessibility of information about the use of zinc supplementation as an adjuvant treatment for diarrhoea. MOST has developed field-level guidelines for the use of zinc in accordance with UNICEF/WHO endorsements. Those guidelines as well as other resources are available on MOST's website, www.mostproject.org, including documents providing key evidence in support of USAID's decision to encourage the rapid global rollout of this new, high-impact child survival intervention, as well as manuals, guidelines, and statements concerning diarrhoea treatment. Technical assistance and funding are provided by USAID through MOST.

In addition to these activities, USAID is supporting zinc intervention for diarrhoea management in a number of other countries through programmatic effectiveness trials and early pilot programs. There have been five trials assessing various programming experiences. The first of these was a large-scale effectiveness trial in Bangladesh where villages were randomized to receive traditional diarrhoea management or the same treatment with the addition of zinc. There are three studies ongoing in India, Pakistan, and Mali where an in-depth formative assessment of diarrhoea treatment was conducted. This laid the groundwork for studies looking at various methods and mechanisms for the roll-out of zinc programmes in each of these countries. Lastly, The International Clinical Epidemiology Network (INLCEN) conducted formative evaluations in five countries assessing the acceptability of zinc in addition to ORS. The study took place in Brazil, Ethiopia, Egypt, India, and the Philippines.

There have also been three sites for programme implementation – Bangladesh, DR Congo, and India. The target population, reach of the programme, and project goals are varied and offer lessons learned to programme planners with diverse needs and populations.

In the largest of these, in Bangladesh, the SUZY project, directed by Centre for Health and Population Research, Bangladesh is implementing marketing and delivery strategies with the goal that zinc will be available and used for every episode of childhood diarrhoea in Bangladesh as soon as possible.

On a smaller scale, the International Rescue Committee completed a pilot programme for several months in DRC. This programme provided zinc for diarrhoea treatment in an emergency health situation. Zinc supplements have been distributed in the Tsunami relief efforts in Indonesia, and in South Delhi, India, World Vision is introducing zinc into the diarrhoea management programmes in one community clinic and one mobile clinic in an Area Development Program as a pilot programme. These research studies and pilot projects demonstrate the programmatic steps necessary to consider before the start of and during the early stages of a zinc intervention programme.

Contact: Jean Shaikh, jshaikh@istiinc.com

Improving Child Survival: A pilot programme in Ghana and Tanzania

World Vision

Along with several other international health issues, the Millennium Development Goals emphasize reducing childhood mortality as a priority. More than 10.6 million children under the age of five die each year. Ninety-eight percent of these deaths occur in developing countries from neonatal disorders, diarrhoeal disease, pneumonia, malaria, AIDS and measles. Malnutrition is implicated in over half of these deaths and the international health community recognizes that many of its causes are largely preventable.

In response to the goal of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015, World Vision Canada (WVC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) are working together in partnership to "Improve Child Survival Through Key Nutrition and Health Interventions: A Commodities Approach". As part of this partnership, a twelve-month pilot programme is currently underway in Ghana and Tanzania reaching a total population of approximately 500,000 people. The goals of the programme are to reduce levels of malaria, vitamin A deficiency, vaccine-preventable diseases and complications from acute respiratory infections, with the ultimate aim of reducing child mortality.

The programme is utilizing the existing World Vision infrastructure working together with the Ministry of Health in Ghana and Tanzania to put into action the commodities provided by CIDA. By providing capacity-building support and training to Ministry of Health staff, WV staff and village health workers, WVC is working to improve current coverage by procuring and effectively distributing commodities in hard-to-reach areas. By filling the gaps in the current system, the programme hopes to accomplish the following objectives in WV area development projects:

- Increase coverage of long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets, from 3% to 80% in Ghana and 10% to 70% in Tanzania
- Improve vitamin A capsule coverage of children 6-59 months from 77 to 100% in Ghana and 41 to 87% in Tanzania
- Expand the immunization of children under one year of age from 78 to 85% in Ghana and 45 to 81% in Tanzania
- Increase the coverage of children under five years of age receiving antibiotics for acute respiratory infections from 5 to 10% in Ghana and 8 to 14% in Tanzania

A household survey will be conducted in the final quarter of the pilot period to assess the effectiveness of the programme. Based on the results of this pilot programme, World Vision will seek funding to extend the principles of the program to additional countries through the creation of "Expanding Nutrition and Health Achievements through Necessary Commodities and Education".

For more information, please contact the World Vision Canada Nutrition and Health Team at nut_team@worldvision.ca

United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition

Information Meeting on

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF NUTRITION FOR REACHING

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

7th June 2005, ECOSOC Chamber, United Nations, New York

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

There was general agreement that income poverty reduction and increased food production alone will not solve the nutrition problems of the poor in developing countries. Furthermore if special efforts are not made to tackle these global nutrition problems, the achievement of most Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be seriously compromised. Both panellists and participants gave broad support to the findings and recommendations contained in the background paper prepared for the meeting, and underlined the need for urgent action at scale.

All agree that the statistics on nutritional status of women and children are incredible, if for no other reason than because of their magnitude. About one half of all pregnant women are anaemic, and more than 60,000 women die in pregnancy each year due to severe anaemia, which is 10% of all maternal mortality. Twenty million babies are born with low birthweight each year, 16.5% of the total, and 18 million babies are born with mental impairments due to iodine deficiency. Almost 6 million young children, about a half of those that die each year, die from diseases that are not normally lethal, such as diarrhoea and respiratory infections, because of their being underweight. Of those who survive, a quarter is left as underweight, a total of 126 million preschool children. The MDG1 target of reducing the proportion of young children that are underweight by half will not be met unless a special effort is made.

Hunger and malnutrition reduction dimensions of poverty reduction programmes should be given greater priority than is currently the case, both at the national levels as well as internationally. It was noted that much of contemporary thinking on development does not seem to adequately recognize the crucial role and impact of nutrition for the MDGs beyond the issues of food insecurity and hunger. Despite our knowledge of the extent to which poor nutrition plagues the developing world, improvements in human nutrition receive short shrift in many important documents and otherwise well-meaning public interventions. Nutrition is a cross cutting issue, that underpins nearly everything, but often falls through the cracks of discussions organized by sector and MDG. This Millennium Project documentation also has limitations in this regard, but as this is all still "work in progress" hopefully these aspects can be rectified. Nutrition should be a priority investment focus for development, not least because food and nutrition programme interventions have consistently been shown to be among the most cost effective.

Concern was expressed that insufficient attention is being given to the non-income poverty indicators of MDG1. It is frequently stated that the poverty reduction goal or MDG1 will be met, but this is based only on the income poverty indicator, or those living on less than a dollar a day. While it is true that income poverty targets of MDG1 will be met, the non-income poverty targets of MDG1 will not. Money-metric measures of poverty offer a one-dimensional perspective which is more likely to understate the inter-connections among the different dimensions of human welfare, poverty and the Millennium Development Goals. The value of the hunger indicator which is based solely on the adequacy of energy intake is also limited because it does not capture the dimensions of nutrient deficiencies or hidden hunger, which affects a far greater proportion of people. The child underweight indicator is perhaps the most critically important of the non-income poverty targets because of its linkages to the many other MDGs. In this regard the child underweight target is a step nearer to the capabilities approach to defining poverty that many advocate.

