

FOOD

FILES

ISSUE 3

**The emperor is
always hungry:
causes and impacts
of the world food crisis**

**HungerFREE Women:
promoting women's rights
and access to land and
natural resources to end
hunger and fight HIV / AIDS**

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Editorial

Food Files number 3 addresses two main challenges posed by the present food security situation: the need to demand that governments actually govern the world food system, and the denial of access to and control over natural resources, with a special focus on gender.

These two issues are presented in the FILE section by renowned researchers, ActionAid staff and members of key networks. Some authors argue that the “false international consensus” generated in the wake of the food and financial crisis may provide even more room for corporate control over the food system, and further increase land concentration in southern countries. The impacts of bio-fuel production and its links to the crisis in food prices are examined via the Guatemalan case. The impact of the crisis on the lives of poor and vulnerable people and the challenges faced by national governments is illustrated from the South Asian perspective, highlighting the difficulty of going beyond immediate emergency responses to the crisis if the structural causes are not properly understood. The section also suggests ways of reforming the UN agencies and state structures in order to allow better inter-sectorial cooperation. Also in the FILE section, the reader is urged to consider the impacts of international trade and the Free Trade Agreements on Latin American family farming and on women’s access to and control of land and natural resources. What significance does the concept of food sovereignty have in this context? The article connects trade agreements and food crises to an interesting gender focus.

The DOSSIER section is dedicated to the International Food Security Network’s achievements. In this issue the campaign *Mujeres por un Futuro Sin Hambre* is highlighted as the centre point of the joint campaign between national and regional networks for the same demand – more land in the hands of women! As a background to this campaign, this section also provides a general analysis of the current state of laws and practices in the Americas region.

In the POST-IT section, the article from Kenya addresses the challenge faced by poor and vulnerable women in accessing and controlling land, while the article from India shows the struggle of fisherwomen to ensure their right to work is recognized and respected. The final article in this section is from Guinea-Bissau and shows how communities are mobilizing to recover agricultural land by separating sea water from river water using the traditional knowledge of ethnic minorities.

The intersections between various forms of denying rights to women are discussed in the CLIPS section from the perspective of women living with HIV/AIDS and fighting for their rights to land, and the challenges of double discrimination.

Issue 3 of FOOD FILES concludes with the AGENDA section, highlighting the importance of CEDAW’s 30th anniversary as a call for mobilization and action around this date.

FOOD FILES has reached 45 countries and been present in key international events that address the issues of food security, food sovereignty and the right to food, and is open to receiving article proposals at the following address: food.files@actionaid.org.

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The emperor is always hungry

Our food system is in trouble

The world population will jump 30% by mid-century as higher temperatures, rising sea levels and the new pests and diseases accompanying climate change erode the South's agricultural output by 20% by 2020. The demand for agrofuels may create a 'peak soil' market that could consume more than 12% of arable land long before 2050.

According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the world population will jump 30% by mid-century as higher temperatures, rising sea levels and the new pests and diseases accompanying climate change erode the South's agricultural output by 20% by 2020. The demand for agrofuels may create a 'peak soil' market that could consume more than 12% of arable land long before 2050.

At the same time, the food system's corporate structure is worryingly more concentrated. The oligopoly formed by the agrochemical corporations now investing in the production of genetically modified crops and livestock sees the current situation as a chance to forge new form of hegemonic governance over food and fuels. The new technologies developed over the last three decades enable the industry, particularly suppliers, to converge inputs even further, concentrate old clients (into fewer and larger farms) and open up new markets (Africa), while creating common cause with the huge energy industry worldwide.

The fact is that conflicting corporate interests still share many commonalities given the opportunities provided by the world's renewed focus on food security. But to exploit this situation, 'old' governance structures need to be reformed. And to achieve this, nothing better than building a false 'consensus' around climate change, agrofuels, food prices/availability and new technologies. This normally challenges governments and institutions to reconsider the multilateral food and agricultural system.

ROYAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE CREATED

Examining the ongoing debate about last year's food crisis or the current financial crisis and its relation to food and hunger, one inconvenient truth (not linked to climate change) comes to the fore: governments have failed to govern the international food system and most leading multilateral institutions connected to food and agriculture (such as FAO) are in deep trouble. This situation has several potentially dangerous consequences.

Firstly, it could convince states to abandon multilateralism and strengthen bilateralism. There has never been a better occasion for major structural and program change. As an ambassador to FAO recently said, "there has



Chris Stowers/ Panos Pictures/ ActionAid

never been greater pressure on governments and institutions to accept such changes.”

The worst scenario is that governments, who have failed to govern our global food system, will turn the job over to others, opening the door to a more systemic and formal role for multinational agribusiness and old and new philanthro-capitalists.

While it is well-known that none of the food-related UN organizations are performing at the level of competence or resources required, it is important to identify the major reasons for this state of affairs.

While we all agree that better coordination of the UN food system is needed, we also have to acknowledge that the present situation is the result of a concrete process that has undermined the existing UN agencies, particularly FAO.

DIVIDE AND NOT RULE

Since the mid-1990s, the organization has lost half its staff and more than 30% of its budget. The agency’s

ability to deliver results has declined and its expertise in many fields has become suspect.

Generally speaking, we can observe that during the last three decades as OECD governments added on new multilateral institutions, support for FAO has declined accordingly. Let me mention a few examples:

In 1961, the World Food Programme was housed (and controlled by) FAO. However, at the beginning of the 1980s, OECD states worked with the WFP Executive Director to wrest the programme’s independence from FAO. The protracted dispute – limply abetted by OECD states – would have been entirely unnecessary had governments accepted their responsibility to govern.

In 1971, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, in agreement with Robert McNamara (new president of the World Bank and former CEO of Ford Motors) created the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). This excised agricultural research from the multilateral system, meaning that CGIAR’s agenda is defined without political scrutiny from either

THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL

(ALEX WIJERATNA, CAMPAIGNS OFFICER / ACTIONAID UK)

Taking stock of the global food crisis and charting a better international response to tackling hunger was the theme of the High-Level Meeting on Food Security for All in Madrid at the end of January 2009. The UN secretary general, Ban Ki Moon, and Spanish President, Jose Zapatero, hosted more than a thousand officials and 62 ministers from 126 countries, plus representatives from companies and civil society in an effort to propose a consultation on establishing a new 'Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security. Clarity about the format of the Global Partnership was lacking and the role of key UN food agencies such as FAO and IFAD, and others like the World Bank and the Alliance for a Green Revolution for Africa (AGRA), was never entirely clear. There were different, and opposed, proposals on the table. On one side was Monsanto and AGRA, and on the other were civil society organizations and farmers movements such as, for example, Via Campesina.

A joint declaration from civil society was produced at the Madrid summit involving ActionAid, Ayuda en Acción, Oxfam, IPC (International Food Sovereignty Platform), Via Campesina and other farmers' movements and civil society organizations. One of the points demanded was that "Building and strengthening the UN institutions for food and agriculture is needed. A deep reform process which includes the bringing together of FAO, IFAD and WFP should radically improve their functioning and make them respond to their original mandates"

The governance structure for a UN space for food and agriculture has to be Rome-based and must include the representatives of all member countries. One country one vote, not one dollar one vote.

While there was much disquiet about the Global Partnership – especially from FAO, and civil society – Ban Ki Moon endorsed the idea, and handed the ball back to the head of the High-Level Task Force on the global food crisis, David Nabarro, entrusted him to form a contact group and come back with a proposal for a multi-stakeholder consultation.

government or civil society. Today CGIAR has a bigger budget and twice the staff of FAO.

In 1974, in the midst of a world food crisis, OECD and OPEC governments agreed to establish the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome. It now has a budget matching FAO's.

Last but not least, since 1974 a clear strategy from grain-exporting countries has meant that the FAO's World Food Council (which was intended to assume some or all of FAO's policy functions) has never borne fruit, accentuating the North/South divide and contributing to the erosion of FAO's normative role.

Behind this situation is the fact that corporate power has grown significantly over the last three to four decades, influencing national interests. At the same time, we know that individual career opportunities have also frequently dictated government participation in the muddled multilateral system.

NEW KINGDOMS BEING BUILT

In the context of the most recent food crisis and this prior history, the minimum one could expect, particularly from major OECD donors, would be an admission of their past mistakes and the lessons learned since. Once again, though, this is not happening.

The development of a Common Framework for Action (CFA) and the institutionalization of a UN high-level task force led by Mr. David Nabarro (Senior UN System Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza) were generally speaking welcomed by a wide range of actors. But when President Sharcozi defended the need for a Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS), different proposals started to be discussed, particularly in relation to Africa.

Among other proposals, major OECD countries argued for the need to create 'alternative' decision-making and consultative mechanisms involving the private sector. Proposals presented by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs are in line with this vision and defend the need to increase the supply of seeds and fertilizer to small-holder farmers.

The initial proposals discussed (and somehow rejected) last January in Madrid (see box) don't allow us to be optimistic about the future of these plans.

Several donors are promising to allocate new resources to this potential mechanism. While this is being discussed, the truth is that, as the ETC group pointed out, "apparently, the only new money is being served up by the Gates/Rockefeller AGRA initiative (Alliance for a Green Revolution for Africa) which is combining with other G8, Clinton, Google and Millennium Village (Jeffrey Sachs) initiatives to introduce a new era of philanthro-capitalism that is leading governmental and inter-governmental policies on agriculture and, especially, agricultural technologies such as seeds and fertilizers."

It is interesting to note that fertile agricultural land is simultaneously becoming increasingly privatized and concentrated in Africa, where investors are anticipating huge profits per year. This is also a region where the Gates Foundation is funding several studies to map the availability and potential productivity of different soil types. All these phases and steps form a clear strategy for incorporating Africa into the international agricultural market.

As we know, this does not necessarily mean less hunger

EXAMPLES FROM OTHER GLOBAL ROYAL PARTNERSHIPS

It might be interesting to reflect and learn from previous experiences like the international bird flu response, where agencies such as WHO, FAO and the World Organization for Animal Health (and their donors) set the international agenda and, consequently, national agendas for controlling bird flu.

Funds were generally offered on condition that the governments adhere to the guidelines laid out by WHO and FAO, which include controversial measures such as culling, drug stockpiling and long-term restructuring of the poultry industry. These have resulted in concrete benefits for the transnational poultry and pharmaceutical companies. Millions of smallholder producers in Asia were eliminated from this chain, became food insecure and/or had to migrate to cities.

As in the case of the present discussions surrounding the first GPAFS project, the initial solution proposed might simply return us to the source of the problem.

Sharing this concern and having listened to the voices raised in Madrid, several governments, NGOs and CSOs are now working together (through a formal contact group within FAO) to discuss the possibility of implementing a renewed and stronger Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to govern our food system. This is an important step in introducing more comprehensive regulation and increasing national efforts towards hunger eradication. A huge collective challenge still remains, though. A challenge since northern countries will have to accept the need for more international regulation and become less influenced by the new actors mentioned above. They will also need to allocate the funds needed for this process at all levels. It will also be a challenge because southern governments, particularly those from Africa, need to become more engaged with and work for the CFS, while being less driven by national elites and their desire for rapid accumulation (at the cost of their natural resources and smallholder farmers). Finally, it will also be a challenge for Civil Society, since it is now more important than ever to be united around a common objective.

Being involved in the international discussions held so far, as well as organizing meetings to involve other civil society actors in this process, I believe that our aim is both achievable and worthy. Being engaged and active is the minimum sign of respect we can have for the almost one billion people condemned to death in live.

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Rising Food Prices and Poverty

in South Asian Countries

We estimate that the number of hungry and food insecure people in the region due to increasing prices could rise to 588 million, an increase of 31 percent. Estimates for the world suggests that, on current trends, the number of hungry and food insecure people could soar to 1.7 billion, representing 25 percent of the world's population.

Food prices are on the rise and it has hit South Asia hard. The rural poor, particularly women, have been affected more than others and a large number of south Asians have suffered worse than elsewhere. More than one-third of the population of south Asia are poor, and it has the highest density of poor in the world. ActionAid estimates that the number of hungry and food insecure people in the region due to increasing prices could rise to 588 million, an increase of 31 percent. Estimates for the world suggests that, on current trends, the number of hungry and food insecure people could soar to 1.7 billion, representing 25 percent of the world's population.²

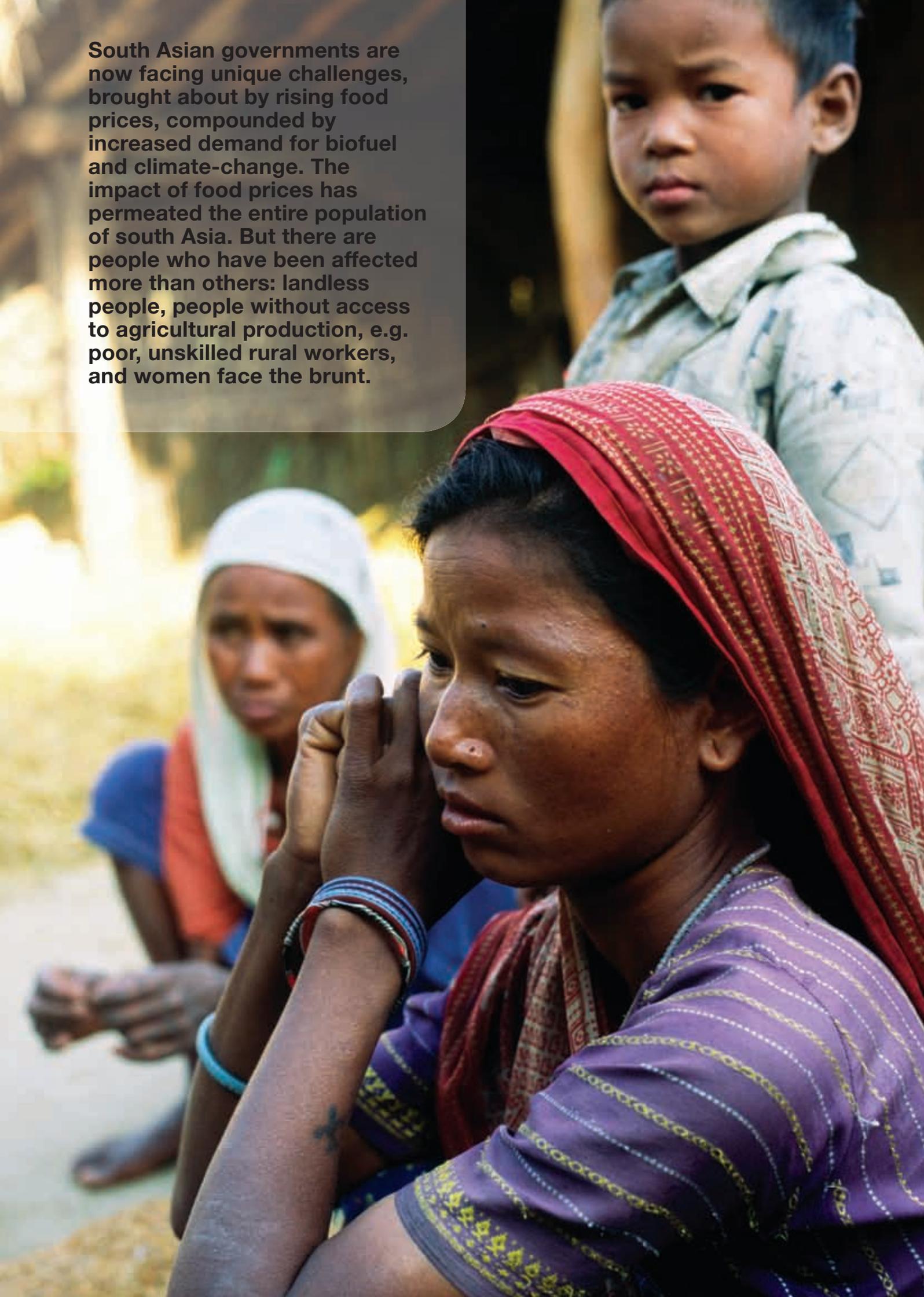
Inflation in food prices in these countries nearly doubled over the past year to an enormous 11 percent. In many countries, inflation is the highest in a decade. The immediate effect of the price rise is hunger, as people are able to buy less, which in turn leads to malnutrition and further poverty.

