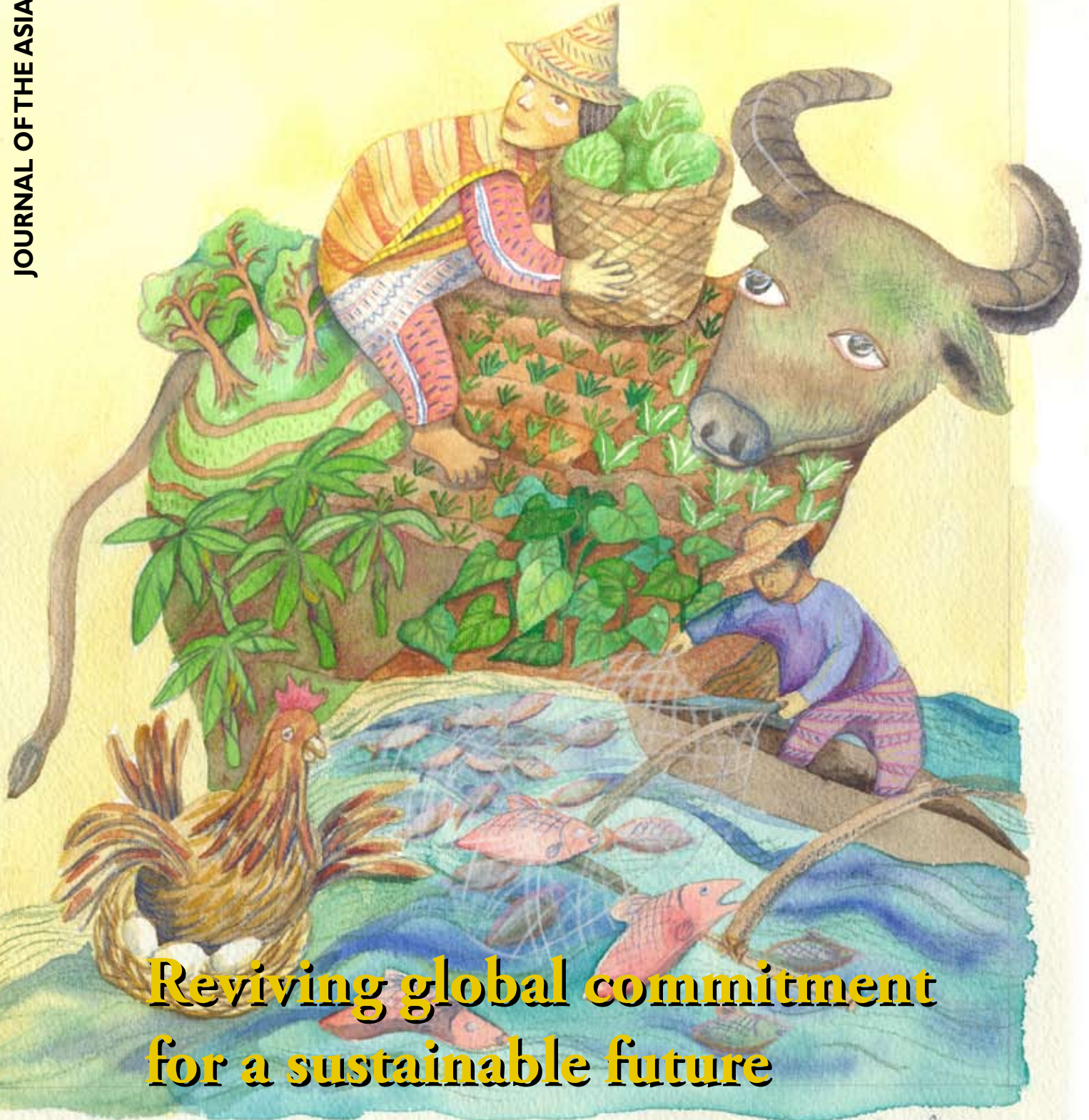


LOK NITI

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**Reviving global commitment
for a sustainable future**

*Katti Ska. Anu
2011*

What is Lok Niti?

LOK NITI and Raj Niti are terms coined from the Sanskrit by Mahatma Gandhi. Lok Niti signifies people's politics—the people in command and direct governance by the sovereign people, as opposed to Raj Niti—the politics of the nation state or indirect rule by a centralized government leadership based on current “democratic” forms of party and representative political institutions.