In order to tackle child undernutrition problems, several areas of focus for action are considered essential. The first is that food shortages are often not the main cause of a child being underweight: diseases such as malaria and gastrointestinal parasites often cause increased losses of nutrients that limit growth, so both have to be dealt with together as appropriate. Second is to focus on the first two years of life, because too old is too late. If children do not get the proper nutrients before birth and in the first three years of life, they never recover the growth that is lost. This means a focus on improved maternal nutrition, on exclusive breastfeeding, and improved complementary feeding, in a continuum of care from pregnancy through infancy. Improving complementary feeding practices alone could reduce child undernutrition by up to 20% at one year of age (MDG1), and reduce up to 13% of undernutrition-related child deaths (MDG4). Improved breastfeeding practices could also save more than 3000 lives daily. The final focus is on partnerships. To meet these challenges the creation of partnerships, between UN agencies, as well as between governments and civil society are all essential.

(...continued on page 86)

Speakers' Corner

Should we provide a guarantee that no child will be brain-damaged by malnutrition in Africa if money can prevent it?

Simon Maxwell

Director, Overseas Development Institute

Child malnutrition is a huge problem in Africa, and is not as visible as it should be in the report of the Africa Commission. It is not an exaggeration to say that a third of Africa's children are brain-damaged as a result of malnutrition, with major long-term effects on learning, health and productivity. Malnutrition can be dealt with, for less than \$US 20 per child per year. This has always seemed like quite a lot of money, but the comparison with HIV/AIDS should inspire us to be more ambitious. At a recent meeting, the Director of the Global Fund, Richard Feachem, estimated that treatment for AIDS would cost up to \$US 500 per person per year, and said the Fund would need \$US 7-8 billion per year for the foreseeable future. These are extraordinary numbers, but the Global Fund is on track to meet its targets. There should certainly be programmes to fight HIV/AIDS – and there should be similar urgency about child nutrition. Children have a right not to be brain damaged by malnutrition. But, in addition, not tackling malnutrition makes achieving the MDGs simply impossible: malnutrition is an indicator for the poverty MDG, but improving nutrition status is also an absolute requirement if the health and education MDGs are to be met.

The facts on malnutrition

We sometimes forget how widespread malnutrition is. The best indicator is the level of stunting, which measures children who fail to grow. For the developing world as a whole, over a quarter of children under-five years old are severely stunted. In Africa, the figure is over a third. In Eastern Africa, including Ethiopia, it is over 44%. In Ethiopia, the figure is 51%. These are minimum estimates, derived from a high threshold. In 2000, the James Commission (an international commission on nutrition) concluded that the official numbers were the tip of the iceberg: many more children are affected, but less severely. Food or food security shocks make the situation much worse in some years.

There are other indicators, reflecting maternal under-nutrition or micronutrient deficiency. A quarter of children in the developing world are born with birthweight below the critical minimum of 2.5 kg. Over a third of school-age children are affected by iodine deficiency. In Africa, over half are anaemic.

In some regions, the trends are improving, sometimes quite fast. In East Asia, the prevalence of stunting has fallen by two thirds since 1990, and now stands at 10%. In Latin America, it has nearly halved. In sub-Saharan Africa, however, the prevalence has barely changed and the numbers have increased. There are 20% more stunted children in Africa now than there were in 1990.

The effect of malnutrition

Malnutrition is corrosive. It increases the probability of illness and of death: half of all child deaths in Africa are associated with malnutrition, and those children that survive to adulthood have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes and renal damage. It affects growth and has a direct impact on labour productivity: every 1% increase in height is associated with a 2% increase in wages; the economic costs of iron deficiency anaemia are high.

What is less well known is that malnutrition has a significant impact on brain development. There is now evidence to show that poor nutrition affects cognitive development, psychomotor development, fine motor skills, skill acquisition, activity level, and social interaction. These effects result both from shortage of calories and from micronutrient deficiency. As just one example, iodine deficiency affects the development of the central nervous system and leads to a loss on average of 13.5 IQ points. The consequences of malnutrition are seen in school performance. Malnourished children start school later, progress less rapidly, and achieve worse results.

The James Commission made a telling point. It estimated that by 2020, even after allowing for improve-



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ment at current rates, there would be one billion children in the world growing up with impaired mental development.

Cost-effective interventions

There is a huge variety of possible interventions, ranging from education and food programmes to the iodization of salt and the supply of Vitamin A. Growth is part of the solution, but rising incomes on their own do not eliminate malnutrition.

The critical age for intervention is in the womb and up to three. By the time children enter school, it is usually too late to reverse the damage.

The professional consensus is that food supplementation is a last resort, and that where food is needed, it should if possible be procured locally. This is not a plea for more food aid.

A popular 'best-bet' programme costs \$US 5–15 per child per year, without food. It involves community development workers in a ratio of 1 for every 20 families, concentrating on promotion of breast-feeding, better weaning practices, better child care and women's education. Such programmes can reduce the prevalence of underweight by 1-3 percentage points per annum—and have done so in countries like Thailand and Honduras.

Other programmes target low birth weight, sometimes through food supplements for mothers, or micronutrient deficiency, through diet change or supplementation. The effects can be dramatic. For example, Vitamin A supplementation in areas affected by widespread deficiency not only reduces night blindness and improves learning ability, but also improves resistance to infection and thereby cuts child mortality by close to 25%.

What works best will vary from place to place. However, the bottom line is that nutrition interventions are highly cost-effective.

What next?

The Africa Commission proposes expenditure of \$US 20 billion a year on health, of which half is to implement a basic package for the major communicable diseases and for early childhood and maternal illnesses. To make under-nutrition more visible in this package, it is tempting to propose a new global fund, with the reach and ambition of the current Global Fund. This would be a bad idea. It would multiply the problems of excessive ear-marking and further cut across rational budget processes in both donor and recipient countries.

A second option would be to charge the Global Fund with the additional responsibility of tackling under-nutrition: a Global Fund for malaria, HIV/AIDS, TB, *and undernutrition*. This would stretch the Fund, but would have the advantage of requiring a careful analysis of spending priorities.

A third option is to advocate for more attention to under-nutrition in PRSPs and in donor programmes. The MDGs provide an adequate framework, but a push is needed to move nutrition up the agenda. Should there be an EU Presidency or G8 initiative?

We have said that no child will be unable to access schooling because education systems are under-funded. Should we not also say that no child will be subject to brain-damage caused by malnutrition if more money can prevent it?

Contact: Simon Maxwell, smaxwell@odi.org.uk

Measurement Concepts for Strengthening Nutrition Education

An integral part of human capacity building endeavors

Venkatesh Iyengar
Tufts University

*Public health and nutrition investigators should develop awareness for current concepts in measurement practices. Understanding the steps of a measurement process and the associated metrological principles enhances the reliability of the result generated thereby contributing to sound decisions. Further, reliable analytical result is linked to economic benefit, a fact that emphasizes the need for sustainability of analytical quality assurance in food and nutrition laboratories. These concepts are embedded in the emerging role of **nutritional metrology** and are essential components of capacity development in the food and nutrition areas.*

Introduction

Scientific progress in areas such as nutrition-pollution interactions, biological monitoring, nutritional physiology, preventive nutrition, eco-nutrition and environmental health, among others, is dependant on reliable analytical data. Moreover, different laboratories generate quite frequently analytical findings and a sound basis needs to be established for judging their merits. Such results pave the way for drawing sound conclusions and for formulating international recommendations needed for resolving public health issues.