CHALLENGES BEFORE THE SOUTH ASIAN LEADERSHIP

South Asian governments are now facing unique challenges, brought about by rising food prices, compounded by increased demand for biofuel and climate-change. The impact of food prices has permeated the entire population of south Asia. But there are people who have been affected more than others: landless people, people without access to agricultural production, e.g. poor, unskilled rural labour force, and women face the brunt. Most of these south Asians have to buy cooking oil, coarse rice and firewood from the market and these are precisely the three items that have seen the sharpest increases over last six months.

A number of snapshot surveys have examined the impact of food prices on poor people and people living just above the poverty line. It is estimated that over 800 million people worldwide will fall back into poverty. For every one percent increase in food prices, food consumption in poorer countries decreases by 0.75 percent (Regmi, A. et al. 2001). A model by University of Minnesota economists predicts that for every one percent rise in food prices represents an increase in the number of hungry people worldwide by 16 million. Given the current crisis, an ActionAid simulation suggests that the number of hungry and

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food insecure people in south Asia could rise to 588 million, an increase of 31 percent (Regmi, A. et al. 2001).

Some farmers and wealthier landowners may have benefitted from increased prices. However, an analysis by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) suggests that the price rise has overall caused a net loss for everyone, with a greater impact on landless people (FAO, 2008).

WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

Female-headed households are more likely to be poor in this region, and are more affected by price rises (FAO, 2008). In the rural areas in Bangladesh and Pakistan, the welfare effect is high because of the staple foods consumed: poorer households spend a greater percentage of their income on food than richer ones. This is compounded for female-headed households who have less access to land and participate less in agricultural income generating activities and, therefore, cannot benefit from food price increases.

NUTRITION EMERGENCY

Most of the southern Asian countries are now in a nutrition emergency. The number of malnourished people

in south Asia increased by eight million from 1991 to 2003 – which only represents data from before the food crisis. During this period, in India, despite a steady growth rate, the number decreased only by two million people and in Bangladesh, it increased by four million, during a period when it had a moderate five percent growth rate per year.

In Nepal alone, 41 percent of the population did not get enough to eat and half of Nepali children were underweight because of the chronic lack of food. The country's 2.5 million people in rural areas need emergency food aid³. Nevertheless, the level of food aid has been going down at an alarming rate in the region. Over the last 12 years food aid has dropped from four percent to just one percent in Bangladesh, and from seven percent to two percent in Sri Lanka. The largest food aid provider, the World Food Programme (WFP) concedes that their cost of providing aid has gone up in last couple of years due to the increase in transportation costs.

SAARC COUNTRIES' DEPENDENCY ON IMPORTS

Many South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries depend on food imports. Even a major food producer like India imported more than two million tonnes of food.⁴ Regionally, India and Paki-





Sanjit Das / ActionAid

stan are the food basket; and most countries in the region depend on them to meet their demand.

SAARC countries like Bangladesh, Maldives, Afghanistan and Nepal are paying huge foreign currency to import food. In fact, food and fuel costs alone constitute more than 70 percent of their import bills. Interestingly, most of the SAARC countries also export agricultural products, of which more than 60 percent is food.⁵

Wheat provides an example of why the internal prices – especially the price of cereal products and the oilseeds – shot up in the SAARC countries. Wheat is the second highest staple food in the region, after rice. Growth in the consumption of wheat has been driven by the increase in income, urbanization and ‘westernization’ of Asian diets. Some countries have actively promoted diversification of their consumption basket to include wheat-based products. This policy has been partially driven by the fact that rice has a very small international market - only seven percent of world production is traded internationally, and any supply shortfall in a major rice consuming country would drive up world prices when imports are needed. In contrast, 19 percent of wheat production is traded in the market, making the wheat market less volatile than rice.

Additionally, the total wheat stock went down from 486.5 millions tonnes in 2003 to 427.4 million tonnes in 2007.⁶

A dependency on the international market affects prices on local markets. Over a period of only 12 months, the price of wheat went up more than 50 percent, with its peak at almost 95 percent. The situation for rice was even worse. Rice prices in Thailand rose more than 260 percent, and at its peak was almost four times more expensive.

THE MAIN REASONS BEHIND THE PRICE RISE

There are three main reasons behind the price rise. Firstly, the increased demand for biofuel has led to a net reduction in food production. According to the Economist⁷, the expansion of biofuels will reduce the calorie intake in Asia by two to five percent by 2020. Secondly, the costs of fuel and fertiliser – fuel, the major elements in agriculture has gone up by more than 500 percent over the last six years, from US\$28 per barrel in 2003 to US\$140 per barrel in 2008. As natural gas is the main ingredient of fertiliser, there has also been a sharp rise in fertiliser prices. Thirdly, the destruction and decline of the agricultural system in general, particularly in developing countries.

POLICY RESPONSE

All of the south Asian countries responded to the crisis, although some slower than others. In many countries the responses came only after there was sharp criticism from the media and public outrage on the government's failure to control prices. Many governments wanted to understand the nature of the problem before acting. Government decisions were also influenced by number of other emergency situations.

In many cases, they failed to understand the links between the local food distribution system; the oligopolistic/monopolistic controls of the market, and the effect of international prices on local markets. They also miscalculated the extent of the price rise, especially for rice. All of the government initiatives were mainly of three broad categories: export restriction, price control and import liberalisation.

The types of policy responses varied according to whether countries are net importers or net exporters. The former involves reducing import restrictions and tariffs, while the latter involves adopting increased taxes and restrictions on exports. Safety net programmes and policies to mitigate the rise in food prices through subsidies, using stocks to stabilize prices, and providing assistance to farmers to meet rising input costs are widespread.

A CALL FOR ACTION

This situation reveals the fragility of the balance between supply of food globally and the needs of people. It reiterates the unkept promises by the leadership to accelerate progress towards the eradication of hunger through agricultural and rural development. So far, south Asian governments have undertaken emergency responses. Now it is time that SAARC countries take more sustainable measures. They must ensure a set of actions that will result in an accelerated and permanent reduction in the number of hungry people and inequality.

They must commit to actions at the national and regional levels. These must relate to public goods, trade policies, markets, and responses to the impact of climate

change. Their actions must focus on how to protect the hundreds of millions of small-holder farmers, the millions of urban poor and rural women. They must enable farmers to adapt regenerative agriculture and appropriate agricultural technologies. Actions need to face the challenges of a growing population and ensure food availability. They must make public land and water bodies available to the landless – especially to women who own less than five percent of the total land in south Asia.

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1 This paper is based on the report "Rising Food Prices and Poverty in South Asian Countries: a call for action in SAARC Summit"

2 Actionaid report. This is based upon modelling by University of Minnesota economists who predict that for every 1 percent rise in food prices, the number of hungry people in the world will rise by 16 million. Another study conducted in 2001 suggests for every 1 percent increase in food prices, food consumption in poorer countries decreases by 0.75 percent.

3 Nepal Times; 2008

4 FAO, 2008

5 ADB; 2008

6 FAO, 2008

7 Originally the research was conducted by IFPRI

The impacts of trade liberalization **on food sovereignty and women's access to land**

Since the beginning of the 1990s, but especially after 2000, governments throughout the world have focused their attention on obtaining trade agreements that allow them to improve national economic performance. However, in most cases there has been a failure to take into account the power asymmetries between the parties in terms of imposing their interests and the potential political and social consequences of these imbalances. The signing of a trade agreement can introduce changes in the distribution of resources, social structures and employment patterns, the role of national governments and the power of institutions.

The impacts of trade liberalization also differ according to the division of labour between men and women, their capacity to access resources and their status and remuneration within the labour market.

The most important arena for multilateral negotiations is the World Trade Organization (WTO) whose 153 member countries look to agree measures and regulations for their commercial transactions. Simultaneously, outside of this space, the countries or trade blocks are working on other partial agreements. Though agriculture is today one of the most hotly debated topics in the WTO, the situation reveals the scale of the disparities between countries like never before.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture originated in the Uruguay Round where agriculture was included for the first time during negotiations on trade liberalization. Previously, under GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), farming had been left out due to the concern with food security. The provisions of the Agreement on Agriculture establish sets of rules on international trade in food products that are designed to reduce import tariffs and lift government subsidies or incentives for production and exportation. However the global trade in farming commodities is, in fact, seriously distorted by the continuance of subsidies that sustain the more powerful economies of the United States and the European Union.

Simultaneously, the Latin American region as a whole has displayed a trend towards increased concentration of land and agricultural production among a small group of multinational corporations, threatening the traditional lifestyles of the poorest rural populations. However, the majority of studies critically examining the process of trade liberalization and its effects

What impacts are international trade and the Free Trade Agreements having on Latin American family farming and on women's access to and control of land and natural resources? What significance does the concept of food sovereignty have in this context?





on the economy, in general, and the agricultural and food sectors, in particular, fail to include the gender issue. These studies emphasize the macroeconomic aspects without incorporating the critical contributions made by feminist economists and studies of the role of women in the rural economy. This article provides a transversal reading of four case studies conducted by the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN-LA) with the support of Women's Rights Team from ActionAid, in Mexico, Guatemala, Paraguay and Colombia. These studies were designed to provide a more in-depth examination of the connections between trade liberalization, food sovereignty and the current situation of rural producers.

DIFFERENT AGREEMENTS, SAME OUTCOME

In Latin America, trade liberalization policies have further entrenched agroexport-based production by increasing the competitiveness of certain tradable goods such as soya and products derived from forest exploitation. This has combined with the fact that the national markets have been opened up indiscriminately to imported products (both manufactured consumer goods and some primary inputs) without generating the conditions for competitive higher added value exports, or for redistributing the resources freed up from the sectors competing with these imports.

As a result of these changes, small-scale rural production has been progressively replaced by the industrialized processes of large multinational companies who increasingly determine what, how, when and where foods are produced and marketed. The feverish pursuit of macroeconomic stability through cutbacks in public expenditure and the encouragement of growth through exports and the attraction of foreign investment have actually resulted in weak regional growth and greater social exclusion.

One example of the dynamic of this situation at national level is the way in which economic liberalization in Paraguay led to intense foreign investment in the burgeoning agroexport industry and a consequent shift in land use. The increase in the international price of soya stimulated an expansion in the area of land used to produce this crop, which makes relatively low use of manual labour. Along with cotton, one of the other main export crops, the international price of soya fell sharply and so too its profitability. The reduction in cotton production, mainly pursued on family smallholdings, led to widespread unemployment within the rural economy.

One of the responses of these families has been to migrate to the city, a process in which women have played an important role: since they lack the productive resources, human capital or capacity to start new enterprises, they have generally sought employment

as domestic or self-employed workers. The deep structural problems signalled by unemployment, internal migrations and work instability have combined with Paraguay's poor bargaining position in terms of ongoing international trade negotiations. The protectionism of the European countries and the United States, including the tariff and non-tariff mechanisms applied to agricultural products, impose serious obstacles to obtaining greater foreign competitiveness, especially for the products traditionally exported by the country.

Other countries of Latin America, such as Mexico, have experienced similar problems in the wake of trade agreements. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed by Mexico, the United States and Canada in 1994, continued and deepened the policies of commercial and financial liberalization, meaning that Mexico's export sector acquired an increasing importance in the overall economy.

The loss of Mexico's food sovereignty has proven to be one of the most unwelcome effects of the NAFTA-related policies, resulting from a poor deal on the agreement's agricultural chapter and an inadequate national policy. This is in stark contrast to the protection and subsidies offered by the United States to its

own farming sector. These effects are evident in the figures. Food dependency in Mexico has risen to unprecedented levels: in 1995, imports reached 50% of national food consumption, while the area cultivated fell by 5 million hectares and 1.5 million people have been made unemployed.

A COMMON DIAGNOSIS FOR THE REGION

Food sovereignty is the right of all peoples to define their own food and agricultural policies; to protect and regulate national agricultural production in order to achieve sustainable development; to determine the extent to which they wish to be self-sufficient; and to prevent the dumping policies pursued by the big producers. Food sovereignty is associated with trade policies and practices that work to ensure people's rights to safe, healthy and sustainable production.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), rural women are responsible for one half of total global food production. This proportion is higher in most developing countries, including those of Latin America: in the latter case, women produce between 60 and 80 per cent of foods. Yet, despite their contribution to the world agricultural economy, development strategies frequently underestimate the contribution of female farmers or fail to take them into account completely.

The case of Guatemala, which to some extent applies to Central America as a whole, helps illustrate this aspect. The country's women and children have always taken part in unpaid production activities, but this involvement has been considered as a help or complement to men's work in the plantations and farms. Women are not included on payrolls and consequently fail to receive social welfare, holidays and Christmas bonuses. This situation is endorsed by Article 139 of the Guatemalan Labour Code, which denies labour rights to female workers by classifying them as assistants to men's work.