This concept of Lok Niti was the political basis of Gandhi's socio-economic “Construction Programme”, which is now known in India as Sarvodaya.

An increasing number of us who are associated with the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC) feel that we have begun to find our bearings in the tangled terrain of “development” through commitment to the “gentle anarchism” of Mahatma Gandhi—a body of principles for both personal and social transformation through work in support of decentralized, village community oriented, rural development, guided by the ideals of satyagraha and non-violence and harmonization with both nature and tradition.

Lok Niti is the journal of the Asian NGO Coalition.

— Chandra de Fonseka †
former Lok Niti editor-in-chief

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ANGOC would like to thank Mr. Antonio B. Quizon for his reflection paper on “Old Issues and New Challenges to Food Security in Asia” and the conference participants of the regional conference on “Translating Commitments to Actions towards Results: An Asian Multi-stakeholder Regional Workshop on Food Sovereignty” held last August 22-23, 2011 in Jakarta, Indonesia for their valuable inputs to sharpen the discussion.

We would appreciate receiving your views. Please send them to angoc@angoc.org

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BY 2050, the global population is expected to rise to nine billion. Food production needs to increase by 70% to feed the extra two billion persons 40 years from now. Meanwhile, competition for land, water, and energy is increasing amidst worsening effects of climate change.

With almost a billion people hungry, an unstable climate affecting food production, and the volatility of food prices, agriculture is ironically back on the international agenda. For civil society organizations (CSOs) and rural communities in Asia who have clamored for changes and decried injustice in this sector, this renewed attention is a welcome development.

Presently, we put forward our questions: What kind of agriculture and what kind of support to agriculture are being promoted by international organizations and national governments? Why is it that hunger and malnutrition continue to plague the Asian region despite the pronouncements and programs introduced by various institutions?

The ANGOC network and its partners have long advocated *food sovereignty* as the framework for agriculture, supported by agro-ecological systems of food production. Many farmer groups have already demonstrated the potential of sustainable agriculture to ensure household food security while raising farm productivity and preserving biodiversity. Governments thus should uphold sustainable agriculture in the mainstream to achieve the best impact to productivity, conservation of the resource base, and sustainable development in general.

During the food crisis, Asia was the site of a glaring irony: higher food prices did not accrue benefits to the farmers. The recent spikes in food prices (2007 to 2008 and 2010 to 2011) corroborated

this marginalizing trend. Studies show higher food prices saw to more losers than gainers, because small farmers have been largely left out of the commercial food market chain (ADB, IFAD). Moreover, small farmers rank among the poor who spend about half their incomes on food. Any increase in the domestic price of staples and food affects household nutrition and other basic needs, including those of small producers.

Many small food producers have neither ownership nor access to land and resources needed to improve land productivity. Many of the resource-poor farmers remain isolated and unorganized, detached from centers of power and government. Gender imbalances in land ownership exist, as traditional and customary practices preventing women from gaining access to land and resources prevail. At the same time, farmers are ageing, with more women taking over farming, while men and the youth continue to migrate to towns and cities in search of better employment. Farming communities also take a hit from calamities and political upheavals, to add to their dire situation.

The ANGOC network and its partners have long advocated food sovereignty as the framework for agriculture, supported by agro-ecological systems of food production.



Democratic control of the food system is the ultimate test of democracy. Food security cannot be ensured by entrusting agriculture, food production and trade to global markets.



ANGOC believes that food insecurity stems primarily from unequal distribution of resources and the inequitable access to productive assets, prejudicing the rural poor. In most cases, the national economic development agendas set by national governments promote grants of land concessions, expansion of plantations, mining operations, joint venture agreements, corporate farming, and the establishment of special economic zones – all of which require that land be distributed to the landless poor.

In 1996, ANGOC organized a Regional Forum with the theme “Food and Freedom, Jobs and Justice, Land and Labor, Peace and Prosperity” among NGOs and People’s Movements. The participants called for an alternative people-centered sustainable development paradigm that restores the environment and the rights of communities to their resources and livelihood, enhances the capacities and participation in

governance of the rural poor, and enables them to be self-sufficient in their basic needs. This paradigm has five major elements:

- stewardship through community-based natural resource management;
- ecological and food security through the promotion of sustainable agriculture;
- equity through the promotion of community social enterprises;
- spirituality as the basis of the Asian community; and
- decentralization and democratization as the guiding principles towards redefining political accountability and security.