Understanding the science behind the process called measurement (metrology)—evaluation of the economic benefits brought about by strict adherence to analytical quality control to achieve reliable results—is crucial to ensure success and sustainability. The user community is increasingly recognizing the role of analytical quality assurance in several areas of food and nutrition and its impact on economic benefits while addressing public health problems. There is a need for an introduction of metrological concepts to biological measurements (food, nutritional and physiological measurements among others) to enhance the authority of the analytical findings. This in turn has opened up the need for strengthening the human capacity (commonly referred to as capacity building) in the area of food and nutrition.

Metrological concepts

Metrology deals with the science of measurement irrespective of the field of application and regardless of the size of the *measurement uncertainty*. Uncertainty is defined as the parameter associated with the result of a measurement that characterizes the dispersion of the values that could reasonably be attributed to the *measurand* (the specific component determined). Thus, the extent of errors in a given measurement, evaluated in terms of uncertainty, helps to identify the accuracy of an analytical finding. In other words, metrology reflects a sustained effort to infuse confidence in the analytical result by evaluating and presenting upper limits for measurement uncertainty for the benefit of the user community. The metrological approach is essential for establishing the so-called *traceability link* of the measurement result through an *unbroken chain* of comparisons to values of international measurement standards (known as SI). Hence, a basis for comparability of the results is established for inter-laboratory results. In a broader sense such comparisons may extend beyond the country boundaries. The overall outcome also facilitates harmonization of measurements [i.e. comparability of a measurement result by different methods that are validated using appropriate certified reference materials (CRM)].

Metrology in Physics and Chemistry

In the world of metrology, measurements of mass, length, volume, electrical current, and others categorized under metrology in physics are directly traceable to the SI units (e.g. meter for length) and are well accepted. Metrology in chemistry offers possibilities to link the measurement results to the SI (e.g. mass expressed in moles) in conformity with metrological requirements. However, when quantifying a specific entity in a complex matrix (e.g. Zn in food determined by atomic absorption spectrophotometry), the metrological links are indirect since an analytical signal (e.g. an electric current generated by ions) is converted into an amount of substance. Hence, the implementation of metrology for many chemical measurements is still evolving and many developments are anticipated.

Metrology in Biology (i.e. biological and physiological measurements)

In biology (which includes *the areas of food and nutrition*), a beginning has already been made with the ap-



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plication of metrological concepts for (i) food composition (e.g. including labeling and food safety) where reliable measurements are being conducted by the international standards organization (ISO) accredited laboratories, and (ii) the emergence of several food based natural matrix CRMs. Further, certain bio-medical measurements are chemical measurements (e.g. assessment of nutritional toxicology using body-fluids, assays for clinical entities such as cholesterol and glucose, among others) and several CRMs have been established through which traceability link to SI units is feasible. However, many other areas are still open for improvements in analytical reliability by applying metrological principles (keeping practical limitations in mind). This is observed by the fact that many biological (and physiological) measurements are carried out under complex conditions (e.g. nutritional, physiological and other metabolic states) and are frequently assessed by indirect means. Therefore, such measurements lack evidence of a proven metrological link. In some specific cases, such as (i) the coulter counter measurements (for cell particle size), (ii) the K measurements in whole body and tissues based on radiation measurements, (iii) use of weighed amounts of certain substrates (labeled with stable isotopes followed by CO₂ emission measurements for diagnosis of infection), (iv) volume/weight based use of single and double labeled waters (for body composition and energy metabolism), and (v) other physiological measurements (e.g. bone mineral density and blood pressure) expressed in established physical units, are all amenable to be based on *nutritional metrology* concepts, thereby enhancing their overall authority.

Keeping these developments in mind, as a contribution to capacity development, a 20-lecture course has been developed to impart metrological concepts to strengthen food and nutritional measurements by the author of this article. Target groups are MS/PhD students of food and nutritional sciences and young investigators aspiring to become future leaders in public health and nutrition. It is essential that they learn to appreciate the role of measurement uncertainty of analytical data for minimizing the occurrence of false positive and negative conclusions caused by analytical findings that are not evaluated for their associated *uncertainties*.

For course details please contact:

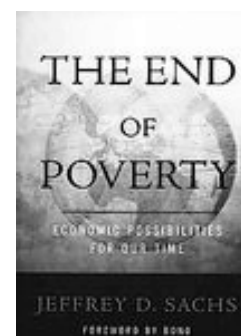
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Publications

THE END OF POVERTY: ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES FOR OUR TIME

Jeffrey D Sachs, 2005, 416 pp
The Penguin Press HC

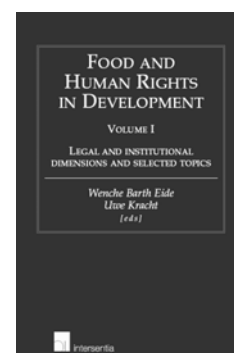
Jeffrey Sachs draws on his remarkable 25 years of experience to offer a thrilling and inspiring vision of the keys to economic success in the world today. With 18 chapters and a foreword by Bono, the book is written as a personal account and is very easy to read. Marrying vivid storytelling with acute analysis, he sets the stage by drawing a conceptual map of the world economy and explains why, over the past 200 years, wealth and poverty have diverged and evolved across the planet, and why the poorest nations have been so markedly unable to escape the trap of poverty. Sachs tells the remarkable stories of his own work in Bolivia, Poland, Russia, India, China and Africa to bring readers with him to an understanding of the different problems countries face. In the last section of the book the development of the Millennium Project is described, together with a proposal for a Global Compact to end poverty. Much of this will be on the table for discussion at the September 2005 Millennium +5 High Level Plenary of the UN General Assembly, 2005 Summit, when the largest ever number of world leaders is expected to participate. In the end, readers will be left not with an understanding of how daunting the world's problems are, but how solvable they are and why making the effort is both our moral duty and in our own interests. Contact Penguin Press at www.penguin.com



FOOD AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN DEVELOPMENT

Wenche Barth Eide and Uwe Kracht, 2005, 550 pp
Intersentia

In 1996 the World Food Summit asked for a clarification of the meaning of the right to food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger and the means for its implementation. Thereafter, special effort have been made in this direction. This first of 2 volumes exposes for the first time the right to adequate food as a human right. It provides guidance for future activities to promote and protect the right to adequate food for all. It presents some practical situations of national and international level application of right to food, and with a special view about states obligation and complementary duties, and responsibilities of non-state actors and international organizations. It ends with the right to food under particular circumstances and for different groups needing special consideration. The aim of this document is to stimulate further debate among scholars, policy-makers and practitioners on some issues of concern in applying a right-based approach to avoid food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition, and in promoting access to and consumption of nutritionally adequate, safe and culturally acceptable food on a sustainable basis for all. Copies of this document can be ordered from www.intersentia.be

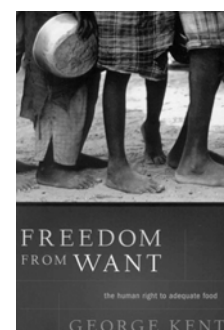


Just released!