In Guatemala, the majority of peasant women live in rural areas, where more than 60% of the country's population resides and where most of its indigenous and poor populations are concentrated. 64 out of ev-



ery 100 Guatemalans live in a rural area and, of these, 59% are indigenous. Four out of five poor people live in rural areas, including 73% of Guatemalan women living in poverty.

The case studies are surprisingly similar in terms of the scenarios they describe. One of the common causes of food dependency faced by the majority of countries is that many of the foods consumed today are imported.

In Colombia, between 1998 and 2002 more than 39,000 men and women died directly and indirectly of hunger. The policy of developing biofuels led to a reduction in the area used to produce the population's staple foods. This has also provoked a rise in the prices of the basic consumer food items used by low-income homes, such as sugarloaves. Authorization for the use of GMOs in crops has worsened the situation of small rural producers, especially in terms of their access to markets, due to the high level of capital needed for production and the increased technological dependency on seed providers.

This situation of poverty and food shortages is found in a regional context shaped by structural adjustment and stabilization policies, as well as other reforms implemented by Latin American states over the last few decades with the aim of achieving economic growth and spurring development.

KNOWLEDGE AS THE BASIS FOR ACTION

As a result of the processes of trade liberalization pursued over recent decades, the region's rural population is now extremely vulnerable in terms of poverty and ac-

cess to food. These processes have transformed the rural world, expressed in the development of new production frameworks with the steady advance of non-traditional agricultural activities and non-agricultural activities.

Different civil society movements and organizations have tried to draw attention to these issues and over the last few years have managed to find more fertile ground for their protests among peasant and indigenous groups and in urban centres. Via Campesina, a movement that has been working since 1993 with organizations of peasants, small and medium-size producers and rural women and young people, indigenous groups, the landless and agricultural workers from more than 50 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, has played a pioneering role in defining food sovereignty as a non-negotiable social, cultural and political right.

Understanding the centrality of the analysis of the regional transformations caused by trade liberalization, its consequences on food sovereignty, emphasizing in particular the situation of rural women, triply discriminated by being female, poor and rural, is the first step in deconstructing naturalized power relations.

These analyses and diagnoses serve, in turn, as a basis for rural women from the different organizations to use the information and arguments when making their voices heard in meetings, in dialogue with national governments and also in regional assemblies such as MERCOSUL's REAF (Special Meeting on Family Farming), with the aim of strengthening public policies for the family farming sector in response to the advance of the free market and the multinational corporations.

TEXTS PRODUCED BY IGTN-LA WITH THE SUPPORT OF ACTIONAID – WOMEN'S RIGHTS TEAM

Cartilla Comercio Internacional. Agricultura y Alimentación (International Trade. Farming and Food. 2007)
Norma Sanchís and Agustina Pérez Rial

Colombia: Género y Problemática Agroalimentaria. Trabajadoras de la agroindustria (Gender and the Agrofood Problem. Female workers in the agroindustry. 2007) Patricia Jaramillo

Guatemala: Maíz, mucho más que tortillas (Maize, much more than tortillas. 2007) Norma Maldonado and Beatriz Barrientos

Mexico: Las relaciones de Género en el sector Agropecuario y Alimentario Mexicano (Gender relations in the Mexican Farming and Food sectors. 2007) Mujer y Medio Ambiente, A.C.

Paraguay: La Seguridad Alimentaria, el Modelo Productivo y su efecto sobre las Mujeres (Food Security, the Production Model and its effect on Women. 2007) Verónica Serafini Geohegan

Changes deriving from

the emergence of big distribution/ retail agents

Due to the process of globalization, the leading distribution / retail agents gained such importance that, along with the finance sector, they became the main responsible for the recent dynamics in world capitalism.

An approach to this subject implies a reflexion on the changes that occurred during the last decades regarding the way in which agricultural and food products reach final consumers. Recent history reveals that the emergence of big distribution/retail agents occurred simultaneously with the consolidation of the present stage of world capitalism – globalisation. Due to this process of globalisation, the leading agents of this sub-sector of economy gained such importance that, along with the finance sector, they became the main responsible for the recent dynamics in world capitalism.

Among the main relevant changes regarding the above-mentioned sub-sectors, the breakthroughs in transport systems and in information technologies are the most important ones. However, it is important that we reject possible inclinations towards technological determinism from the start, which characterise many approaches to this phenomenon. In fact, it is necessary to take into account both the politico-ideological and the socio-cultural dimensions. This means that, although technological progress was the necessary condition for globalisation, the sufficient condition for the emergence of globalisation is to be found in the politico-ideological dimension, namely in the transition to the neoliberal paradigm based on the following trilogy: privatisation, liberalisation of trade and capital movements, and deregulation.

These changes allowed the proliferation of transnational companies, the decisive dynamic agents of this new stage of capitalism. They also enabled these companies to change their behaviour virtually everywhere in the world², from adopting strategies to conform with national political will to strategies through which they are able to impose conditions and demand compensations in order to establish themselves in several countries (Moreira, 1994). It is in the general context of globalisation that big distribution/retail agents – often vertically integrated with other intervenient agents from the value chain – find the suitable conditions to predominate³.

INNOVATION IN DISTRIBUTION/RETAIL BUSINESS

The generalisation of the use of containers, along with cheap transportation, has been determinant to globalisation. Nevertheless, it has also been necessary to act in the political arena, in which the agenda of the liberalisation of trade would be conducted through the progressive reduction in taxes and the removal of other barriers to the entry of goods⁴.

Concomitantly, information technologies have been vital to the changes mentioned as they enabled new calculation methods and, consequently, new management instruments, which resulted in **multi-spatial**

management and coordination forms in real time, besides allowing for the effective and almost instantaneous transfer of financial flows.

In sum, breakthroughs in market goods transportation and in information technologies have been determinant for the introduction of the logistic innovations required for the rise of big distribution/retail agents. The significant productivity gains of these companies represent a decisive competitive advantage against smaller competitors. This competitive advantage explains the tendency for oligopoly creation, emulating other players in the agrifood sector.

PHARMA: The top 10 companies control almost 59% market share of the world's leading 98 drug firms.

ANIMAL PHARMA: The top 10 companies control 55% of the \$20,255 million world veterinary pharmaceutical market.

BIOTECHNOLOGY: The top 10 publicly-traded biotech companies account for almost three quarters of the global biotech market.

SEEDS: The top 10 companies control almost half of the \$21,000 million commercial seed market.

PESTICIDES: The top 10 firms control 84% of the \$29,566 million global pesticide market. Analysts predict only three major companies will survive in the conventional pesticide business by 2015.

FOOD RETAIL: In 2004, the top 10 global food retailers accounted for combined sales of \$84,000 million – 24% of the estimated \$3.5 trillion global market.

FOOD & BEVERAGE PROCESSING: The top 10 companies accounted for 24% of the estimated \$1.25 trillion global market for packaged foods. The top 10 companies account for 36% of the revenues earned by the world's top 100 food and beverage companies.

NANOTECH: Industry and governments invested more than \$10,000 million in nanotechnology R&D in 2004.

Source: ETC Group

Information technology innovations in agrifood chains, namely electronic data exchange and the internet, allowed for new efficiency levels in the flows of raw materials and of final goods throughout the value chains⁵. In parallel, there have also been some important breakthroughs in the storage and transportation of foodstuffs, namely regarding fresh products.

Faster and cheaper transportation and more efficient logistics confer a greater importance to forms of distance selling. Yet, even in direct selling, information technologies, whose widespread use was pioneered

by big retailers, were determinant for making retail outlets more efficient and less dependent on labour⁶.

Nevertheless, with no underestimation of the importance of these technologies, we consider that the most important innovation has been the emergence of purchase centres, which are destined to supply all retail outlets of a specific group within a strategically defined geographical area, which might very well be a transnational one. This phenomenon represented not only an extraordinary incentive, but also a great imperative for business concentration into fewer units.

IMPACTS

The new dynamics within this particular sector translates into growing competition and into the easiness with which the most important groups began expanding their scope of action over other places, regardless of the frontiers of Nation-states. According to the orthodox economic doctrine (more efficiency), one expects that growing competition results in abandonment by those who are not able to compete, in favour of the economy and of society in general. However, this economic orthodoxy also recognises that those changes create winners and losers, since it maintains that the benefits obtained are superior to the loss of those who are damaged, which would compensate for their loss.

This linearity might be accepted from a restricted economic view. On the contrary, from the view of political economy, it is necessary, on the one hand, to identify the winners and the losers of this new dynamics and, on the other hand, to understand the effects that an economy no longer restricted to national frontiers can have on the economy of the mostly affected sectors, but also on the societies involved.

At this stage of globalisation, growing competition in the agrifood sector takes place among different actors in terms of their economic and financial weight, that is, between big actors or between bigger and smaller actors, but also between these and agents from several different places in terms of economic development. In this context, and focusing exclusively on the subject of big distribution/retail agents, the competition between bigger and smaller actors, both small trade intermediaries and small producers, acquires great importance.

The impacts of this competition are historically well known. The smaller actors increasingly lose importance in the market. When they adopt collective action strategies, they can more or less resist to competition by bigger actors, although they can rarely subsist in the face of acquisition aims or partnerships close to integration.

There is also competition between big agents that belong to the same competitive level. Regarding these actors, recent history reveals several concentration phenomena, which end up establishing oligopolistic market structures, in which a small group of agents holds a substantial share of the market.

THE WORLD'S TOP 10 SEED COMPANIES – 2006 Based on 2006 Seed Revenues

Company	2006 seed sales US \$ millions
1. Monsanto (US)	\$4,028
2. Dupont (US)	\$2,781
3. Syngenta (Switzerland)	\$1,743
4. Groupe Limagrain (France)	\$1,035
5. Land O' Lakes (US)	\$756
6. KWS AG (Germany)	\$615
7. Bayer Crop Science (Germany)	\$430
8. Delta & Pine Land (US) (acquisition by Monsanto pending)	\$418
9. Sakata (Japan)	\$401
10. DLF-Trifolium (Denmark)	\$352

The top 10 seed corporations account for 55% of the commercial seed market worldwide;

In 2006, the top 10 companies account for \$12,559 million – or 64% of the total proprietary seed market.

Monsanto – the world's largest seed company – accounts for more than one-fifth of the global proprietary seed market.

The top 3 companies – Monsanto, Dupont and Syngenta – account for \$8,552 million – or 44% of the total proprietary seed market.

The top 4 companies account for \$9,587 million – or almost half (49%) – of the total proprietary seed market.

Source: ETC Group

Another important impact of competition between these big agents is felt upward in the value chains, since the agents with greater importance in the market are able to squeeze the prices of the respective suppliers. Moreover, if one takes into account that the liberalisation of trade allowed for the deterritorialisation of purchasing, competition – which was for a long time economically restricted to national space or community space in the case of the EU – became open to the whole world, which made it much more intensive. The consequence is that suppliers, namely agricultural producers in national spaces, are pressured in order to guarantee products in the quantities and quality requested by big agents, also being forced to squeeze selling prices of their products as much as they can.

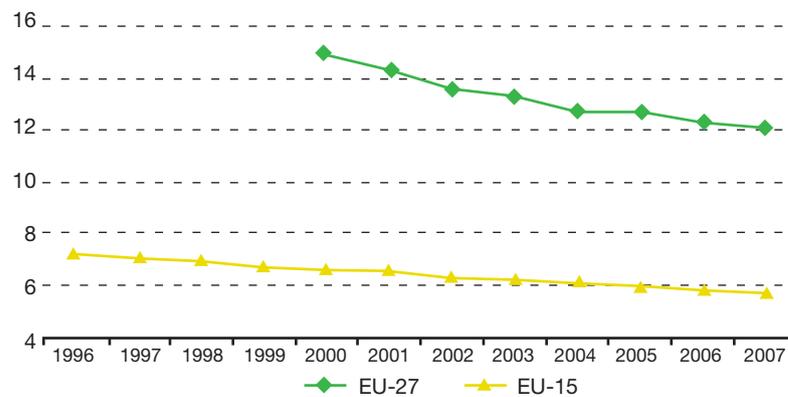
In the relationships between big distribution/retail agents and their suppliers, powerful economic groups

interested in the productive field, such as world giants connected to the agrifood sector, have been gaining power in the market over the last decades through processes of acquisition and mergers. Small producers, in their turn, face growing competition in the already decreasing market share they compete for, which leads many to abandon the agricultural activity.

NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS IN EUROPE (1000)		
	1995	2005
EU (15 countries)	7370.04	5843.05
Germany	566.91	389.88
Italy	2482.10	1728.53
Netherlands	113.20	81.83
Spain	1277.60	1079.42
Portugal	450.64	323.92
Finland	100.95	70.62

Source: EUROSTAT

AGRICULTURE LABOUR INPUT (EU) 1996-2007



Over the period between 2000 and 2007, agricultural labour input declined by 19.5% in the EU-27.

In 2007, total agricultural labour input continued to fall in all Member States,

Overall, EU agricultural labour input was down by 2.2% in 2007.

Source: EUROSTAT

The European situation is exemplary in this matter. The reduction in the number of agricultural holdings has been increasingly growing, particularly among smaller holdings. This process is also evident through an analysis of the significant decrease of agricultural labour, mostly due to the abandonment of the agricultural activity by smallholder farmers.

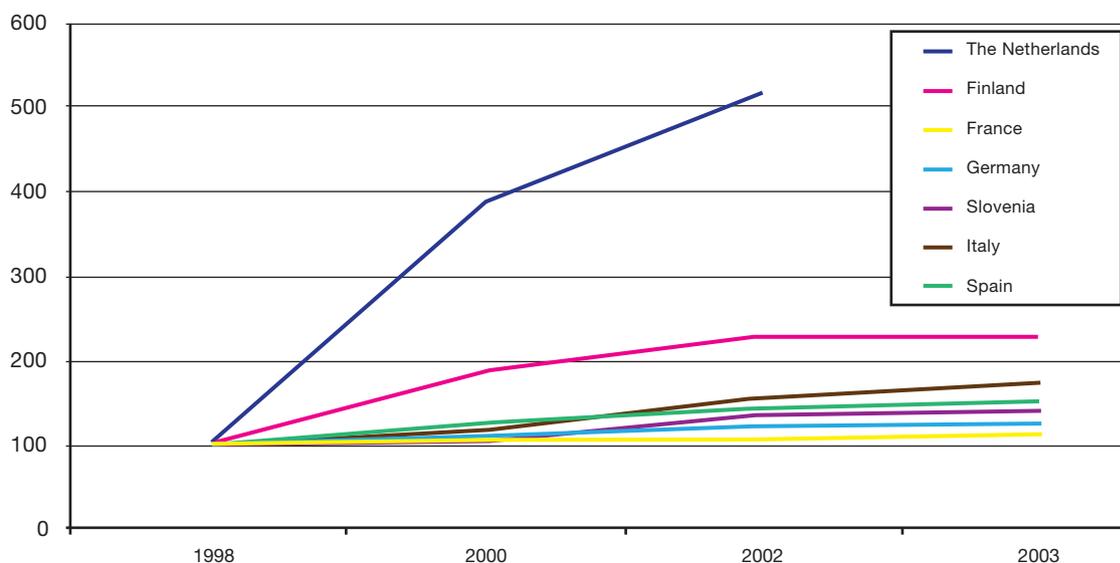
As regards the impacts of big distribution/retail agents on farmers, even great holdings lose the power to negotiate prices, quantities, quality requirements or delivery deadlines. Consequently, they are forced to concentrate their production into cooperatives or into producer groups in order to access markets shares controlled by big distribution/retail agents.