Sixteen years later, we find that the principles of people-centered sustainable development hold true and magnify the concept of food sovereignty.

We likewise evoke the call made by over 100 CSOs through the 1996 Bangkok Declaration for the World Food Summit:

“Democratic control of the food system is the ultimate test of democracy. Food security cannot be ensured by entrusting agriculture, food production and trade to global markets. Land, water, biodiversity and traditional/intellectual practices, which are the vital resources that make food security possible, should be under the democratic control of those who produce food.”¹

Beyond policy changes and patches of agricultural programs, there is a need to restructure global governance and push institutional reforms for commitments to be translated into actions, and eventually to results. Unless there is no fundamental shift in the current agricultural paradigm, then small producers’ lack of access and control over agriculture and land will persist.

Several international platforms are opening discussions to avert another food crisis and to propound a more sustainable solution to the perennial problem of hunger and poverty. However, reform should happen within the UN system for food and agriculture. The ANGOC network is one with many CSOs in calling not just for tighter coherence, but reform of policies to respond directly to the needs of small farmers and producers, indigenous communities and other rural poor groups of the UN, and other international and intergovernmental institutions such as the FAO, WFP, IFAD, World Bank, ADB, GFAR, the CGIAR, APAARI, ASEAN, SAARC, and other similar platforms. More importantly, reforms and

actions should also be elevated to the regional and national level.

Towards this end, the ANGOC network will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders and decision-makers in constructive policy dialogue. We vow to explore other modalities of cooperation in enhancing household food security and furthering the rights and empowerment of small food producers in Asia. □

¹ The Asia-Pacific NGO Declaration for the World Food Summit of 1996 (known as The Bangkok Declaration), a statement signed by 101 CSO representatives on 30 April 1996 in Bangkok, Thailand at the Asia-Pacific Consultation of NGOs on the World Food Summit.

REFLECTION



Old Issues & New Challenges to Food Security in Asia

HUNGER continues to stalk the lives of 925 million people in the world today, and their numbers continue to rise. Over three-fifths, or 578 million hungry live in Asia (FAO, 2010).

Poverty lies at the root of hunger. About 70% of the world's poor live in the rural areas – far and isolated from centers of decision and power, deprived of assets, having limited economic

opportunities, poor education and skills, and hampered by socio-political inequities (by gender, age or indigenous roots).

Asia has two-thirds of the world's poor and 63% of the world's undernourished people. About 1.7 billion people (or more than half of the population of developing countries in Asia) live on less than \$2 a day, majority of them in rural areas.

This reflection paper by Antonio B. Quizon is based on a regional workshop held on 22 – 23 August 2011 in Jakarta, Indonesia, on the theme of “Translating Commitments to Actions towards Results: An Asian Multi-stakeholder Regional Workshop on Food Sovereignty.” This meeting brought together CSOs and community representatives working on food and nutrition security from 12 countries – Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam – as well as representatives of academic institutions and IGOs, particularly the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It had three objectives:

1. Keep abreast on the current global and regional processes spearheaded by international organizations on the area of food security, hunger and malnutrition;
2. Identify central issues that shape the current debates on food sovereignty in the region; and
3. Explore possible areas for regional cooperation among CSOs in Asia in attaining food security and define and agree on way forward and next steps.

The two-day Conference was organized jointly by the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC) and the International Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition (AAHM), with the support of the International Land Coalition, MISEREOR and the FAO Resident Office in Indonesia. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect all those who attended the Conference.

Throughout history, small farmers and producers have served as the backbone of Asian agriculture and food security. Asia is home to 75% of the world's farming households, 80% of whom are small-scale farmers and producers. However, majority of them are resource-poor and lack access to productive assets, especially land and water. As with other regions of the world, small rural producers in Asia also lack access to financial services, education opportunities, advisory services, infrastructure, and well-functioning markets.