FREEDOM FROM WANT: THE HUMAN RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD

George Kent, 2005, 290 pp
Georgetown University Press

Long-time friend of the SCN, this is Professor George Kent's most recent book on the right to adequate food. A full review of this book will appear in the next issue of SCN News (#31). To order a copy, please contact <http://press.georgetown.edu>





ALLAITEMENT MATERNEL LES BÉNÉFICES POUR LA SANTÉ DE L'ENFANT ET DE SA MÈRE

Programme National Nutrition et Santé,
Ministère des Solidarités, de la Santé et
de Famille, et Société Française de
Pédiatrie 2005, 68 pp

Ce document de synthèse est le fruit d'une analyse, par le comité de nutrition de la Société française de pédiatrie, des données les plus récentes concernant la relation allaitement et santé. Un des objectifs du Programme National Nutrition et Santé consiste en la promotion de l'allaitement maternel. Sachant qu'en France près de la moitié des femmes n'allaitent pas et très peu poursuivent l'allaitement au-delà de 2 à 3 mois, ce document fournit les arguments que les femmes demandent afin de décider du mode d'alimentation de leur enfant. Il s'adresse principalement aux professionnels de la santé dans le but de promouvoir l'allaitement maternel ainsi qu'au milieu associatif qui joue un rôle essentiel pour venir en appui aux professionnels et aux mères, et ainsi répondre à leurs interrogations et difficultés. Il comprend, entre autres, des chapitres concernant la composition et variabilité du lait de femme, les bénéfices-santé de l'allaitement maternel, les précautions au cours de l'allaitement maternel lors de situations spéciales, ou encore le développement psycho-affectif de l'enfant. Ce document peut être téléchargé sur le site du Ministère Français de la Santé et des Solidarités, www.sante.gouv.fr



THE ATLAS OF HEART DISEASE AND STROKE

Judith Mackay and George A Mensah
WHO and CDC 2004, 112 pp

Heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of death in all developed countries and in most developing countries. With a total of 17 million deaths for 2003, it

represents about one-third of all deaths in the world. Heart diseases and stroke claim, as the authors tell us, more lives in developing than developed countries. Cardiovascular diseases are more than just a health problem, both diseases and their underlying causes have major financial implications for governments, businesses and individuals. Heart disease can no longer be seen as the problem of overworked, overweight middle-aged men in today world, women and children are at risk too. This atlas, filled with tables and graphs that make the document comprehensive and user-friendly, is divided into 6 parts that cover the definition of cardiovascular diseases, the risk factors, the burden of disease, the action, the future and the past, and finally presents data tables. Copies of this publication can be obtained from bookorders@who.int



BANGLADESH IN FACTS AND FIGURES 2004 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NUTRITIONAL SURVEILLANCE PROJECT

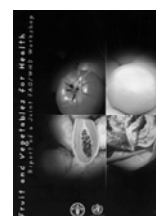
Helen Keller International and
Institute of Public Health Nutrition
Dhaka, Bangladesh
2005, 93 pp

The Nutritional Surveillance Project has conducted, since 1990, household-level surveys that are used to screen and evaluate national health and nutrition programmes. It collects information from children aged less than five years, their mothers and their households throughout rural Bangladesh and in the urban slums of the 6 largest cities in the country. This annual report provides information on a selection of indicators such as household demographic and socio-economic status, household food security, food consumption, health and nutritional status, caring practices, and the performance of national health programs. The report is accompanied by a CD-ROM that contains some of the key variables for understanding the factors that contribute to malnutrition in Bangladesh. Copies of this document can be downloaded from www.hkiasiapacific.org

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING

Judith Richter
International Baby Food Action
Network, Geneva Infant
Feeding Association
2005, 20 pp

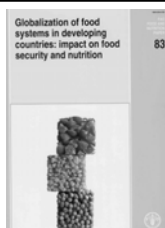
The purpose of this short paper is to provide general insight into the concept of conflict of interest. The focus is mainly on conflicts arising from financial and other interrelationships between business actors and public officials or health professionals. It proposes a definition of conflict of interest, and provides at the end a section on measures to better address conflicts of interest in infant and young child feeding. More information for ordering this publication can be obtained from info@gifa.org



FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR HEALTH: REPORT OF A JOINT FAO/WHO WORKSHOP

FAO and WHO
2005, 46 pp

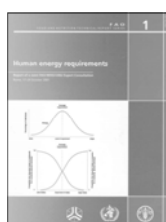
Noncommunicable diseases currently kill more people every year than any other cause of death. Four factors in the epidemiology of these diseases, including poor diet, are of overwhelming importance to public health. Balanced diet, including daily sufficient intake of fruits and vegetables, could help prevent some of those diseases. Overall it is estimated that up to 2.7 million lives could potentially be saved every year if fruit and vegetable consumption was increased. This document is part of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health approved at the 57th World Health Assembly on 22 May 2004, that aims to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables. WHO and FAO have formed a partnership around this theme, and organized a workshop that took place between 1-3 September 2004 in Kobe, Japan. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a framework to guide the development of cost-efficient and effective interventions to promote adequate consumption of fruits and vegetables in Member States. Copies of this report can be obtained from bookorders@who.int or downloaded from www.who.int



**GLOBALIZATION OF FOOD
SYSTEMS IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES:
IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY
AND NUTRITION**

FAO
2004, 300 pp

In October 2003, a workshop on the globalization of food systems was held at FAO in Rome, Italy. The purpose of this meeting was to increase the understanding of the influence of globalization and urbanization on food supply, marketing and distribution in developing countries. The workshop also analyzed the changes globalization and urbanization have on areas of concern, such as smallholders, food consumption, and nutrition and health outcomes. The Report is divided in 2 parts: first an overview paper that describes shifts in food availability, food consumption, and food and nutrition security in urban settings. The topics are then explored, in the second part, through 11 country case studies. Those examples explore the issues from either an economic perspective or a more nutrition and health view. This publication is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. It can be ordered or downloaded through FAO website, www.fao.org



**HUMAN ENERGY
REQUIREMENTS:
REPORT OF A JOINT FAO/
WHO/UNU
EXPERT CONSULTATION**

FAO and WHO 2004, 96 pp

This publication updates the Report on Human Energy Requirement published in 1985. It brings, among others, new concepts and recommendations for calculation of energy requirements for all ages, and modifies requirements and dietary energy recommendations for infants, older children and adolescents. The aim of this expert consultation report is to provide international agen-

cies and their member countries with the necessary tools for addressing practical questions, such as assessing the adequacy of food supplies and the number of people who do not attain energy adequacy, drawing up targets for food production and informing national food and nutrition policy and planning. The Report is accompanied by a CD-ROM that contains a Calculating Population Energy Requirements and Food Needs application. Copies of the Report can be downloaded from the FAO site, www.fao.org or ordered from FAO.