Anyhow, whatever the adopted form of negotiation may be, since in general they are not negotiating trademark products that are market leaders, and since purchase centres have oligopsonic characteristics, it is clear that their detainers have enough

market power to squeeze prices and even to demand fringe benefits.

This dynamics stimulates a rearrangement of the geographical productive areas with the abandonment of the most marginal areas.

AVERAGE TURNOVER PER COOPERATIVE (1998=100)



Source: COPA - COGEC

REACTIONS TO IMPACTS

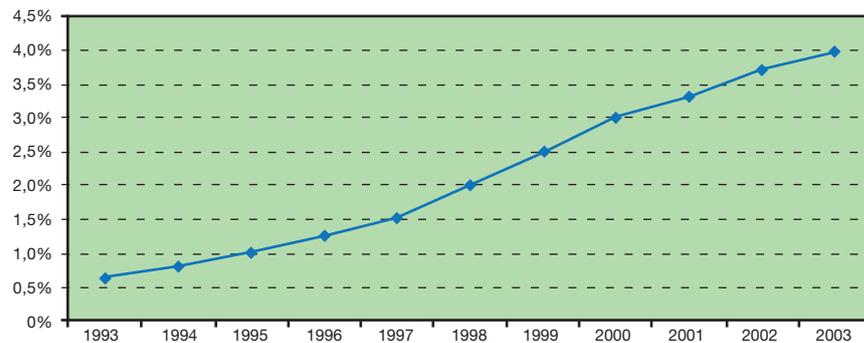
In the upward part of agro-industrial value chains, agricultural and/or agro-industrial producers are faced, almost abruptly, with new and much fiercer competition, which forces them to rapidly adapt to or to withdraw from the market. The reactions to growing competition are the usual ones: on the one hand, an intensification of industrial appropriation and substitutionism, as referred to by Goodman *et al.* (1987) and, on the other hand, the acceleration of the technological treadmill on the part of agricultural producers (Cochrane, 1979). This explains the acceleration of structural changes, characterised by increasingly bigger and more productive agricultural holdings, which cause the extinction of smaller units that cannot or are not willing to get into that race. Thus, a division is created among those who want to remain in the market, which separates those agents that have the conditions to access the existing technologies in order

to better compete in the market from those who are only left with the possibility of exploiting market niches.

Downward in agrifood value chains, consumers are faced with products that derive from increasingly more complex circuits, and which are produced in distant places. Therefore, the search for food safety, which has been a growing concern of consumers, is not surprising. This concern has mostly been caused by the fear prompted by several cases with great media impact⁷ and reinforced by activists of “natural product consumption”.

Consumer fears caused by such cases have greatly influenced the modes of production, namely promoting organic agriculture, which from a mere market niche was turned into a powerful business⁸.

food innovations resulting from the developments of medical and nutritional sciences are also worth mentioning, as they explain changes, often very sud-

SHARE OF ORGANIC AREA IN UTILISED AGRICULTURAL AREA IN EU-15, 1993-2003 (%)

Source: EC. *Organic Farming in the European Union – Facts and Figures*. Brussels, November 2005.

den, in consumption patterns and in the solutions found by agrifood production to meet and/or to cause such changes⁹.

Naturally, big retailers take advantage of these innovations in close cooperation with producers, by strengthening their image of innovation and dynamics to consumers in campaigns that disseminate and promote their products against traditional commerce, which is regarded as conservative and old fashioned.

FINAL NOTES

The emergence of big distribution/retail agents in agrifood value chains derives from the characteristics of these new market agents, particularly from their innovative capacity for taking advantage of the possibilities created by breakthroughs in transport systems, in information technologies, and in logistics. With these new instruments, these agents pursued the fulgurous concentration of demand through purchase centres. This concentration together with the characteristics of the retail market itself – impersonal, where prompt payments were demanded – allowed big agents to consolidate their economic and financial power, which translated into great market power. Therefore, they introduced a new market dynamics, which consequently caused highly significant changes both upward and downward in value chains.

Regarding the impacts on agricultural production and food production, in face of the distribution/retail giants, most small and medium-sized producers have no other alternative than¹⁰: i) to adapt to the demands

and specifications defined by big distribution/retailers, otherwise their chances to put their products into the market are seriously reduced; ii) to exploit, through adequate selling strategies, local proximity markets, which translates into a competitive advantage; iii) to take advantage of market niches of products with quality stamps.

It is important to stress that we understand the adaptation to the demands of big distribution/retail agents as three different things: i) the obligation of producers to respect quality requirements; ii) the need of agricultural producers or industrial/handicraft small producers for concentrating supply, which points to the need of collective action, whether through formal cooperatives or by adopting vertical and horizontal cooperation forms, even if these are not formally institutionalised; and iii) the concern with the improvement of their competitive capacity by producing more efficiently and more cheaply, in order to keep up with the competitive race.

As regards the impacts in the consumption segment, the most important ones are not merely economic effects, which derive from the exercise of market power, whether from local monopolies or from oligopolies. The main effects derive from the possibility brought to consumers by big distribution/retail agents to change traditional consumption patterns, by creating opportunities of contacting with new products to which most consumers now have easy access to at mass-market prices¹¹. Thus, if in fact it is not possible to say that consumers are sovereign, as advertising makes be-

lieve, the reality is that the growth of available products in supermarkets or in on-line sale catalogues is one of the greatest changes for consumers, which provides them with different degrees of freedom of choice.

In conclusion, a brief prospective note is justified. Considering that purchase centres have come to stay, pressure on producers will certainly go on. Nevertheless, it is no longer clear whether, given the environmental pressures and the expectations regarding the increase of transport prices, some of the effects of long distance competition will attenuate. On the other hand, if the production of biofuels from agricultural products increases, food value chains are expected to suffer from high prices for agricultural raw materials. That will certainly bring some encouragement to local producers. In any case, great impacts are not to be expected in the organisation of value chains or in the relative importance of actors, although inflationist pressures on consumers are predicted.

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- 1** Professor in the Department of Economy and Agrarian Sociology of the School of Agronomy of the Technical University of Lisbon (mbelomoreira@isa.utl.pt). I am indebted to João Pinto for his efforts translating and condensing the text.
- 2** China and India are the most prominent exception to this tendency, since their respective Nation-states have kept an interventionist attitude both regarding attempts to establish foreign capital in their countries (Tapia, 1995) and in general terms.
- 3** As it becomes evident merely by reading the business magazines which organise rankings of the biggest companies.
- 4** This movement was greatly discussed in the negotiations involving the preparation of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) agreements and it is presently discussed within WTO (World Trade Organisation) negotiations. The latter have lately been at a standstill due to the present unequal conditions between northern and southern countries. See Stiglitz and Charlton (2007), and Moreira (2007).
- 5** The role of ESCs (electronically-enabled supply chains) is very important in this matter, as they enable radical changes in the quality and speed of information flows between value chain partners.
- 6** An example of this is the widespread adoption of bar codes, which has not only allowed a better management of stocks throughout the whole chain but also made EPOS (electronic point of sale) profitable, since the latter are quicker than the old register machine, and also provide information for management automatically.
- 7** Namely, the recent BSE crisis (known as the "mad cow" disease), the foot-and-mouth disease, the presence of nitrofurans in the chicken production chain or the bird flu.
- 8** At the same time, this mode of agricultural production calls for new regulation forms in production, with quality certification demands and attempts of traceability of products from the stage of production until selling outlets.
- 9** Consider the influence of what became known as the French Paradox in the consumption of red wine, as well as the controversy regarding food supplements and the emergence of the so-called functional food (nutraceuticals).
- 10** Regarding big producers, they are the only ones that are able to keep their power of negotiation in order to face big distribution/retail agents that produce market leader trademarks.
- 11** Namely from exotic origins and/or from other food patterns, mostly ethnic ones.

Biofuel production in Guatemala **and the right to food**



Leo Liberman / Actionaid

Over the last five years, agroindustrial companies geared towards the production of biodiesel and ethanol in Guatemala have sought to occupy all the land 'suitable' – according to technical criteria – for cultivating African oil palm and sugarcane. As they expand, they are monopolizing the lands of large, medium and small farmers in key areas of the country.

The current food crisis has placed the issue of access to food at the centre of global concerns and discussions, along with the basic human right to adequate food and life. Different analysts have stressed that the current crisis in food availability and the sharp rise in food prices is the result of multiple factors. These include: the rising price of oil and the resulting increases in the costs of energy, transportation, fertilizers and other farming inputs; the reduction in harvests among some grain exporting countries that now channel these crops towards biofuel production¹ and the reduction in the lands previously used in developing countries to grow food crops in favour of biofuel production; and the increased demand for grains and other foods at global level, primarily stimulated by the growing consumption of the large populations of the so-called 'emerging' countries, such as Brazil, India and China.² Food has become a commodity quoted on the stock market and subject to the interest of national and international capital, whose volatility

is increasing in the context of climate change and the rising frequency of 'natural' disasters.

In Guatemala, the expansion in the crops planted for biofuel production – particularly African palm and sugarcane – is causing the loss of lands previously used to produce food crops. This reduction in lands entails a sharp fall in the national production of basic grains and other foods, an output that has been systematically weakened over recent years by neoliberal policies. Over the last decade, Guatemala has ceased to be self-sufficient in food and is now dependent on importations of yellow maize, rice, wheat and soya from the United States, increasingly subject to international food prices and dependent on food availability at international level.³

Over the last five years, agroindustrial companies geared towards the production of biodiesel and ethanol in Guatemala have sought to occupy all the land 'suitable' – according to technical criteria – for cultivating African oil palm and sugarcane. As they expand, they are monopolizing the lands of large, medium and small farmers in key areas of the country. The production of ethanol from sugarcane began in 1983, but the

sugarcane growers are now expanding their productive capacity. For their part, the companies investing in cultivating African oil palm and processing the fruit were preparing to begin large-scale production of biodiesel at the end of 2008.

The policies of the Guatemalan government and the international financial institutions have enabled and supported these commercial aims without considering the implications of this wave of modernization, both in terms of the country's farming infrastructure and in terms of the population's right to food, as well as the future possibilities for human development in the country.

The expansion of biofuel monocrops is also linked to the concentration and reconcentration of agricultural properties – processes that are worsening the problem of access to land for family farmers, whether owned or rented.⁴

The process of agricultural property concentration refers to the concentration of family farming plots and/or small and medium-size farmers and ranchers into larger properties directed towards monocrop plantations. This form of monopolizing land is primarily observed in the districts of Ixcán, Chisec, Fray Bartolomé





de Las Casas and Sayaxché. In these areas, the palm oil companies are buying land from individual owners and communities acting as groups of co-owners. Most of these smallholders are rural families who acquired land under the Colonization Programs implemented by the Guatemalan State in the 1960s and 70s, or groups of families who were forced to relocate because of the waves of repression and violence during the internal armed conflict. All of these owners succeeded in regularizing ownership of the land and obtaining property deeds at a date subsequent to 1996, when a peace accord was finally signed.

The process of reconcentration of agricultural property, on the other hand, refers to the concentration of pre-existing estates, already extensive, into even bigger properties. These are large farms formed over a lengthy historical process of private appropriation that are now being purchased by national and multinational agroindustrial corporations in order to expand their plantations. This process is occurring, for example, in the valley of the Polochic river, in the districts of La Tinta and Panzós (Alta Verapaz) and in El Estor (Izabal), where the sugar refinery has bought up almost all the old farms.

Along with the loss of lands implied for many rural family farmers, there is also the loss of remaining forests and the degradation of various natural resources in these areas. In order to expand their monocrop plantations, the companies alter the landscape and dry up water sources and wetlands with the resulting fragmentation or elimination of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity. The natural resources being lost in the process contribute significantly to meeting the basic needs of the rural population through their integrated production systems, as well as the cultivated foods themselves. In other words, the loss of farming lands used for food production occurs hand-in-hand with the change in the use of the soil of extensive areas that until now had been kept as woods and wetlands, providing the local population with a distinct range of renewable natural resources that help supplement their overall income.

The methods used by producers of African palm and sugarcane to acquire and concentrate land vary from region to region. In Petén companies have used mechanisms ranging from the immediate offer of cash at sums above local land prices to threats, coercion and violence.



Leo Liberman / Actonaid

Another strategy frequently used is the gradual purchase of small areas of nearby land, closing off the transport routes and the access to water sources to rural smallholders, surrounding those owners reluctant to sell in order to suffocate them and force them to sell their land.

In other areas of the country, the buying and selling takes a different form. The company responsible for producing African palm oil has tried to persuade smallholders through the offer of land titles with certain restrictions. Where the owners refuse to sell, the company offers different lease options. In all cases, the price paid by the company – whether for outright purchase or leasehold – is immediately attractive to some rural families. For now, rural families and the general public are largely unaware of the consequences of complete dependence on the supply of work and monetary income, the decline in value of the currency, the increase in the price of essential products, or the conditions of soil degradation by the end of the contract period. It must be stressed that the total annual income of a rural family derives from the combined earnings of its economic activity as a whole: agriculture, livestock, craftwork, trade and extractivism.

In those regions where the purchase of land by agroindustrial companies involves large-scale farmers, it is the latter who assume the task of expelling the former tenant labourers or redefining the terms of their relation-

ship through the payment of benefits and/or the transfer of small areas of land on the margins of the farms.