Will Asia continue to be able to feed itself? With 4 billion people or 60% of the world's population, Asia has 34% of the world's agricultural area, 15% of the world's forests, and a wealth of ecological, ethnic, and biological diversity. Already four times more densely populated than Europe, Asia's population growth and accelerated urbanization in the coming decades will bring even greater pressures and conflict on existing land, agricultural, and ecological resources, along with changes in people's lifestyles and consumption patterns. In the "transforming economies" of Asia (including that of China), poverty remains overwhelmingly rural, yet agriculture is no longer seen as the historical main engine of economic growth, and small producers are no longer supported.¹ This may have tragic consequences, as rural poverty persists, and rural-urban disparities grow wider than ever.

Asia's continuing "silent crisis"

In the developing countries of Asia, poverty and hunger are rooted largely in the rural and agricultural. The great irony is that small food producers are the most vulnerable to hunger. Small farmers and producers, rural artisans, and indigenous peoples are often deprived of access

¹ The *World Development Report of 2008* describes three types of countries, based on their development agendas for agriculture: (i) agriculture-based, (ii) transforming countries, and (iii) urbanized countries. (World Bank 2008).

and control over productive resources (i.e., land, water, forests and coastlines) for their livelihood. In the Philippines, statistics show that fishing communities and farmers are the two poorest sectors. Filipino farmer households have a poverty incidence of 40% and fishing households, 50% – compared to national poverty incidence of 21% in 2009. In Vietnam, poverty rates are higher among the 53 ethnic minorities compared to the ethnic majority. Poverty incidence is also highest in mountainous regions and in areas vulnerable to floods, droughts, and storms, as these conditions limit agricultural development and obstruct access to infrastructure and markets.

Indeed, many are forced to eke out a living from their fragile environments. Long-term sustainability is sacrificed for immediate survival. Meanwhile, rural youth migrate to towns and cities in search of work, adding to the growing numbers in urban slums.

Bangladesh has a population of about 140 million people living in a territory of approximately 14 million hectares, making it one of the most densely-populated countries of the world. The lands are fertile but scarce; available land per capita is just 0.28 hectare. Based on official data, 56% of the population or 72 million people are in poverty. About 80% of the poor are in rural areas, and half of them are dependent on agriculture. Another 25 million people are at constant risk of falling into poverty. Already, 45% of the 140 million people are experiencing food deficits – consuming less than their daily calorie requirements.

In Sri Lanka, the victims of war and internally-displaced persons also count among those in poverty and hunger. The country is still recovering from the war of 2007, especially in the North, where there were massive losses in lives, agriculture, and infrastructure. While the conflict has ended, social tensions remained, with many people still missing, most of them men. In

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the Northern Province, there are at least 300,000 internally-displaced people and a large number of female-headed households who have been resettled since.

Chronic rural poverty is caused by landlessness and the lack of tenurial security, which continues to rise in many countries. Poor governance contributes to landlessness. In Bangladesh, agriculture remains the largest sector of the economy, employing three-fifths of the total labor force. Yet, there is growing landlessness in agriculture; the percentage of landless households (or those owning 0.19 hectare and below) rose from 19% in 1960 to 56% in 1996. Studies show a strong association between landlessness and poverty, i.e., that poverty is reduced with increased land ownership.² Yet land reforms remain unfinished business. Only a portion of the total collected *khas* lands (1.34 million hectares, or some 10% of the total area of Bangladesh as of 2001) has been distributed, often involving bribes and corruption. The remaining *khas* lands supposedly under government custody have been illegally occupied by rich peasants.³

Pakistan is the world's sixth most populous country, with 173 million people in 2008. About 68% live in the rural areas, where two-thirds of the people rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Data from Pakistan's Planning Commission show that at least 64 million people were living below poverty line in 2008, mostly rural and dependent on agriculture. Land ownership is highly skewed, and landlessness is the main cause of rural poverty; some 60% of the rural poor are landless.

Since independence in 1945, three land reforms were instituted, but they had little or no effect

² ALRD (2008). "Land Watch Asia Campaign: Bangladesh Status Report". Association for Land Reform and Development. Unpublished. The paper provides a table on "Poverty and Landownership Trends" using data from the Ministry of Finance, 2003.