**THE INTEGRATION OF
VITAMIN A
SUPPLEMENTATION INTO
COMMUNITY-DIRECTED
TREATMENT WITH
IVERMECTIN:
A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR AFRICA**

Helen Keller International
2004, 66 pp

Nancy Haselow, HKI's Onchocerciasis Director, has written a manual offering an overview of the problems that vitamin A deficiency and onchocerciasis pose as well as providing concrete information about practical steps that can be taken to solve these problems. She promotes the integration of vitamin A supplementation (VAS) into existing Community-Directed Treatment with Ivermectin (CDTI) for onchocerciasis, thereby addressing two serious public health problems simultaneously. The success of CDTI is based on the strategy of communities taking responsibility for their health, and is currently being implemented in 26 African countries, all of which also have vitamin A deficiency problems of public health importance. An integrated CDTI and vitamin A supplementation programme can potentially increase coverage of both ivermectin and vitamin A. "Based on a conservative estimate, ensuring adequate vitamin A supplementation through CDTI will reach over 11 million children and save the lives of 72,000 children per year." The manual also provides information about support and resource organizations and materials that are available.

Funding to produce the manual was awarded by the CORE group as part of its efforts to disseminate promising child health innovations to a larger audience. The manual is available in English and French. Contact Nancy Haselow by e-mailing her at nhaselow@hki.org



**MONITORING FINANCIAL
FLOWS FOR HEALTH
RESEARCH VOLUME 2**

Global Forum for Health Research
2004, 105 pp

This is the Global Forum for Health Research's second report on financial flows for health research, 3 years after the first one. With its focus on financial expenditure on health, the report takes place in the context of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The purpose of this document is to observe if growth in funding levels has continued, whether the share of spending from public, private and non-for-profit sources had changed, whether the low and middle-income country contributions had increased, how well health problems affecting those countries are being addressed, and the extent to which global health inequities had been reduced. It provides information about who sets priorities and what kind of research is conducted, where and by whom the research is accomplished, who funds it, and finally who will use and benefit from the results. It finishes with proposal for future research. Copies of this document can be downloaded from www.globalforumhealth.org or ordered from info@globalforumhealth.org



**IODINE STATUS WORLDWIDE:
WHO GLOBAL DATABASE ON
IODINE DEFICIENCY**

WHO 2004, 48 pp

In 1993, the first version of the WHO Global Database on Iodine Deficiency was published with global estimates on the prevalence of iodine deficiency using data from 121 countries. This recognized public health problem has improved over the past decade, and, therefore, this 2nd version of the Database presents revised and updated facts to reflect the current situation of iodine deficiency worldwide. In the 1990s, total goitre prevalence was the recommended

indicator for assessing iodine status, and today urinary iodine is recommended as a more sensitive indicator of recent changes in iodine status. Consequently this revised version includes urinary iodine data and only uses total goiter prevalence to make a comparison with the former report. This publication provides general information on iodine deficiency, its health consequences and existing control intervention. It finally presents the methodology used to generate estimates, and a critical analysis of this process is also available. Copies of this report can be downloaded from www3.who.int/whosis/micronutrient or ordered from bookorders@who.int



SYSTEMES D'INFORMATION POUR LA SECURITE ALIMENTAIRE, L'EXPERIENCE AEDES EN AFRIQUE

Paul-Marie Boulanger, Denis Michels,
Christophe De Jaegher
L'Harmattan 2004, 305 pp

Lors du sommet mondial sur l'alimentation, Rome, juin 1996, l'ensemble des chefs d'état et de gouvernement a réaffirmé le droit fondamental de l'accès pour tous à la nourriture et s'est fixé comme objectif la sécurité alimentaire aux différents niveaux que constituent l'individu, le ménage, la nation, la région et le globe. Un plan d'action a été mis en place pour atteindre cet objectif. L'établissement de systèmes d'information pour la sécurité alimentaire fait depuis lors clairement partie des moyens d'action des politiques nationales de lutte contre l'insécurité alimentaire et la faim. Malgré la reconnaissance de l'importance de ces systèmes d'information, peu de pays disposent à ce jour d'un outil qui soit performant et fiable. Cet ouvrage a pour objectif, au travers des 15 ans d'expérience de l'Agence Européenne pour le Développement et la Santé, d'exprimer les principaux concepts à l'œuvre dans de tels systèmes d'information. Ce document explore, entre autre, les concepts de sécurité alimentaire, de vulnérabilité, de famine, ainsi que de la gestion du risque au sein des sociétés traditionnelles. On y trouve également une description des systèmes d'information existant. Les auteurs ef-

fectuent de plus une analyse de l'efficacité et de la viabilité de ces systèmes d'information, et présentent des pistes pour leur rôle dans le futur. Pour toute information complémentaire se renseigner sur le site de l'AEDES, www.aedes.be

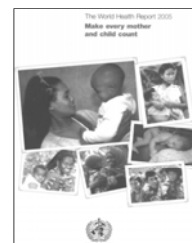


HOW TO ADD DEWORMING TO VITAMIN A DISTRIBUTION

WHO and UNICEF
2004, 39 pp

A recent estimation has calculated that as many as 230 million children aged 0-4 years are infected by soil-transmitted helminthes, more commonly known as intestinal worms. Those infections represent a public health problem in numerous developing countries. Programmes that prevent worm infection are existing and efficient for school-age children. The problem persists for pre-school children that are not dewormed and therefore are, among others problems, at higher risk of micronutrients deficiencies or infections. This publication explains the benefits of delivering vitamin A and deworming tablets together. It also presents some practical issues about deworming drugs, and finally reports several country experiences. This publication can be downloaded from

www.who.int/wormcontrol or ordered from bookorder@who.int



THE WORLD HEALTH REPORT 2005 MAKE EVERY MOTHER AND CHILD COUNT

WHO
2005, 229 pp

The 2005 Report calls for enlarging the maternal and child health area to the often overlooked health problems of newborns. This year an estimated 11 million children under 5 years of age will die from causes that are largely preventable. Among them 4 million babies will not survive the first month of life, and about half a million women will die in pregnancy, childbirth or soon after. This Report examines why these deaths continue to occur on such a scale, and how it can be reduced. It focuses on countries where progress in maternal and child health is slow, stagnating or has even gone into reverse in recent years. The main features of inequity as well as key constraint to progress are identified by this wide report. Copies of the Report can be download form WHO website, www.who.int or ordered from bookorder@who.int

Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security Relevance to the Working Group on Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding

Editor's Note: In discussing the paper, the Working Group recognized that from a legal perspective, nothing in the Voluntary Guidelines weakens the obligations contained in the existing international human rights instruments. It also stressed that the Guidelines should not be seen as in any way superseding these instruments or undermining them, but rather as a clarification tool. A taskforce was established to further examine and articulate these issues and to report the result of its work to the SCN at its next meeting. Anyone interested in participating in this task force should contact David Clark, Project Officer, Nutrition (Legal), at dclark@unicef.org

Background

The first Millennium Development Goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, with a 2015 target to halve the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger. But there is a distinction between the right to be free from hunger and the right to adequate food. According to FAO "The right to freedom from hunger is fundamental. This means that the state has an obligation to ensure, at the very least, that people do not starve. As such, this right is intrinsically linked to the right to life." ¹

However, states are also under an obligation to take appropriate measures to ensure the realization of the right to adequate food for everyone within their jurisdiction. According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its General Comment 12 on the right to adequate food, the core content of this right implies:

"The availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture;

The accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights."²

In an attempt to further articulate the content of the right to adequate food, an Intergovernmental Working Group was set up in 2002, in the context of the World Food Summit follow-up, to elaborate a set of voluntary guidelines to support Member Nations efforts to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. The guidelines were adopted by the FAO Council in November 2004 and are also intended to benefit relevant stakeholders.