Finally, it must be stressed that the State and the international financial institutions (such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and Central American Bank for Economic Integration) are resolute in promoting and supporting the national and transnational agroindustrial companies in this process of commercializing and concentrating farm property. Simultaneously, they are contributing to rural farming families losing their land and their livelihoods. The State and the international financial institutions have aligned their policies and resources with the interests of the agroindustrial companies.

Therefore, the expansion of plantations in Guatemala for producing biofuels, driven by the agroindustrial companies and supported by the national government and international financial institutions, is harming rural family farmers and the poorest and most excluded section of the population, placing at risk their nutritional and food security and violating their right to food.

1 Currently the United States channels 10% of the global production of maize to the production of ethanol.

2 See: Maluf, Renato S. 'Elevação nos preços dos alimentos e o sistema alimentar global.' In: Observatorio de Políticas Públicas para a Agricultura. No. 18, April 2008. www.ufrj.br/cpda

3 According to data from FAOSTAT, between 1990-2005 the national production of wheat fell by 80.4%, beans by 25.9%, rice by 22.7% and maize by 22.2%.

4 Hurtado, Laura. *Dinámicas agrarias y reproducción campesina en la globalización*. Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2008.

Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre¹: Moving from laws to practice in the Americas

In Latin America, on the ground where social struggles unfold, we can observe new alliances being formed by those people and movements challenging the dominant economic model and the situation of unemployment and poverty generated by neoliberal policies over recent decades. And women have played the biggest role in making this happen: structural/economic causes and specific causes protagonized by women. Women are placing social movements at centre stage while demanding their own visibility. (Gohn 2008:156-157)

The women engaged in the Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre¹ campaign belong to this groundswell of female activists who are fighting for visibility and recognition of their demands within the movements, organizations and networks and in relation to the national states and their regional and international bodies.

Between October 15th 2008 and March 8th 2009 more than 3,500 rural Latin American women involved in the Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre campaign marched and demanded the right to food through access to land and other resources. As well as making their voices heard, these events allowed them to highlight the demands of many female comrades unable to join them at the city rallies or other campaign events by collecting plates with messages and by drafting collective manifestos. Many are members of mixed organizations but felt the need to organize as women and collectively present their specific demands concerning access to and control of land and other natural and productive resources. These demands are allied with the campaigns to end violence against women, the promotion of breastfeeding and the right to therapeutic abortion as part of their demands as rural women



Leo Liberman / ActionAid

ICARRD's Final Declaration, paragraph 7, March 2006

We recognize that laws should be designed and revised to ensure that rural women are accorded full and equal rights to land and other resources, including through the right to inheritance, and administrative reforms and other necessary measures should be undertaken to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, labour rights, legal identification documents, appropriate technologies and access to markets and information.

CEDAW - Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:
 - (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;
 - (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counseling and services in family planning;
 - (c) To benefit directly from social security programs;
 - (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;
 - (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;
 - (f) To participate in all community activities;
 - (g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;
 - (h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

since, for them, these are an integral part of achieving their human right to food.

Supported by the various international agreements signed by their countries⁴ – in particular article 14 of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women) and paragraph 7 of ICARRD (International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development) – these women joined the global HungerFREE Women campaign to demand their human right to food through:

- Assurances that more land and related resources are held by women;
- Women acquiring permanent rights to land (and resources) as citizens through the elimination of discriminatory laws and policies and/or the enforcement of legislation on equal treatment for women;
- The strengthening of the political power of rural women through alliances and solidarity movements and effective steps to form a political group that fights for women's rights to land and natural resources;
- Government protection for the rights of women and the implementation of regulatory frameworks that prevent the concentration of land in the hands of elites and corporations.

Building the campaign *Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre*

The process started a year before October 15th 2008 when the International Food Security Network (IFSN) and ActionAid invited a group of women leaders belonging to food security networks, feminists groups, academia and social movements from Americas region to meet to discuss the issue of "Strengthening women's fight for their right to land and natural resources." This seminar was hosted by ActionAid in September 2007 in Rio de Janeiro. Several questions were in our minds when we met: why is there such inequality in the distribution of land ownership between men and women in Latin America? What has happened in terms of the rights of rural women and their ownership under neoliberalism? Has the contemporary women's movement had an impact on the rights of women to land and property?

Can women's access to land be ensured under communal property schemes? Is private titling the answer? These and many other questions filled the first encounter of women representatives from the networks affiliated to the International Food Security Network (IFSN), the Hemispheric Social Alliance and Latin American social movements such as CLOC (VIA Campesina) and the World March of Women.

The seminar was part of an ongoing ActionAid initiative begun with preparations for the ICARRD conference in 2006. During this phase, ActionAid promoted the participation of women's groups from mixed and non-mixed organizations in the conference and also enabled IFSN networks to take part and present case studies of good practices from their countries. Civil society as a whole succeeded in influencing the final declaration⁵ approved by the 92 FAO member states attending the conference. This declaration is very progressive and gives women a platform

for claiming their rights that goes beyond previous declarations to include demands such as inheritance rights.

As a follow-up to this conference, ActionAid and IFSN are promoting the participation of groups and network members, with special emphasis on women, in spaces such as FAO's Committees on Food Security and Agriculture and its regional conferences. Simultaneously we are promoting the *Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre* campaign in the Americas region and at international level, looking to pressure national governments in cases where ICARRD and other declarations (soft and hard international laws) need to be transformed into concrete actions.

At the Rio seminar we identified those groups keen to help build the campaign and decided on the spaces where we could act together as a campaign, including FAO and the World Social Forum. In Rosário in August 2008, prior

KEY DATES IN THE MOBILIZATION OF *MUJERES POR UN FUTURO SIN HAMBRE* (2008)

Actions at the Americas Social Forum (University of San Carlos, Guatemala):

8 to 11 October – typical food fair, collection of campaign plates and photographs of those supporting our demands;

9 October – event: "Women's fight for land and rural development in Latin America" organized by CNOG, Vía Campesina, MAELA, REDSSAG, Campaña Guatemala Sin Hambre;

11 October – demonstration in front of the space of the Forum to call attention to women's demands;

12 October – march.

Paraguay – CONAMURI

10 to 12 October – encampment and food fair of rural and indigenous women;

10 October – 250 women produce a public manifesto with their demands.

Chile – ANAMURI

12 to 16 October – local markets, seed exchange and typical food fair;

15 October – workshop on the right to food and food sovereignty to celebrate World Rural Women's Day;

16 October – march for the right to water.

Peru – FEMUCARINAP and FLORA TRISTAN

14 to 16 October – drafting of the manifesto of Peru's rural women to the National Congress and organization of a seed and typical food fair;

15 October – 1000 women march to the offices of national and international organizations to deliver the manifesto

to the Via Campesina Conference and almost a year after the seminar, having met and lobbied together at FAO's regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean in April 2008, we agreed on our name and logo, as well as the concrete actions to be developed and the focal points for these activities.

Rights and practice: women's access to land and to natural and productive resources

The UN General Assembly has issued numerous International Conventions and Declarations with the aim of promoting equal rights between men and women. Yet despite these instruments, women today are still subject to significant forms of discrimination. These constitute a violation of the principles of equal rights and the respect for human dignity, and comprise an obstacle to their full participation in the social, political, economic and cultural life of their countries.

Despite the different international and regional declarations, such as the American Convention on Human Rights (articles 1, 2 and 17.4), in support of the non-discrimination of women, including married women, in the access to land and to natural and productive resources, "in many parts of Latin America, it is very rare for rural women to own and manage land due to both legal and sociocultural obstacles" (Cotula 2007:27).

This distance between law and practice is also recognized by different actors (Gohn 2008; Cotula 2007) as a manifestation of the vested interests of patriarchy and/or as a sign of women's disempowerment and a lack of awareness of their rights.

In many countries, any effective application of policies and laws protecting the rights of women has been limited by deeply-ingrained cultural practices, the lack of legal awareness, restricted access to courts and a lack of resources. These problems are generally more serious in rural areas than in urban areas. In these cases, effective intervention to improve

Country	Year of the Programme	% of Women Beneficiaries	Year
Bolivia	1954/1994	17.2%	1994
Brazil	1964/1996	12.6%	1996
Chile	1964/1973	low	
Colombia	1961/1991	11.2%	1986
		11.00%	1991
Costa Rica	1963/1988	11.8%	1988
		Cooperatives: 34.7%	1979
Cuba	1959/1988	Individuals: 5.5%	
		Cooperatives: 21 %	1988
		Individuals: 13%	
El Salvador	1980/1991	Cooperatives: 11.7%	1991
		Individuals: 10.5%	
Ecuador	1964/1993	low	-
Honduras	1962/1991	3.6%	1979
Guatemala	1962/1996	6.0%	1996
		Cooperatives 1.3%	1970
Mexico	1920/1992	Cooperatives 13%	1984
Nicaragua	1981/1990	Collectives 11%	1990
		Individuals 8.0%	
Peru	1970/1991	low	-
Dominican Republic	1961/1995	5%	1995

Source: Magdalena de León's presentation (Rio de Janeiro, September 2007).

the legal status of women should include not only legislative reforms but also the necessary measures to bridge the gap between law and custom. (Cotula 2007:2)

Even in the case of Latin America where redistributive land reforms were implemented mainly after the 1950s and until the 1990s, a decade in which Market-Based Land Reforms started to become predominant, few women benefited from these processes (from 5% to 21%). Cotula (2007) argues that one reason for this is that many national land reform programs were directed towards the 'family head' and rural workers with regular and permanent jobs. In practice, this meant that they benefitted men alone. "Only in a few countries (Cuba and Nicaragua, for example) were women direct beneficiaries of land reform" (Cotula 2007:27-28). This is confirmed by Magdalena de León's data:

According to Pereira (2006), the Market-Based Model of Land Reform that began to be introduced in Colombia

in 1994 generated a wave of revisions that in three years had reached South Africa, Brazil and Guatemala, and just a decade later had begun to operate in countries like Honduras, Mexico, Malawi, El Salvador and the Philippines.

The market-based model of land reform was developed to replace redistributive models of agrarian reform, based on the disappropriation of rural properties that fail to fulfil their social mission, with relations founded on land purchases and sales. (Pereira 2006:22-23)

As well as the IBRD's interest in promoting a freer and more dynamic land market that eliminated the least efficient and promoted the most efficient, Pereira (2006) also identifies other opportunities afforded by the promotion of market-based agrarian reform. In some countries such as Guatemala, Colombia and El Salvador political clashes were rooted in agrarian conflicts. In other countries like Nicaragua, reducing these conflicts demonstrated the path towards peace agreements. Among other reasons for the



We can see the need for women to organize and find a strategy for ensuring our rights are respected... For FEMUCARINAP, for the women, no law or decree will stop us. Because when they take away our lands, they are already killing us.

My mother used to have her own plot of land, but a mining company took it from her. I was nine years old at the time and I was there with her, seeing her cry... And that remained branded here, in my heart. After that, life went on... When you are robbed of your lands, you migrate to the city, and the city is a whole new world. At least when you have land, you can sow the corn seeds and with a little water they will grow. And at least you have something to eat. But if you want to sow crops in the city, you're surrounded by cement and asphalt.

This crisis impacts more violently on women. Women, aside from being female citizens with rights, have other things inside... A woman is more sensitive because she's a mother, or a wife, or a daughter. A mother doesn't say "you know what, child? We have nothing to eat." As a mother, daughter or wife you have to find a way to give your children, your family, some food. It is more difficult for us women because we become desperate.

But women are very resistant, we come together to say NO. We become organized. We become organized to gain respect and to ask our local and national governments what's going on. We are human beings and we have our rights. We have the right to be respected as women; we have the right to our food sovereignty. Food Sovereignty implies defending our culture and our environment, defending them together, as a package.

Lourdes Ester Huanca – President of FEMUCARINAP Federación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Artesanas Indígenas, Nativas y Asalariadas del Perú (National Federation of Peasant Women, Indigenous Craftswomen, Natives and Women Workers of Peru).

IBRD's growing interest in market-based agrarian reform in the mid 1990s, the author also identifies the need to respond to the general trend towards fighting poverty and the desire to reduce the collective ownership of land:

In this context, IBRD began to pursue two complementary lines of action (...). On one hand, it encouraged the complete commoditization of access to rural land through institutional and legal changes, with the aim of increasing land productivity, stimulating the free flow of rural labour, attracting private capital to the rural economy and enabling the subordinate integration of specific sectors of the impoverished rural population into the system of capital accumulation managed by the agroindustrial-financial bourgeoisie. On the other hand, it backed a series of 'social' programs in the rural environment to alleviate poverty in a targeted way, especially in countries or regions where the tensions in the rural world could threaten or undermine the 'governability' of the 'market democracies' (...). (Pereira 2006:17)

As the different authors in the collection edited by Sauer & Pereira (2006) make clear, these programs have not ensured comprehensive land reform and nor have they benefited the more vulnerable. This is in addition to the numerous problems in implementing the programs faced in the different countries. It is also clear that the increase in women's access to land under neoliberalism

is not due to these programs. As Magdalena de León pointed out during the seminar, "it should be stressed that the higher inclusion of women as land owners is not a consequence of this model but the result of the strength achieved by women's movements at national and regional levels. The support networks created among the different movements have also been crucial in terms of discussing issues and defining strategies for women's empowerment that encompass the need to fight for women's access to land." These advances have also been reflected in the new legislation approved in various countries during this period in favour of women's rights, in particular in the area of family law.

As Cotula states (2007), despite these achievements:

In some countries, Family Law still recognizes the husband as the family head or representative (for example, in the Dominican Republic, article 213 of the Civil Code; in Honduras, article 167 of the Civil Code; in Nicaragua, article 151 of the Civil Code) and accords him sole rights over managing the family's property (for example, in the Dominican Republic, article 1421 of the Civil Code; in Honduras, article 82 of the Family Code), including over the private property of his wife (in the Dominican Republic, article 1428 of the Civil Code). (Cotula 2007:27)

Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre in Nicaragua

The progress achieved in Nicaragua's national legislation makes the legal environment more favourable to realizing women's rights.

Nicaragua's Agrarian Reform Law, promulgated in 1981, does not adopt the criterion of assigning lands to the head of the family and specifically recognizes women as direct beneficiaries of agrarian reform, without detriment to her family status. However, due to cultural factors, women only obtained access to land during the redistribution program; in practice, when the land was claimed by a family (which was normally the case), the property deed was issued in the name of a single person, normally the name of the husband/father (Galan 1998). The redistribution of lands was halted in the 1990s, giving way to a program of land titling. Law 209 of 1995 stipulates that both men and women have the right to obtain land property deeds (article 32), and allows joint titling of couples. Joint titling of a couple (married or otherwise) became obligatory following article 40 of Law 278 (1997), under which the deeds issued in the name of the head of the family were understood to be issued also to the name of the wife or partner. The entitlement program produced a considerable increase in the number of women with legal ownership of land. (Cotula 2007: 28)

Nevertheless, in practice we know that until 1990 only 11% of women benefited from agrarian reform (those women belonging to organizations) or 8% if we consider the land transferred to individuals.