³ Barkat, Abdul, S. Zaman and S. Raihan (2001). *Political Economy of Khas Land in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Association for Land Reform and Development.

due to poor governance and corruption under successive military rulers. In Pakistan, the military has significant landholdings throughout the country. Military personnel control an estimated 4.9 million hectares, constituting about 12% of state land, including 2.8 million hectares of prime agricultural lands in Punjab and Sindh.

In Cambodia, farmers continue to suffer from insecurity of land tenure. Political upheavals in the last 40 years have overturned the country's land and property rights systems, causing massive confusion and dislocation in the ownership and use of land. Implementation of the 2001 Land Law and related decrees is plagued by corruption, as the government grants economic land concessions (ELCs) to corporations. From 2008-2011 alone, over 2 million hectares were given as concessions to 222 private companies.

Hunger is not due to insufficient food supplies, but to the lack of "access" to food. With 16% of the world's population and only 2% of the world's land, India has managed to avoid major famines due to crop failures that plagued the country in the past. However, chronic poverty and hunger persist because of people's lack of economic access (purchasing power).⁴ About 77% of the population live on half a US dollar (INR20) per person per day (Arjun Sengupta Commission, 2009). The 2010 Global Hunger Index ranks India 67th out of 122 developing countries.

In many countries, the poor suffer not only from hunger but also from malnutrition, known as the "silent killer". Disproportionately affected are children and women. In India, overall poverty incidence was placed at 28%, or more than 300 million in 2004-05, based on

⁴ The Indian economist Amartya Sen, in his 1981 study "Poverty and Famines", showed how "famines thrive even without a general decline in food availability". He brought forward the concept of "entitlements".

official estimates.⁵ Yet a larger segment of the population is chronically malnourished. A recent survey by Naandi Foundation showed that 42% of children in India below 5 years old are underweight. Malnutrition leads to diseases that should be preventable. Meanwhile, anemia among children and women is on the rise; about 79% of children aged 6-35 months and 56% of women of 15-49 years are anemic. According to UNICEF data, one-third of malnourished children in the world live in India. (FAO, 2012)

Malnutrition stunts growth among young children, and could leave a permanent scar in their lives. Malnutrition also robs adults of their capacity to work, limiting their ability to improve their own lives. In Pakistan, 26% of the population is undernourished, and at least 38% of the undernourished are children. At present, 77 million or almost half the population is food-insecure, with a daily calorie intake below the recommended level.

In Cambodia, about 35% of the population live below the poverty line, and 23% of the population, or over 3 million people, are food-deprived or food-insecure – consuming less than their minimum dietary energy requirement. Children are hit hardest by the effects of poverty and malnutrition. Two out of every five children (40%) below 5 years old are chronically malnourished, with nearly one in ten (9%) of children below 5 years old acutely malnourished. Some 29% of all children are underweight. Malnutrition is the cause of 54% of premature deaths among children (1 in 8 children dies before the age of 5).

Lao PDR is the poorest country in Southeast Asia, where majority of the population are dependent on subsistence farming. Despite having doubled its cereal production and tripled its meat production in the last 25 years, Lao PDR still remains in a state

of food insecurity. One fifth of the population is undernourished, 40% children are underweight and at least 42% suffer from stunted growth due to lack of proper nutrition.

Despite the importance of agriculture to employment generation and poverty reduction, however, there has been declining government emphasis and investment in agriculture, especially in support of smallholders.

In Pakistan, the agriculture sector contributes 22% of GDP, 60% of exports, and provides employment to 45% of the labor force. In Cambodia, 85% of all households live in the rural areas – engaged in rice-based agriculture, collection of forest products, and livestock production. The agricultural sector generates one-third of GDP and provides employment to 80% of the country's labor force. Some of the key challenges include: landlessness, poor infrastructure, high costs of agricultural inputs, credit and production related concerns, land reform, and land titling.

In Vietnam, only 7% of the national budget is spent for agriculture, showing a decline in public spending for agriculture. Agriculture contributes 20% of GDP and employs at least 70% of the labor force. Other issues faced by producers are land degradation, loss of land to industry, degradation of environment, heavy use of chemicals, population growth, increasing food prices, natural calamities, and climate change.