These guidelines do not create legally binding obligations for Governments or international organizations, but are intended to assist states in implementing the obligations that arise from other international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW.

Relevance to the Working Group on Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding

To what extent do these guidelines provide support to those engaged in promoting optimal infant and young child feeding practices as described in the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding?

In the first place, the Guidelines aim to guarantee the right to access to adequate food to all individuals, including vulnerable groups. Infants and young children are among the most vulnerable members of our society, and this is even more so in the case of infants in the early months of life. The recent LANCET series on child survival clearly states that breastfeeding is the number one preventive health intervention that could save an additional 1.3 million children's lives annually,³ while continued breastfeeding with age-appropriate complementary feeding could save yet an additional 587,000 lives. It is thus clear that breastfeeding must be viewed as fundamental to guaranteeing the child's right to adequate food. To what extent do the guidelines recognize this fact?

Guideline 10 on nutrition states that:

10.1. If necessary, States should take measures to maintain, adapt or strengthen dietary diversity and healthy eating habits and food preparation, as well as feeding patterns, **including breastfeeding**, while ensuring that changes in availability and access to food supply do not negatively affect dietary composition and intake.

10.5. States should take appropriate measures to **promote and encourage breastfeeding**, in line with their cultures, the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and subsequent resolutions of the World Health Assembly, in accordance with the WHO/UNICEF recommendations.

10.6. States may wish to disseminate information on the feeding of infants and young children that is consistent and in line with current scientific knowledge and internationally accepted practices and to take steps to counteract misinformation on infant feeding. States should consider with utmost care issues regarding breast-

...continued on the next page

feeding and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection on the basis of the most up-to-date, authoritative scientific advice and referring to the latest WHO/UNICEF guidelines.

So the guidelines do recognize that states should take appropriate measures to encourage breastfeeding in line with their culture, the Code and WHO/UNICEF recommendations. But this is clearly not sufficient, as it misses the protection and support aspects that are necessary to ensure optimal infant feeding practices. The strategies and interventions that are necessary to achieve this are well articulated in the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, adopted by the World Health Assembly and endorsed by UNICEF's Executive Board. **The Guidelines should thus remind Member States of their obligations under the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding.**

The guidelines also state that "States may wish to disseminate information on the feeding of infants and young children that is consistent and in line with current scientific knowledge and internationally accepted practices and to take steps to counteract misinformation on infant feeding". This would appear to suggest that the provision of information on appropriate infant feeding practices is optional. But according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by, and is thus legally binding on, all but two countries in the world, governments must take appropriate measures to ensure that all segments of society are informed and educated in the benefits of breastfeeding (Article 24).

Similarly, the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, adopted by the World Health Assembly and endorsed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child as an appropriate measure to fulfil obligations under Article 24 of the CRC, states that:

"Governments should have the responsibility to ensure that objective and consistent information is provided on infant and young child feeding for use by families and those involved in the field of infant and young child nutrition." (Article 4.1)

Furthermore, the same guideline says that States may wish to take steps to counteract misinformation on infant feeding, again suggesting that this is optional. But as mentioned above, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognized that Code implementation, which aims to protect against misinformation, is a concrete measure towards the realization of parents' right to objective information, and thus a measure that Governments are bound to take.⁴

Hence the guidelines appear to underplay the responsibility on governments to fulfil the obligations articulated in the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding, which includes the obligations to ensure that their citizens have accurate, unbiased information on infant and young child feeding and to be protected from misinformation through implementation of the Code.

Recommendation

The Working Group on Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding should establish a task force to better articulate the human rights aspects of infant and young child feeding, including obligations at all levels, and advocate with the relevant human rights bodies for greater recognition of these rights and responsibilities.

Footnotes

1. See www.fao.org/Focus/E/rightfood/right1.htm
2. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment 12, Right to adequate food, (20th Session, 1999), UN Doc E/C.12/1995/5 (1999).
3. Jones G, Steketee R, Black R, et al. How many child deaths can we prevent this year? *Lancet*, 5 July 2003, 362:67.
4. Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, 1998.



Conferences

8th European Health Forum Gastein Partnerships for Health October 5-8, 2005 Salzburg, Austria

The Forum usually serves as a high level discussion platform for key actors in European health policy offering opportunities for an exchange of experience and networking. The 2005 Forum will focus on much needed partnerships for progress in health development. In various fields, challenges will be assessed and potential solutions developed in discussion with delegates. In addition to following the traditional Gastein approach of engaging a broad range of stakeholders, a particular focus will be given to involving and serving citizens in Europe. Those participating in the event include senior policy and decision-makers representing politics and government at EU, national and regional levels; business and industry, health care funders and service providers, civil society, as well as, experts and researchers in health care and public health. For more information contact: info@ehfg.org or visit www.ehfg.org.

Would you like to post a notice on this board?

The next issue of *SCN News* will be published in late 2005. Please send your contributions to scn@who.int

The annual **World Food Prize International Symposium** will be held October 12-14, 2005 in Des Moines, Iowa.

This year's symposium, "The Dual Global Challenges of Malnutrition and Obesity," will feature presentations by experts from around the globe. The programme will also include panel discussions focusing on both domestic and international issues in nutrition. Leading research scientists and medical professionals will participate, as well as those at the forefront of setting the policy agenda on nutritional requirements. More details can be found at: www.worldfoodprize.org/ or contact Judith Pim at jpim@worldfoodprize.org

SBCTA 6th Latin America Symposium on Food Science

November 7-10, 2005
Sao Paulo, Brazil

At the time of publication the contents of the programme were not available. Complementary information can be found at www.slaca.com.br or requested from Prof Delia Rodriguez Amaya at delia@fea.uncamp.br

6th International Conference on Food Science and Technology

November 7-9, 2005
Guangzhou, China

This conference is intended for a broad audience, covering different topics that impact the development of products and food processes for health and well-being. Some examples of topics covered are food processing and preservation, food safety, functional food and bioactive factors. For more information contact Dr C Ai Jun Peng at icfst@scut.edu.cn or visit www2.scut.edu.cn/icfst

3rd International Congress on Developmental Origins of Health and Disease

November 16-20, 2005
Toronto, Canada

Developmental Origins of Health and Disease, also known as Fetal Origins of Adult Disease, addresses how nutrition and other factors at the earliest stages of development influence lifelong health outcomes, eg, obesity, diabetes, heart and lung disease, mental health, and cancers. To register, please visit the conference website at www.dohadsoc.org

SAVE THE DATE 1st World Congress of Public Health Nutrition

Barcelona, Spain
September 28-30, 2006

Organized by the Spanish Society of Community Nutrition and the International Union of Nutritional Sciences. Visit www.nutrition2006.com for more information.