In Nicaragua, the history of our struggle for women's rights has not only been invisible, it has also failed to receive decisive support from other sectors, such as trade unions, farmer producers, teachers, etc. (...) In the 1990s, we achieved joint titling through which we increased women's access to land. However this measure alone is insufficient

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS IN FAMILY LAW

Formal equality:

'Individuals and organizations,' Mexico (1992); Peru (1995); Honduras (1991)
Explicit formal equality in relation to land rights: Nicaragua (1981), Brazil (1988), Costa Rica (1990); Honduras (1991); Colombia (1994); Bolivia (1996); Guatemala (1999)

Joint allocation and/or titling of couple:

- a) Optional: Brazil (1988); Honduras (1992)
- b) Requirement: Colombia (1988); Costa Rica (1990); Nicaragua (1993). Since Beijing: Peru (1988); Dominican Republic (1998), Ecuador (1999), Guatemala (1999)
- c) Proposed as requirement: El Salvador, Honduras

Priority to female family heads. Colombia (1988); Nicaragua (1993); Chile (1993)

Priority to women exposed to violence: Colombia (1991)

Priority to women in concensual unions: Costa Rica (1990-92)

since the most recent census from 2001 shows that only 18.5% of real estate is owned by women. We are the only political platform that unites rural women's organizations fighting for the right to land, and we make clear that we need the land to improve our lives and our families' living conditions. We joined the Coordinating Committee of Rural Women, which in 2007 introduced the draft bill setting up a special fund to access land with a gender perspective. This bill is very important since it gives us a greater capacity to obtain land, as well as the resources to produce crops, obtain loans and acquire infrastructure and new technologies.

(Idália Cordoba, GISSAN, Nicaragua)

The gap between laws and practice can also be observed in the demands made by Nicaraguan women who on the 15th October were prevented from marching but managed to hold a standing protest in front of the National Assembly. A commission of five women also met with three members of parliament to discuss their demands and present their proposals. The group was welcomed and promises were made. Thus almost 2,000 women had their manifesto acknowledged, including their demand for gender equity in redistributive land reform programs and the approval of two laws presented by civil society: i)

MANIFESTO FROM NICARAGUA

"(...) On October 15th we rural women wish to march to publicize our problems and our just demands with the hope that we shall be heard and that our demands will be addressed so that our livelihoods can be improved.

We are marching because all of us women know that the problems of hunger and poverty in the world, including in our country, are not due to a lack of resources or food, but to inadequate and unfair distribution of these to the world's people. (...)

We are marching to proclaim that land is not a commodity, so we don't want access to land or land distribution through buying-selling or 'land banks.'

We hope that our government wants to discuss the regulation of land expropriation and resource redistribution and ensuring a minimum level of livelihood for all rural families.

We hope that they will adopt measures to promote and protect land tenure security, especially that of women and poor families, through legislation that fully protects their rights and equal conditions to control land and other property, including the right to inherit.

We are marching because we believe that there can be no comprehensive and real land reform without gender equity. Despite the crucial role women play in peasant agriculture, few of us women have our own land and property deeds. To be able to plant crops, many of us need to lease land and use much of the income from what we produce to pay back this rent. Although the problem of land affects the entire peasant population, we women face extra difficulties. This is why we are marching to demand equal opportunities. More land and productive resources need to be placed in the hands of women.

We are marching because we need more facilities to access credit and agricultural services, technical assistance, access to the market and above all the revision of the joint property law so that we are not left landless and we can obtain legal support.

We are marching so that land tenure is submitted to the basic principle that "only those who work on the land, depend on the land and inhabit the land with their family have the right to own it."

We are marching in solidarity because the 15th of October is World Rural Women's Day when we celebrate the launching of the world mobilization 'Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre' (...)"

GISSAN declaration on the 15th of October



the Food Security and Food Sovereignty Law, and ii) the Land Fund Bill to promote equitable access to land by rural women. The press response to the campaign was huge and amplified the voices of the women gathered in front of the national assembly and those back in the communities who had sent their claims via the plates given to their colleagues.

After one year of silence from the National Assembly, we submitted 5000 signatures and a statement as we stood in front of the National Assembly. We numbered more than 2000 women. This marked our launch of Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre. We stood proudly with our T-shirts and banners, and distributed plates for women to sign. We worked hard to create flyers and banners and to educate people about the laws we wanted to see approved. We were banned from marching, but this didn't discourage us: we stood there, more than 500 women from the city and 1500 from distant rural areas. (Idália Cordoba, GISSAN, Nicaragua)

Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre in Peru

In Peru 20% of rural producers are women, but only 4.7% of rural women have land titles.⁶ To reverse this scenario and demand their right to land and natural resources, the women from FEMUCARINAP⁷ joined the campaign Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre. Between the 13th and 17th of October, the campaign in Peru represented the diversity of women and their common demand: access to land and natural resources for women.

On the 14th and 15th of October the women organized an event inside Congress with the support of congresswoman Karina Beteta, president of the Women's Commission, and the presence of congresswoman Hilaria Supa. On the first day a fair was set up in the congress and women farmers and artisans from the various regions of Peru exhibited their products and traditions (food, seeds, clothing and dancing). A press conference was also held to explain the campaign and to give voice to the women's demands. To celebrate



Renata Neder / IFSN / ActionAid

MANIFESTO FROM PERU

(...) We are organized women, actresses of millions of struggles, resisting a patriarchal capitalism and defending the sovereignty of our people by ensuring equality for all women.

We are united in our dreams and by the common threats to our people that call upon us to act. (...)

Women are the main guardians of our country's natural and cultural heritage. We see that our land, our seeds, our knowledge and our biodiversity are threatened by policies that promote privatization and commoditization.

The neoliberal model destroys nature and life, forces us into new shackles of dependency through technology and the control of our natural heritage; it reduces the areas of peasant production, and generates genetic and cultural erosion, destroying our food sovereignty.

The present context is aggravated by the expansion of biofuels, a phenomenon that cannot be seen as an opportunity for either rural development, fighting poverty or climate change. (...)

In this context of exclusion, large numbers of Peruvians have become victims of forced migration. We women form half of the migrants and end up in unstable jobs like domestic work and the entertainment and sex industries. The irony is that while hunger is increasing among our people, our country's food is also migrating to industrialized nations.

In a situation where women's autonomy is being reduced, we find an increase in the commoditization of life, sexist violence and the violation of sexual and reproductive rights. (...) Women are not vulnerable by nature, they have been made vulnerable! (...)

We demand:

1. Amendment of laws that penalize demonstrations and other forms of protest and amnesty for those women imprisoned and/or prosecuted for these acts.
2. Repeal of decrees 1015, 1073, 1064 on access to land.
3. Repeal of decrees 1081 on access to land.
4. Ban on GMO seeds and their derivatives.
5. Respect for the labour and social rights of rural workers in the agro-export business.
6. Creation of an agrarian bank to provide specific credit to rural women.
7. Ensure access to quality education and healthcare in rural areas, as well as information and capacity building for women.
8. Follow-up and implementation of the international conventions ratified by Peru, in particular ICARRD, CEDAW and ILO convention 169

the 15th of October, a panel discussion was held and one woman from each region presented their demands to the congressmen and women present at the event. ActionAid also attended the event and presented the campaign's international dimension, explaining the contents of CEDAW and the ICARRD follow-up. At the end of the event, one of the congresswoman put on the T-shirt showing her support for the campaign and the women's demands. On October 16th, the women unable to march held a standing protest in front of FAO and the Prime-Minister's offices and delivered hundreds of plates with messages from their colleagues back home in the communities.

Moving forward: Women's struggle to lessen the gap between "good (inter) national laws" and "poor national practice" in the Americas

The work of *Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre* did not cease with the events of October in the Americas. A daily fight to bring good laws into force and to review or eliminate laws that undermine women's rights to land is being made by thousands of women in their homes, communities, organizations and countries across this continent. Campaign members such as GISSAN in Nicaragua and FEMUCARINAP in Peru are following up on the concrete demands made to their national governments and the FAO delegations based in their countries. They are also coordinating efforts regionally through the International Food Security Networks and regional social movements like CLOC.

Thousands of plates with concrete demands have been collected, as well as testimonies from women leaders, which provide a face and voice to the demands contained in the national manifestos.

International and regional conventions and declarations have already been signed with these women's demands. Now the time has come to close the gap between good declarations and poor practices.



Leo Liberman / ActionAid



Leo Liberman / ActionAid



Leo Liberman / ActionAid

- 1** Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre (Women for a hunger free future) was the HungerFREE Women Campaign in the Americas region.
- 2** This article relied on the contributions of Alejandra Scampini and Renata Neder, members of the HungerFREE Women group in the Americas. We jointly organized and reported on the activities described in this article.
- 3** Today different women's groups are engaged in this campaign in several of the region's countries, including ANAMURI in Chile, FEMUCARINAP in Peru, Via Campesina Honduras, GISSAN in Nicaragua, Redssag and the campaign Por una Guatemala Sin Hambre (For a HungerFree Guatemala) in Guatemala, REDCASSAN in Central America, ActionAid and the International Food Security Network (IFSN).
- 4** Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 2 and 7), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Articles 2.2 and 3), the International Convention on Political and Civic Rights (Articles 2.1, 3 and 14) and the American Convention on Human Rights (Article 1). For more information, consult Cotula 2007.
- 5** To read the full declaration, visit http://www.icarrd.org/news_down/C2006_Decl_en.doc. To learn more about the ICARRD conference, visit <http://www.icarrd.org/>.
- 6** Data from www.landtenure.info
- 7** FEMUCARINAP – Peruvian Federation of Peasant Women, Indigenous craftswomen, Natives and Women Workers.
- 8** Peru has a decree criminalizing all types of public demonstrations. In the past few months, hundreds of legal actions have been taken against the members of social movements and several leaders have already been imprisoned. The request to march on the 16th of October was refused and the women decided to hold a standing protest in front of FAO and the Prime Minister's offices.

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LET THE WOMEN SPEAK!

"A HungerFREE future is a moment to praise ourselves, our traditional food; we need to go back to these traditions and defend them as something sacred and non-negotiable. (...) The call for a HungerFREE future focused on women means an opportunity to place women at the centre along with our knowledge of seeds and food; we need to look at this future for ourselves and for our children. So a HungerFREE future is a responsibility we ourselves must assume, but the state must also remain accountable. We need stronger public policies to defend this tradition, don't we? (...) There is a saying that goes: no pain can endure more than 100 years, but we can also resist a 100-year pain." **Francisca Rodriguez, ANAMURI. Rosario, Argentina, August 2008**

"As we reflect on the events, we have to stop to analyze the impact of our work inside GISSAN, a mixed organization that was not focusing on women's issues at all. GISSAN's women's platform was born after we participated in a meeting convened by AAI to strengthen the fight for women's access to and control over land and natural resources in 2007. I was there in Rio de Janeiro and I was so excited I took the lessons and recommendations to GISSAN. GISSAN included my participation as 'others' in their monthly debate agenda. But this was just the beginning. I worked hard and with the support of other women and AAI we convened the first meeting of women prior to the meeting of the Food Security and Food Sovereignty Network of Central America. There were women from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama. We created our platform and our work plan containing concrete actions and expected outcomes. At the outset the men in the organization were not happy about this, but with wisdom and unity among us we convinced them to include our proposal. In 2008 we repeated the strategy and had our second meeting, once again hosting women from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. We ratified our interest in continuing to grow as a network as we learn about the progress and challenges in each country and we agreed to join the campaign *Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre: Soberanía Alimentaria Ya!* (...) We have learnt a lot about how to move politically within a mixed space. The process of our formal inclusion as a platform of women in the GISSAN network was very rewarding for ourselves and for the men. We are also proud of our capacity to convene a meeting with one of the parties in the National Assembly and to be able to articulate our demands and be invited by the President of the Economic Commission where the laws that we are demanding are still waiting for approval." **Idália Cordoba, coordinator of Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre in GISSAN (IFSN network in Nicaragua) and RedCASSAN (IFSN Central America Network).**

"...this campaign, *Mujeres por un Futuro sin Hambre*, is very important and interesting. (...) Because we women are the ones who go out and defend the land and the water, and we protect them with our lives. (...) We started in August with a press conference at the National Congress. Our strategy also involves being there to ensure commitments from our congress people, our representatives. Since we elected them, they must commit themselves to fight with us and our right to be respected." "We believe that the activities we carried out between October 13th and 18th 2008 will become a landmark in Peru's history. It was the first time that rural peasants, indigenous people, artisans and women from distant areas were heard! (...) It allowed us an opportunity to consolidate our grassroots groups and become involved in a political process that helped us learn more about the laws and our rights. (...) You could see the joy in my friends' faces. Our self esteem was raised; we are not alone, we are a national organization!"

Lourdes Ester Huanca Atención de Perú is the President of FEMUCARINAP (Peruvian Federation of Peasant Women, Indigenous Craftswomen, Natives and Women Workers). Rosario, Argentina, August 2008

"We will fight together for food sovereignty. Working land is not for sale. Land has to be recovered. Land has to be defended."



"Stop the plantations of biofuels in Guatemala."



"We are demanding that food is a right for all women and men and not just the few. There must be an equitable distribution of wealth."



"We need to rethink the concept of control over land so that it includes traditional indigenous approaches to land management and use."



"Food is a basic right of all human beings. We women must demand it!"



"All of us women have rights and obligations. Let's live and make the best of our life. No one must be allowed to silence our voices ... Let's claim our rights."



"We the women from Nicaragua want comprehensive land reform in which all women can be included. We want to be heard!"



KENYA Women on the move for claiming their rights to land



Gideon Mendel / ActionAid

ActionAid Kenya has been working on Development Initiatives with communities in various parts of Kenya to reduce food insecurity, improve health, ensure access to education and promote good governance. Through this work, ActionAid Kenya has identified emerging issues, such as the violation of the land and property rights of women, that have a direct impact on food security and livelihoods. In addition, the campaign has also identified a strong link between these issues and discrimination against HIV-positive women.