Asian governments all have food security as a national priority. However, programs do not focus on improving *smallholder farming and production systems*. Many issues remain – policy coherence, land tenure, support for smallholders, agriculture subsidies, women empowerment, and addressing risks and vulnerabilities of malnutrition and food insecurity of the rural poor and the most vulnerable sectors.

Asian governments all have food security as a national priority. However, programs do not focus on improving smallholder farming and production systems.

⁵ Some sectors claim that official estimates of poverty are too low. Another government report shows an overall poverty incidence of 37.2% or more than 400 million people in 2004-05. (Dev, 2010)

The direct response of governments to hunger has been through “safety net” programs for the poor. But while these distribution programs alleviate hunger, they are not intended to address its underlying causes. In Indonesia and the Philippines, the government provides food (rice) subsidies by retailing food to poor consumers at government-subsidized prices. However, low prices could also act as a disincentive for small producers. In Asia, staples like rice and wheat are considered not only as economic goods, but also as “political crops”. Sufficiency of supplies and price stability in rice and staples are often used as benchmarks for food security, economic performance, and political stability. Ensuring an adequate supply of low-priced staples is seen as part of a larger “development strategy” – i.e., to keep urban wages low, and to stave off political uncertainty and social discontent. While Indonesia is self-sufficient as a rice producer, the Philippines ranks among the world’s top importers of rice.

In India, the government’s direct response to hunger is the Public Distribution System (PDS) where food grains procured and stored by the government are delivered through nearly half a million Fair Price shops. Yet the program has been plagued by leakage and the high costs of delivery. The Philippine government meanwhile has carried out a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program since 2008 which provides cash to the poorest households (2.2 million people as of 2011). CCTs were also implemented in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, where the cash-transfer approach was first piloted in 1991 under the *Janasaviya Program*.

Safety net programs in Asia are still growing. In India, the Parliament is discussing a Food Security Bill that would extend subsidized food grains to 75% of the rural population and about half of urban households in this country of 1.2 billion people. In the Philippines, the government plans to expand the CCT program with an additional USD 100 million loan from the World Bank.

The key question about safety net programs is whether these are sustainable in the long term, and whether they empower poor people to escape from chronic poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

Ensuring “food security for all” remains as a prime responsibility and mandate of the state.

The right to food is a basic principle enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that stipulates the rights of everyone “to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.” The right to food is also enshrined in the constitutions of each country. The Pakistan Constitution (Article 38d) ensures the provision of basic necessities of life including food for all its citizens. It states: “The State shall provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment”.

Nepal’s interim constitution of 2007 establishes the fundamental right of each citizen to food sovereignty, and it is the responsibility of the state to protect this right. As the country is still recovering from a decade of civil war, food insecurity remains a serious developmental challenge.

In India, a public interest litigation petition was recently filed by the People’s Union for Civil Liberties over the rotting food in warehouses, despite the existence of widespread hunger. In an unprecedented decision, the Indian Supreme Court upheld the fundamental “right to food” and ordered that the surplus food-grains be distributed among the poor for free or be sold at low cost. Similarly, the Standing Committee of Parliament advised that the surplus food-grains be distributed among the poor free of cost or exported (AVARD, 2011).

China has made major strides in reducing poverty and hunger. With only 9% of the world's cultivated land, China has managed to meet the food demands of most of its 1.3 billion people, or 20% of the world's population. Carefully-managed market reforms since the 1980s have brought rapid economic growth and increases in household incomes. A major factor was the introduction of the household responsibility system (HRS) in the late 1970s, where collective farms were dismantled and land was distributed among individual farming households. The impact on production was dramatic: between 1978 and 1983, per capita incomes of rural people doubled, and food calorie intake increased. Over the years, poverty has significantly been reduced to about 11% of the population (150 million) today.⁶ However, there is concern over growing income disparities: average urban incomes are thrice higher than rural incomes.

Similarly, since introducing economic reforms under *Doi Moi* (renovation) in 1986, food security in Vietnam has also significantly improved. Hunger and poverty have been reduced from 58% of the population in 1993 to 18% today. Within the agriculture sector, peasant households were given usufruct rights to land. Vietnam has transformed from a rice importer to the 2nd largest exporter of rice in the world today.