3rd International Conference on Traditional Mediterranean Diet: MEDIET 2007

April 25-26, 2007
Athens, Greece

In a world of fast food, junk food, processed food and other similar "temptations," traditional diets may be a viable alternative even though many specialists believe that Traditional Mediterranean Diet is an endangered species. Detailed information and Conference First Announcement will soon be available at heliotopos.conferences.gr/index.php?id=56. For more information please contact Maria Liat-sou, conference manager, Heliotopos Conferences at mediet@heliotopos.net

Bulletin Board



Courses

Public Health in Complex Emergencies Training Programme

November 7-19, 2005
Kampala, Institute of Public Health, Uganda

This course focuses on critical public health issues and is intended for NGO/PVO personnel working in complex emergencies. The course is prepared by leading international and regional experts with a wide variety of field experience in complex emergencies. The purpose is to enhance the capacity of humanitarian assistance workers and their organization to respond to health needs of refugees and internally displaced persons affected by these emergencies. The participants will develop competences in the field of epidemiology, context of emergencies, communicable diseases, environmental health, nutrition, reproductive health, weapons-violence and trauma, protection and security, psychosocial issues, and coordination. For additional information contact Mrs Prima Nalubega Wasukira (pnaalubega@iph.ac.ug)

12th European Nutrition Leadership Programme Seminar 2006

March 8-16, 2006
Luxembourg

The purpose of this course is to promote nutritional well being through a multidisciplinary and multicultural network of nutritionists that is internationally recognized for its quality in science and communication. The emphasis is placed on understanding the qualities and skills of leaders, team building, communication of nutrition information in a broader context, and to understanding the role of nutrition and science in society. The programme is intended to assist in the development of future leaders in the field of human nutrition in Europe. The course is designed for final year PhD students and post-doctoral fellows (≤ 35 years) in human nutritional science in Europe. For further information please contact: Mrs Lous Duym-Brookman at lous.duym@wur.nl

Obesity: Etiology and Prevention

June 2006
New York, Columbia University, USA

This course, taught by eminent experts in obesity, is intended for practicing physicians, nutritionists, public health professionals, and those responsible for development of prevention and/or intervention programmes. The course focuses on assessment and practical applications for treatment options of obesity both in national and international settings. It is intended for noncredit candidates and early registration is recommended due to strong enrolment interest. For further information please contact Dr Sharon Akabas at sa109@columbia.edu.

The 23rd Leeds Course in Clinical Nutrition

September 6-9, 2005
Leeds, St James's University Hospital, UK

The aim of the course is to provide a complete basis in all aspects of clinical nutrition and is intended for clinicians, dietitians, hospital pharmacist, nursing staff, nutritionist and others with interest in patient nutrition. More information can be requested from Carol Would at c.would@leeds.ac.uk or from Samantha Armitage at s.armitage@leeds.ac.uk

New Resources

Innovation Strategy Today

Innovative Strategy Today is a new online publication which is intended to share creative and innovative ideas and experiences about global issues in agriculture, health, and the environment facing developing countries. All issues can be download for free from www.biodevelopments.org/innovation

2004 Global Refugee Trends: Overview of refugee populations, new arrivals, durable solutions, asylum-seekers, stateless and other persons of concern to UNHCR

UNHCR 2005, 91 pp

This report summarizes global levels and trends in the population of concern to UNHCR: refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless, and others of concern. The data, reported by UNHCR country offices, generally reflect the view of the host country. The statistics contained in this note should be considered provisional and subject to change. It provides only the main global trends. For detailed statistics on 2004 and for online copy, see www.unhcr.ch/statistics.

Food and Agricultural Immunology

This journal, produced by Taylor and Francis Group, presents original immunological research with food, agricultural, environmental and veterinary applications. Since the beginning of 2005 the journal benefits a new publishing model. The main focus is on research exploiting antibodies and the immune response with food and agricultural applications. Articles directed towards understanding interaction at the interface of the food and immune systems can also be found. More information is available at www.tandf.co.uk/journals.



nutrition



NEW FREE PUBLICATION

nutrition **The international magazine for nutrition practitioners working in developing countries**

nutrition is a new publication specifically for nutrition practitioners. It provides an opportunity for those working in the field to share their valuable practical experiences (both successful and less successful) and updates nutrition practitioners on related policy, research and technical issues.

nutrition is clear and easy-to-read. It contains practical information, articles, summaries of research, pullouts, interest pieces and updates on courses, conferences and new books. Nutrition practitioners are encouraged to write up their experiences and can be given help by the editors to ensure that their contributions are clearly written.

nutrition is edited and published by Nutrition International based in the UK, in collaboration with a number of southern-based nutrition institutions.

Three thematic pilot issues of ***nutrition*** will be published over the first year:

- 1** Nutrition and HIV/AIDS (September 2005)
- 2** Breastfeeding and infant/child feeding (January 2006)
- 3** Iron deficiency anaemia (May 2006)

If you wish to receive your free copy of ***nutrition***, or if you wish to submit a contribution please contact the editors@nutritioninternational.org.uk or write to:

The Editors, Nutrition, 7 Winterbrook Road, London SE24 9HZ.

The Lancet - Neonatal Survival Series

March 2005

The Lancet has published a free series of articles highlighting one of the greatest catastrophes in global public health: the death every year of 4 million infants in the first month of life. The series are the product of a partnership between scientists, health worker, and journal editors. The aim of this publication is to erase the excuse of ignorance for public and political inaction once and for all. The publication can be access through www.activemag.co.uk/lancet.htm and a free PDF access after registration can be found through www.thelancet.com.

(...continued from page 74)

It was agreed that continued and increased efforts should be made to improve maternal nutritional status as a way to improve both women's health and early childhood survival growth and development. Improved maternal nutrition will not only contribute to improved maternal health (MDG 5) and attaining the target for maternal mortality reduction, it is also important for the targets on reducing child undernutrition (MDG 1) child survival (MDG 4) and achieving universal primary education (MDG 2). Giving an emphasis to improved women's nutrition will also contribute to improving gender equality and advancing women's empowerment (MDG 3).

It was noted that food and nutrition programmes can make a great contribution to achieving MDG2 on primary education. The provision of food and nutrition interventions in schools has many positive effects on school attendance and performance. Children that have eaten recently are better able to concentrate on their lessons, be it in a developing or developed country setting. The provision of school meals and/or micronutrient supplements together with periodic deworming contributes to reducing anaemia and improving school performance and reduces drop outs, especially among girls. From the practical experience gained by Brazil for example, the provision of food in schools is best achieved through local farmers so that the local market for food is stimulated, increasing local incomes, and reducing poverty. School feeding and enrolment-linked take home food rations also contribute to increasing enrolment rates, and again especially for girls. In areas with high levels of HIV/AIDS the provision of take home food rations has proven an important strategy not only for keeping orphaned children in schools, but also of providing food to the rest of the affected household.