These violations are manifested in the disinheritance of widows from their husband's land and property, or the pressure on female inheritance from relatives. This was found more frequently in areas with a high prevalence of HIV infection. In these cases, land rights violations were a consequence of the intersection of violence against women and HIV. ActionAid Kenya was also involved in campaigns relating to cash crops, such as sugar and cotton, working to ensure that small-scale producers receive higher and more equitable benefits from sales. Despite the success of these campaigns, which indeed improved the income of poor and small-scale farmers, this income was mainly received by

men and little of the money earned was allocated to improving households. It was clear from our engagement with communities that the women responsible for reproductive roles remained trapped in poverty.

In 2004 there was a case in which large tracts of land were put up for sale in Narok District by local men without the knowledge of their wives or families. The women mobilized and held public demonstrations against the land sale, which proved successful as the land sale was stopped. Without the women's mobilization and ActionAid Kenya's support, the result would have been certain destitution for the local families who depend on the land for shelter, agriculture, livestock rearing and tourism revenue.

The underlying problem is the low value attributed to women and girls in both the legal and social arenas, resulting in unequal gender relations between men and women.

For instance, Kenya has 5 marriage laws, which collectively place women at a disadvantage as the African Customary Marriage Law can supersede all the other laws. There is an archaic Matrimonial Property Act (1892), a relic of the colonial times that contradicts

provisions contained in the Succession Act enabling women to inherit land and property from their fathers and husbands. Kenya's current Constitution provides for women's succession rights in relation to land property but this is contradicted by a section ruling that traditions and customs supersede these rights. Traditional laws are male dominated, making land inaccessible to women. There is also a gender bias among the courts and judiciary, evident in rulings that overwhelmingly favour men. Lawyers' fees are an obstacle to many women as they seek their rightful inheritance. Furthermore, women are sometimes themselves inherited as though they were property. In response to these challenges, ActionAid Kenya initiated the formation of a Women and Land Campaign in Kenya, inviting CSOs who prioritize women and land issues and who work at both national and community level. The key partners

"In Nyakach, if a woman loses her husband, she has to be inherited before she can even build a house," says 27-year-old Pamela Aoko, who refused to be inherited after her husband died in 2003.

in this campaign are ShelterAfric Forum, Kenya Land Alliance, GROOTS Kenya, Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD), Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA-Kenya), League of Kenya Women Voters and World Vision Kenya.

The Coalition agreed to compile a study that would form the groundplan for the Campaign. There has been a great deal of research on the issue of women and land in Kenya, so this study was effectively a compilation of the range of evidence now available.

The study makes it clear that further 'education' on Kenyan women's rights to land and livelihoods is essential, highlighting the importance of this kind of campaign.

Besides the absence of programs targeting women and land issues, a fact admitted by the Minister of Agriculture, there is also a lack of gender budgeting, as the Minister of Justice declared when attempting to justify why the allocation of gender resources is ignored. On the other hand, the Minister of Lands has stated that "It is not our core function to provide civic education on women's property rights." In another example, a policeman claimed that "Women can't come here [for property cases]... they can't go into family cases on

inheritance. Each tribe has its custom.... We can't get involved."

If women decide to go to court – that is, if they can afford the lawyers fees – they will face the kind of gender discrimination expressed by one Judge: "It should be remembered that a wife is married into the husband's clan." At village level, from young to old, men exhibit the same ideas regarding women's rights to land and livelihoods:

"Many young men were the first ones to oppose recognizing women's property rights ... [because of poverty]"
Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) Commissioner

"You must accept there are men in charge here, not women...!"
A male villager threatening a legal assistant

"When you marry, you show the woman which livestock are hers, but the man knows very well the livestock belong to him."
Village Elder in Kajiado District

But you also find 'lip-service' being paid to this issue by some public figures:

"A lot needs to be done to change attitudes and values in society... I support women's equal property rights."

A former male MP who had no will or any form of co-ownership of his property with his wife. This illustrates the doublespeak of politicians.

After the study's conclusion, the coalition embarked on the process of drafting a campaign strategy for the 2008–2012 period.

However, around this time, Kenya was rocked by post-election violence that has pushed development and policy work into the background. CSOs have been left fragmented in Kenya and since then partners have found it difficult to commit resources to the campaign. The campaign was launched on Rural Women's Day (15th October 2008), despite the risks and challenges posed by the fact that land issues are highly politicized in Kenya today – indeed, they were one of the areas of contention leading to Kenya's post-election violence. Despite the fact that the continued fragmentation of CSOs makes national lobbying even more difficult in a country where there is high intolerance for gender equality on resource issues, the campaign has identified the following key targets: the ongoing Constitutional review process, the formulation of Kenya's National Land Policy process, and the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Process, which will address land injustices. The campaign will also simultaneously target non-formal customary laws.



Fisherwomen champion INDIA community rights



Ganesh Muthu/ActionAid

Fisherwomen from coastal India are demanding recognition of their rights as workers

Under the banner of the National Coastal Women's Movement (NCWM), participants from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Pondicherry, recently held a day-long consultation in Chennai to mark the first anniversary of this platform. Women spoke on being together and how it has changed their lives and understanding of their centuries-old community rights, particularly in the wake of a threat through the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) notification.

Coastal community threatened

"The CZM will put the entire coastal community at risk of losing what they have been doing for generations. The Government must ensure their right over the coast and sea," says Enitha from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu.

The proposed Coastal Zone Management (CZM) regulation seeks to undo an earlier law, Coastal Regulation Zone Notification 1991, which aimed at protecting coastal zones from being commercialised. The fear that was voiced related to large

projects and companies taking over the coastline, while displacing people living there and also their sea-based livelihood.

"The CZM will impact the entire coastal community and women in particular. The small and marginal fishing community will suffer in absence of an alternative livelihood," stresses Josephine of ActionAid.

"Thousands of fishing villages across the nine coastal states in India are a part of the coastal economy, but despite this we are not recognised as part of the working population," says Swapnasundari, a platform member from Chennai, pointing towards the neglect that the fishing community feels when it comes to focus of government schemes.

Together for rights and livelihood
"It is the men who go out to the sea. But the fact is that it is the women in the community who bring home the money. They are the ones who labour to process and sell the catch," says Magline Peter, a member of the platform Kerala.

"A fisherwoman's life is a fight to be known, to be visible and to be heard. NCWM has helped them fend off middlemen and empowered them to speak out for justice," she adds.

The women who have joined the platform vouch for the support that they have been able to rely on since they joined the platform.

"I got loan when I needed and we are being able to sort out differences better as a community through this platform," says Everesta Jose from Kerala.

"We encourage women to collectively use their earning to become economically independent, many of them them run shops," says Chamundeswar, a member from the platform.

NOTE:

NCWM emerged from the Campaign on Violence Against Women in Post Tsunami, an initiative by ActionAid along with several civil society organisations and activist groups in the tsunami affected countries. In India it was active in three states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The platform functions as a pressure group in establishing rights of the coastal women and is involved in educating the community especially women on their rights.

Searching for alternatives to enhance food security and reduce dependency

GUINEA-BISSAU



Carlos Rui Ribeiro/ActionAid

Guinea-Bissau is a former Portuguese colony located in West Africa between two francophone countries (Senegal and Guinea-Conakry). With a population of 1.7 million (2006), it is one of the poorest and most indebted countries in the world.¹

Since political independence in 1974 until the mid 1990s, the country lived under a single party regime. From 1994/5 to the present, the political system can be termed democratic, in the sense that regular elections are held and contested by a large number of political parties (more than 25). This phase of implementing and consolidating the democratic system has been marked by continual political instability (constant changes in Government), giving the feeling of a country adrift, especially given the complete absence of policies being implemented in general.²

Cashew nuts and rice: fighting for food security

With rice as its staple food crop, Guinea Bissau went from being an exporter of rice to Portugal in the period 1940/45 to an importer from Asia of around 60% of its current consumption needs. Cashew nuts have replaced rice as the country's main export commodity, responsible today for more than 95% of its exports. The product is sold in raw form to be processed in India before being re-exported, in the form of nuts, to the United States and Europe. The market is completely controlled by Indian companies, a fact that places a huge pressure on domestic prices, providing minimal earnings for the country's rural workers.

Due to the dependence of Guinean rural workers on the cashew nut crop, the direct-exchange mechanism of trading nuts for rice (2kg nuts/1kg

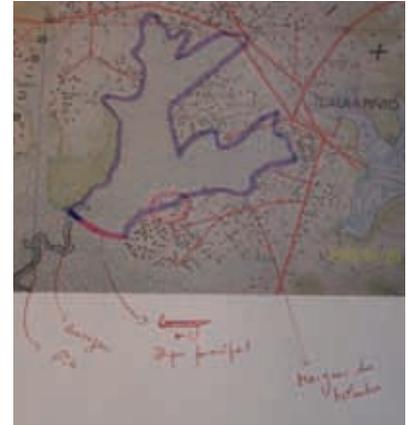
rice) is today one of the main forms of feeding the population. This applies to the North Province, in the Cantchungo sector, one of the most densely populated areas of the country and where ActionAid bases its local initiatives.

The expansion of cashew tree planting in this zone led to a sharp reduction in the lands used for food crops, especially where the lowlands – specialized in rice cultivation – have been invaded by salty water flowing inland along inlets.

The annual fluctuations in the price of cashew nuts, which sometimes register falls in the order of 40%, bring a high level of food insecurity to the communities that now depend on cashew production to obtain rice through the direct-exchange system. People recall that they used to be relatively self-sufficient in terms of their staple crop, rice.



Carlos Rui Ribeiro/ActionAid



Carlos Rui Ribeiro/ActionAid

The salt marshes where they manage to grow rice have mostly been invaded by salt water due to the rupture of the dikes and dams built to protect the marshes from the sea water flowing up the tidal inlet from the sea.

Using traditional knowledge to recover farming land

Various community leaders, in collaboration with the Cantchungo Traditional Leader (Régulo, in Portuguese), travelled to the offices of CONGAI – the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations and Associations who work south of the Cacheu Inlet – to ask for help in recovering the main salt marsh in the Cantchungo region. Their aim was to reduce dependency on the direct-exchange of cashew nuts and rice in order to ensure the local population’s access to its staple diet.

CONGAI, a partner network of ActionAid in Guinea-Bissau, adopted the idea in its planning meetings and the proposal began to be implemented in March 2005 with the support of ActionAid. Before beginning the work, various meetings were held among the different parties (ActionAid, community leaders and CONGAI) with the aim of allocating the responsibilities and tasks to each party involved.

The communities recognized their lack of technical capacity to repair the

dam and dike. They had already tried twice without success: the salt water flowed back into the area and destroyed everything. They therefore suggested using a tractor and trucks along with a landfill because of the inlet’s depth (5 metres) and breadth (more than 200 metres). To remove the water from inside the marsh, they proposed the use of reinforced concrete locks.

The scale of this work would have demanded a high level of external resources and revenue. ActionAid Guiné Bissau proposed searching for alternatives based on the traditional knowledge of local ethnic groups.

The alternative agreed was to research technical resources among neighbouring communities who retain their own techniques for controlling and managing salt water. The choices were the Balanta or the Felupe. The local leaders opted for the latter people.

CONGAI was responsible both for hiring the Felupe and for coordinating all the work on-site. ActionAid Guiné-Bissau assumed the tasks of raising the necessary funds and coordinating the different initiatives involved.

The main tasks during the construction phase were: (i) a basic topographical survey; (ii) construction of the dam; (iii) construction of the main dike and secondary (lateral) dikes (14km); (iv) construction of the lock for removing fresh water from the basin; (v) clearing

the mangrove swamp; and (vi) desalination of the lands.

The basic topographical survey, coordinated by CONGAI, concluded that the paddy field was 940 ha in total, of which only around 25% was still in use. Objectively, therefore, 700 ha of land were set to be recovered.

The essential technical part, which included construction of the dam [256 metres], the main dike [430 metres] and the lateral dikes [around 5km], were under the responsibility of ten technicians from the Felupe ethnic group. AAGB assumed around 90% of the costs involved in hiring these technicians, while the benefitted community covered the remainder. The removal of the fresh water from inside the rice paddy was another serious challenge. No funding was available for building the concrete locks. The option was to use the traditional ‘pump’ technology, except that PVC tubes were used instead of tree trunks (cibe). The automatic system of opening and closing the pipes to protect the area from the entry of salt water was maintained.

Clearance and desalination of the paddy were assigned to the communities who agreed to organize voluntary work parties to realize these tasks.

The ceremony inaugurating the work and handing over the installations was attended by the Minister of Territorial Administration, the Governor of the Region and the Sector Administrator, all representing the State. They were accompanied by representatives from the traditional leaders (Régulos), 14 representatives from local villages

(Tabancas, in Portuguese) and other traditional entities. During the ceremony it became clear that there was a problem caused by an institutional vacuum: the local administration lacked the capacity, experience or even interest to take over the management and maintenance of the project; and the most qualified entities, the traditional institutions, had lost any legitimacy and legality for managing public works for reasons connected to the country's recent political history.

Achievements and challenges

During the first year of the project (2005), the dam (256 metres) and main dike (430 metres) were built and 10 water pumps installed. The following year (2006), the number of pumps needed to be doubled, the lateral dikes (5km) were constructed and the central canal for removing the water (14km) was dug inside the salt marsh. The work of clearing the mangrove swamp and desalinating the marsh is being undertaken as necessary. In terms of final results, the initiative enabled the recuperation of a total of 938ha of rice fields, 775.1ha ready for immediate use, and another 163.1ha of mangrove to be cleared as and when needed.

It was possible to avoid using the tractor and trucks by resorting to the traditional knowledge of neighbouring ethnic groups. This substantially reduced both the costs of the work and damage to the soil.

After the first years of the dam's operation, interests against the project also surfaced within the community that had not been taken into account by local leaders at the outset. These were the fishermen and salt extractors. Both groups discovered after the conclusion of the project that they were forced to relocate to more distant zones. However this difference in interests was resolved through negotiations – and a degree of coercion, since there were some attempts to destroy the work.

After the work was concluded, it was discovered that the years of disuse of much of the rice fields had provoked serious problems in terms of local land inheritance: the new lands recovered from the salt water were being contested between generations of the same family and between families. These were problems that the traditional authorities found difficult to resolve due to their waning legitimacy.

These issues reveal the seriousness of the problem caused by local distrust of the traditional institutions and the

institutional vacuum left as a result. Made extinct after the country's political independence in 1974, these institutions were 'partially reinstated' during the phase of democratization, but merely as an electoral ruse without any legally enshrined political function. This has led to an institutional vacuum that threatens any public or collective project directed towards the communities.

In these kind of situations, the biggest problem is the sustainability of these large-scale projects, since those who should take control lack the legitimacy and authority to do so and the state refuses to even consider the hypothesis of taking these projects under its own management. The biggest challenge, therefore, has been left to the new institutional structure formed by civil society organizations and the local network these have created. Together with ActionAid Guiné-Bissau, these entities are looking to keep the land recovery project running, negotiating with the different actors involved where necessary.

¹ Between 1999/2002 around 50% of the country's revenue was channelled to paying interest and external debt. ("Guinea-Bissau: Public Expenditure Review. The challenge of restoring budgetary discipline." World Bank, September 2003, page 18.)

² Guinea Bissau was recently shaken by the killing of its president and main opposition leader.



Women, Land and HIV

Securing women's right to land and livelihoods to end hunger and fight HIV / AIDS

Guaranteeing women's land and property rights is one of the most powerful but most neglected weapons to stem the feminisation of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. As HIV and AIDS has spread across the globe, it has become clear that the social groups most at risk and suffering a bigger impact are the poorest and most marginalised. Women and girls are consistently at a greater disadvantage compared to men: they are more vulnerable to HIV infection and bear the greatest burden when HIV and AIDS affect families through illness or death. Across the world, new HIV infections are higher amongst women than men. In sub-Saharan Africa, women now account for 61 percent of people living with HIV, up from 57 percent in 2003¹ and young women are more than three times as likely to be infected than young men².

Rural populations are the worst affected by hunger, and their livelihoods have come under increasing stress. Rural women's ability to feed their families is severely limited by the lack of viable employment opportunities and the lack of access to markets, combined with women's lack of access to productive resources, as-

sets, credit and land. The links between the right to food and women's right to land, between HIV and food security and between HIV and gender inequality are well established. Women's access to and control over land is, therefore, crucial for improving their status and reducing gender inequalities, which in turn are critical factors in reducing the prevalence of poverty, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS.

In view of the feminisation of HIV/AIDS and women's unequal access to land, governments and the international community must act. Firstly, all agencies at national and international level must improve the policy linkages between gender equality, food security and small-scale agriculture as part of a comprehensive AIDS response. Secondly, governments must fulfil their obligations to eliminate discrimination against women in access to and control over land and property. Thirdly, food security policies and programmes need to support the central role of women in ensuring household food security. Finally, there is a need to give priority and develop specific measures to secure rural women's livelihoods.



Food insecurity and the AIDS epidemic

As food insecurity continues to worsen, problems of climate change, restructuring of food and agricultural markets and production (e.g. to accommodate bio-fuels), and rising food prices are likely to increase food scarcity and inaccessibility. In particular, smallholder agriculture continues to suffer from disinvestment: aid to rural development has decreased by 50 percent over the past 20 years³, and is further squeezed by the expansion of market economies and global agricultural trade.

In the context of HIV and AIDS, the impact of undernourishment and malnutrition within households is extremely dangerous. Lack of adequate nutrition lowers the body's immunity, which in turn leads to greater vulnerability to AIDS. The probability of HIV transmission is higher among poor people who 'are already immunocompromised as a result of malnutrition, parasites or other infections'⁴. Since the responsibility for feeding families falls primarily on women, they have to be at the centre of food security and nutrition efforts.

Coping strategies

For rural households the impact of illness and death on livelihoods may include loss of income and assets, loss of labour and a decline in family production. The impacts of HIV rely on a complexity of factors but for many communities, HIV and AIDS is 'one of among many concurrent stresses' and many populations where HIV is prevalent have to deal with 'overlapping vulnerabilities'⁵. Women faced with multiple vulnerabilities and stresses can force them to adopt short-term 'coping strategies' at a risk to their long-term health.

Many women are driven to selling sex by hunger, poverty and the need to support their families. In such situations, they seldom have the power to consent to sex or insist on safe sex. In 2007, a study in Botswana and Swaziland to investigate the relationship between food insufficiency and sexual relationships found that, 'among women, food insufficiency was associated with approximately 70 percent higher probability of inconsis-

tent condom use with a non-primary partner compared with 14 percent among men.'⁶ Women who reported lacking sufficient food to eat had 80 percent increased probability of selling sex for money or resources, a 70 percent increased probability of engaging in unprotected sex and reporting lack of sexual control, and a 50 percent increased probability of intergenerational sex.'⁷ The problem is exacerbated by the prevalence of food insecurity.⁶ This study shows both the gender gap between levels of food insecurity as well as gender differences in responses to food insecurity.

The importance of small-scale farming

Women are responsible for between 60-80 percent of food production in developing countries.⁷ Gender inequality and socio-cultural norms determine women's role in producing and securing food for the family, as well as what resources they have at their disposal to produce food, what food they can produce and who consumes this food. They are also responsible for most other household tasks including securing water, fuel and firewood, processing crops and preparing food. Despite the importance of small-scale farming, it has often been overlooked in favour of commercial farming; food production has received less investment than cash crop production. Infrastructure projects have focused on large commercial concerns for exports, rather than providing better opportunities for smaller producers. Targeting women as beneficiaries of agricultural technology and inputs, and increasing literacy have been shown to be key factors in raising productivity.

Access to land and resources

Access to and control over land, natural resources, productive inputs and technologies to ensure food self-sufficiency in households is important for improving women's livelihood and social status. Although women constitute the majority of the agricultural workforce (70-80 percent in some regions) their access to and control over land is globally estimated at five percent⁸, although there are variations in regions. The high lev-

els of exploitation, abuse and violence experienced by women, as well as inequalities in levels of education, access to public services are directly linked to their inferior economic status.

Most rural families in sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia live under customary regimes - where male relatives own the land and proceeds made from it. Although land markets are growing, inheritance (or in some systems gifts/loans) is the main means by which rural households might acquire land. Women's inheritance rights are generally unequal to those of men, and in some cases non-existent. Even in matrilineal societies, access to land is largely controlled by a male family member. Women's access to and control over land is therefore dependent on negotiating these usually unequal power relationships, rather than as a general entitlement.

Property ownership and social protection

HIV infections are spreading most rapidly in the 15 to 24 age group, with infection rates growing faster amongst adolescent women. Young women are particularly targeted for sexual exploitation, abuse and violence: the lack of economic opportunities and unequal access to productive resources are major contributing factors. Men and women are both affected by the collapse in rural livelihoods, but the impact on young women is different because they do not have the same entitlements to family resources and assets. Economic empowerment gives women more opportunities to leave violent relationships or insist on consensual and safe sex with partners. In rural areas land is the primary asset of households, and therefore economic and socio-political equity must start with land.

'Research suggest that women who own property or otherwise control economic assets have higher liveli-



Stuart Freedman/ ActionAid

hoods, a secure place to live, greater bargaining power within their households and can better protect themselves against domestic violence and having to exchange sex to meet their essential economic needs. With greater ownership and control over economic assets women are empowered to negotiate abstinence, fidelity, safer sex and can avoid exchanging sex for money food or shelter.⁹

An ICRW (International Center for Research on Women) study on women's property ownership and social protection in South Asia showed that women who owned property experienced less violence¹⁰. The study also affirmed the pervasiveness of violence, with 35 percent reporting at least one incident of physical violence and 64 percent reporting the experience of psychological violence.

'Women who owned land or a house, are at significantly lower risk of physical and psychological violence both long term and current. For instance, among the property-less, 49.1 percent experience long-term physical violence. In contrast, those who owned both land and house reported dramatically less physical and psychological violence (6.8 and 16.4 percent respectively.)'

In many countries girls are married in their teens as a poverty reduction strategy. Recent studies in Africa indicate that young married women are at higher risk of HIV infection than their unmarried counterparts. A study in Ndola, Zambia, found that 27 percent of married girls were HIV-positive, compared to 16 percent of unmarried girls of the same age. Similar patterns were found in Kisumu, Kenya, which also found that half of the married women whose husbands were 10 or more years older were infected with HIV, compared to none of the women whose husbands were up to three years older. Increasing women's sexual autonomy is critical to decreasing their risk to HIV. While economic security does not guarantee women's protection from violence, it increases women's ability to insist on consensual and safe sex, and leave abusive and violent relationships.

Politics, ideologies and vested interests

Millions of community-based initiatives have shown that it is possible to raise awareness, change attitudes and put in place effective strategies to fight AIDS. These initiatives have not been transposed to the broader level because institutions refuse to abandon their own ideologies, interests and politics, whether these are in defence of religious, economic or patriarchal beliefs.

To effectively respond to the AIDS epidemic, it is necessary to challenge the institutional resistance to promoting women's rights at every level. This means being bold and courageous enough to remove harmful traditional and religious practices, challenge unjust social norms, reject impositions of harmful economic reforms and intervene to create equality between men and women at the household level. Governments and international institutions need to create open and inclusive policy making and dialogue spaces in which women are able to formulate and articulate their own proposals to deal with HIV and AIDS, while ensuring that they enjoy the support of public institutions and financial resources to craft new solutions.

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* "This article is based on ActionAid's briefing paper *Securing women's right to land and livelihoods: a key to ending hunger and fighting AIDS*. The complete version of the briefing paper is available at http://www.ifsn-actionaid.net/uploads/1/virtual_library/english.pdf"

HungerFREE Women celebrates the 30th Anniversary of CEDAW

The month of March is the time when we celebrate International Women's Day –a month fuelled by articles, statements and analyses, since the event is an opportunity for us to reflect and assess where we currently stand in terms of our fight for equality and women's empowerment. It is also a moment when groups can get together, mobilize, march, demonstrate and join forces in pursuit of opportunities for radical social changes. For us at ActionAid it is also a moment to reflect and celebrate. HungerFREE Women Campaign was launched in 2008 as part of International Rural Women's Day, inspired by the women and girls with whom we work in many locations across the world. They represent a substantial part of the economically active population, yet are most of the time invisible and unrecognized. These women are farmers, artisans, peasants, workers, fisherwomen and extractivists and they play a crucial role in maintaining the food security of their communities and households. In many countries we can see progress being made with women obtaining more power and space as men are forced to migrate to urban localities or increasingly procure jobs in the non-agricultural sector. Yet most of the women have limited or no access to resources such as land credit and services. Most of the women with whom we work provide clear evidence of these situations and how they are working intensely to guarantee their access to resources and sustainable livelihoods. From Peru to Malawi, there are many examples of rural women revealing their capacity to campaign and work to ensure their rights to land and other resources. ActionAid is supporting women from Via Campesina and the International Food Security Network (IFSN) to lobby their governments, pressing them to respect, protect and fulfil their rights.



Renata Neder / IFSN / Actionaid

HFW has succeeded in putting women's access and control over land and livelihoods on the public policy agenda in various countries, demanding revision of constitutions, customary laws, religious edicts and other laws that discriminate against women. It has also demanded assessments of the impact on women of the food and financial crises and reductions in social expenditure, as well as campaigning for women's independent access to resources and livelihoods, such as land, employment and credit – all key elements in improving the position of women at home and in their communities. We believe these are crucial elements in the promotion of equity and social justice and the full realization of human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, recognized that "discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (Article 1). As women make clear in their declarations, discrimination can take many forms. Discrimination is de jure when it is contemplated in the law. This is the case, for example, when family

rights or inheritance laws undermine the legal capacity of married women to control assets, including land (India). Discrimination is de facto when the law itself is not discriminatory, yet discrimination exists in practice. This applies to some agrarian reforms, such as those of Brazil, that do not specifically refer to gender/sex but do refer to categories that are male dominated (FAO 2007). The women we met as we marched with HFW are not a homogenous group. They not only live in different contexts but also have distinct identities, depending on their class, caste, race, age, families, religious beliefs, ownership of property and civil status. These dimensions must also be considered, therefore, including how they intersect with national and international laws. Merely flagging the non-discriminatory principle is not enough to overcome the economic or social challenges faced by these women. Legal instruments are essential. CEDAW urges states party to the convention to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women" (Article 3) and "all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of

the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women” (Article 5).

On the 30TH anniversary of CEDAW, we need to sustain the momentum. According to UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), a total of 185 states have ratified the CEDAW Convention, while 90 have ratified its optional protocol. This year we once again have the opportunity to submit complaints concerning violations of women’s rights to the Commission and request investigations. Many states have adopted well-formulated laws and policies to eliminate gender discrimination on the use and control of resources, yet in the Americas it is very rare to see women in possession and control of land given the existence of legal and social cultural obstacles: women own 11% of land in Brazil, 22.4% in Mexico, 15% in Nicaragua, 27% in Paraguay and 12.7% in Peru (Mason & Carlsson 2005, based on Deere & Leon 2003).

CEDAW’s anniversary is an opportunity to maintain our struggle for women’s rights, especially in the context of the present food and financial crises. We need to review the available information and re-assess the challenges and advances. Serious complications exist and the analysis of our situation in the region is that it is getting worse. Even in those countries with equal rights legislation, the application and enforcement of the law is generally unsatisfactory. We can take the case of Brazil where most of the laws demand equal treatment of men and women, yet this principle is seldom put into practice.

Unfortunately we are also faced by a context of increasing violence. HFW has been witness to husbands or partners who have prevented women from gathering or coming to meetings. We have also faced the violence exercised by state governments and institutions when they prevent our partners from marching on the streets or persecute them if

they decide to protest. In making their demands, rural women link the denial of their economic rights to the failure to guarantee their right to participate in decision-making processes, reproductive sexual rights or the right to decide on their own bodies.

ActionAid calls on its partners and allies to seize the opportunity provided by CEDAW’s anniversary. Our gains can be reversed, as we see on a day-to-day level with the impunity given to infractors and the failure to implement existing laws. We are also facing new challenges such as climate change, global food insecurity and a global financial crisis. More women will be pushed into extreme poverty. Natural resources and people’s food sovereignty are at serious risk. As much as we celebrate the commitments and advances contained in some legislative frameworks and norms, we lament the gap between local and distant realities.

2009 is an opportunity for AAI and its allies to join forces, coordinate their initiatives and campaign strongly to move from words to action. We need to reinvigorate our movements and renew our commitment to push for universal ratification of CEDAW without reservations as a fundamental step to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals. We hope to take our initiatives to another level and enable local demands for women’s rights to land and livelihoods to be presented in regional and international spaces.

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Kate Holt / Eyevine / ActionAid

To download the full text of CEDAW visit:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

To learn more about the HungerFREE Women Campaign visit:
<http://www.hungerfreeplanet.org/>



States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

- (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;**
- (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;**
- (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;**
- (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;**
- (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;**
- (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;**
- (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women**



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