It was also agreed that the negative consequences of undernutrition in early childhood were far greater than just poor school performance. Low birthweight, inadequate young child feeding practices, stunting and micronutrient deficiencies are all associated with reduced school attendance and performance later in life. Every year of missed schooling during childhood cuts deeply into lifetime earnings. Stunted and anaemic adults are less productive and earn lower wages in manual labour. Productivity losses due to undernutrition are conservatively estimated to be 3% of developing countries Gross Domestic Product.

The need to demonstrate the effectiveness of programmes was agreed, and for this the need to monitor appropriate indicators, and to demonstrate the achievement of high coverage of the target population with the various interventions. Issues of targeting were also discussed: in order to be effective there is a need to balance the focus of such interventions being only on the poorest of the poor, with this being so restrictive that little or no impact will be seen in the population at large. Programmes for the poor often tend to be poor programmes. Programme interventions are often easier to manage when they are universal and targeting is done geographically. The greatest challenge in this regard then becomes the organization of these various interventions into a package that is suited to local conditions.

Hunger and malnutrition should be high political priority and made the concern of all segments of society, not just of government departments. The challenge of doing this is exemplified by the case of Brazil, where the National Food and Nutrition Security Council is composed of two thirds civil society representatives and one third of Government representatives. The Council is responsible for overseeing the fulfilment of agreements concerning the Food and Nutrition Security Policy established between state and society. It thus constitutes a Council with overarching intersectoral status when compared to the Ministries which execute and implement the policies related to food and nutrition security.

It was further agreed that while goals such as the MDGs are a valuable means of establishing targets and measuring progress, we must not lose sight of the fact that rights, including those to a decent standard of living, are obligations that states must implement. Our MDG commitments, therefore, must be understood as not just about producing progress and development, but about implementing rights. A coherent approach by governments, UN agencies and donors is required to realize the right to adequate food and the right to be free from hunger and malnutrition, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the human rights covenants. A concerted effort is needed to achieve the MDGs, and as was made clear at the information meeting, one effective way is investment in food and nutrition programmes.

The 10th Dr Abraham Horwitz Lecture

ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The SCN Secretariat in Geneva announces the 10th Dr Abraham Horwitz Lecture. It is scheduled to take place in Geneva, Switzerland in March 2006. Proposals are invited from young professionals studying or working in the field of international nutrition.

Dr Abraham Horwitz served as the Chair of the SCN between 1986 and 1995. He died on July 10, 2000, at the age of 89 years. In an interview published in *SCN News* in late 1995, just after his retirement, Dr Horwitz sent a message to those working in nutrition:

"Keep the faith that you are committed to a most noble cause, the well-being of people whom you do not know but whose needs you feel intensely. Redouble your efforts in whatever you do in nutrition while being bold and imaginative."

The Horwitz Lecture Series' aim is to continue Dr Horwitz' heartfelt, highly valued and extremely generous tradition of mentoring young talent and their ideas for nutrition programmes. The Lecture Series was established by Sir Richard Jolly in 1996. Each year a young guest lecturer who possesses the knowledge and commitment to prepare an exceptional paper is invited to make a presentation at the SCN Annual Session.

The 10th Lecture will take place in the context of a one-day SCN symposium. The symposium's theme will be Nutrition and the Double Burden of Disease: a global challenge. The opening will be followed by a distinguished keynote and other focused presentations.

The Lecture topic should be related to the topic of the Symposium. It should not be just a theoretical discussion, but draw on a solid evidence base and evaluation experience. It should reflect an analytical evaluation of options and experience, and avoid conclusions based on anecdotal experiences other than to illustrate specific challenges. It should consider the knowledge and information needs that must be filled to meet this challenge, the human, institutional, and organizational requirements for its realization, as well as the political obligations and commitments required for enabling effective programmes. The Lecture will be published as part of the symposium proceedings in one of the SCN's publications.

Young nutrition professionals are invited to submit a three-page (double-spaced) concept paper to the SCN Secretariat in Geneva by Friday, 2 December 2005. All proposals should relate directly to the Symposium's theme. Proposals will be evaluated against three criteria: clarity, innovation, and demonstrated knowledge of the field. All proposals meeting these criteria will be considered, however, preference will be given to those describing newer strategic, programme or policy approaches.

Proposals will be accepted by email, regular mail or fax. The proposal should contain:

- A cover letter with the applicant's full name and contact details.
- A one-page personal resume.
- A three-page concept paper (double-spaced) explaining the proposed Lecture's scope and clearly detailing the key issues proposed for presentation.
- Two supporting letters from professionals from two of the three SCN member groups, i.e. UN Agencies, Bilateral Partners, and Civil Society. The two supporting letters must address the writer's willingness and commitment to provide the applicant with guidance in preparing the proposed Lecture and paper that will be published.

The SCN Secretariat will select the best proposal. The successful candidate will be notified by Friday, 23 December 2005. Travel to and from Geneva and hotel/living expenses while attending the meeting will be covered by the SCN. The Lecturer also will receive an honorarium of \$500.

*Further information is available from the SCN Secretariat in Geneva:
Phone: 41-22-791 04 56, fax: 41-22-798 88 91, Email: scn@who.int*

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UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which was comprised of the heads of the UN Agencies, recommended the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Nutrition in 1976, following the World Food Conference and with particular reference to Resolution V on food and nutrition. This was approved by the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC) by resolution in July 1977. Following the reform of the ACC in 2001, the ACC/SCN was renamed the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition or simply “the SCN”. The SCN reports to the Chief Executives Board of the UN, the successor of the ACC. The UN members of the SCN are ECA, FAO, IAEA, IFAD, ILO, UN, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRISD, UNU, WFP, WHO and the World Bank. IFPRI and the ADB are also members. From the outset, representatives of bilateral donor agencies have participated actively in SCN activities as do nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The SCN Secretariat is hosted by WHO in Geneva.

The *mandate of the SCN* is to serve as the UN focal point for promoting harmonized nutrition policies and strategies throughout the UN system, and to strengthen collaboration with other partners for accelerated and more effective action against malnutrition. The *aim of the SCN* is to raise awareness of and concern for nutrition problems at global, regional and national levels; to refine the direction, increase the scale and strengthen the coherence and impact of actions against malnutrition worldwide; and to promote cooperation among UN agencies and partner organizations. The SCN’s annual meetings have representation from UN agencies, donor agencies and NGOs; these meetings begin with symposia on subjects of current importance for policy. The SCN brings such matters to the attention of the UN Secretary General and convenes working groups on specialized areas of nutrition. Initiatives are taken to promote coordinated activities—interagency programmes, meetings, publications—aimed at reducing malnutrition, reflecting the shared views of the agencies concerned. Regular reports on the world nutrition situation are issued. *Nutrition Policy Papers* are produced to summarize current knowledge on selected topics. *SCN News* is published twice a year, and the *NICS* (formerly *RNIS*) is published quarterly. As decided by the SCN, initiatives are taken to promote coordinated activities—interagency programmes, meetings, publications aimed at reducing malnutrition, primarily in developing countries.

MS CATHERINE BERTINI
CHAIR

DR ROGER SHRIMPTON
SECRETARY

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