Emerging Issues in Asia's Food Security

In recent years, Asia and the world experienced a new round of "food crises" that brought food security back into public attention and into national development agendas.⁷ These food crises periods were different from those of the past; they were marked by sudden spikes in global and domestic food prices – especially of rice and

wheat, two key staples produced and consumed in Asia. And even after the market stabilized, food prices have remained high – thus suggesting that the problems are deeper and systemic, rather than just a matter of temporary price fluctuations.

In several countries, the crises forced people to stand in long queues to purchase government-subsidized grains and to receive food rations. Poor families spend about half their income on food; thus, any sudden price hikes of rice and staples force poor families to cut back on food, resulting in food insecurity and malnutrition. The lack of food, in turn, hinders the ability of poor people to work, and this sinks them deeper into debt and poverty. It is said that a 10% spike in domestic food prices in developing Asia could push an additional 64.4 million into poverty (ADB, 2011). Indeed, when a crisis strikes, the rich get away unscathed, while the poor starve even more.

Several factors have been cited for the rise in food prices. On the *demand* side: *Asia's growing populations and changing tastes and diets* – away from traditional staples produced by small farmers, and towards increased consumption of commercially-grown meats and processed foods that require more resources and energy to produce.⁸ On the *supply* side, factors include: *rising costs of inputs; competing use of crops for biofuels; unsustainable production systems* that cause soil erosion and reduce soil fertility; *increasing scarcity of fresh water; and reduction of farmlands* due to urban expansion, commercialization, and climate change.

Rising competition from the biofuel industry for land and food crops

One reason cited for rising food prices is the growth of the biofuel industry worldwide, which

Poor families spend about half their income on food; thus, any sudden price hikes of rice and staples force poor families to cut back on food, resulting in food insecurity and malnutrition.

⁶ China uses a local measure of poverty at USD 0.5 per day, compared to USD 1.25 per day of the World Bank.

⁷ Asia's "food crisis" occurred in three periods: 1997-98, 2007-08 and 2010-11.

⁸ With increased incomes and growing urbanization, people move up the food chain towards consumption of meat, dairy and "high-value" products, which require more resources to produce. To cite: 1 kilo of meat requires a minimum of 5-7 kilos of feed grain.

has increased the demand and competition for Asia's land and food products. Market demand for biofuels rose with the sudden spike in global oil prices and with Western governments' support for renewable fuels.⁹ Biofuels production worldwide grew from 1 million hectares in 2001 to 25 million hectares in 2008, and is expected to more than double between 2007 and 2017 (FAO, 2008b).

Biofuel production affects agricultural production by shifting land use from forests and food, to biofuel crops. Biofuel production is capital-intensive and thus favors large-scale plantations. Palm oil is one of the major crops used for biofuel. Although Indonesia already has 6 million hectares of oil palm plantations, it has plans for expanding by another 4 million hectares by 2015, dedicated to biofuel production alone.¹⁰

Biofuel is produced also from food crops that include sugarcane, maize, and soybean, and the end-use of these crops is often undetermined until they have been harvested and sold. Thus, it is *market prices* that determine whether these crops end up as food for people or as fuel for cars. According to FAO, global biofuel production based on agricultural commodities increased more than three-fold from 2000 to 2008. And because crops such as maize and sugar can be diverted to biofuel, food prices are now exposed to other factors, such as the volatility of oil prices, hoarding, and the growing energy market.

⁹ Global demand for biofuels is driven by a European Union policy of sourcing 10% of all transport fuels from renewable fuels by year 2020. About 80-90% of this target is likely to be met by biofuels. (Cotula, 2011) Also, in 2007 the US passed the Energy Independence and Security Act which seeks to reduce the country's dependence on oil imports through mandatory use of renewable energy sources.

¹⁰ The Indonesian government has reportedly given concessions to 600 companies for 9.4 million hectares of land for oil palm companies, mostly from Malaysia, Singapore and the Middle East. From the report of Iwan Nurdin, KPA, 22 June 2011.

The impact of non-sustainable production systems

Agricultural production in Asia increased by some 62% from 1990 to 2002, but this was achieved largely through more *intensive use* of land and water resources.¹¹ This involved heavy use of agrochemicals and freshwater. During the same period, Asia's application of mineral fertilizers per hectare of agricultural land increased by some 15%, in contrast to a *decline* in the rest of the world. In 2002 twice as much mineral fertilizer was used per hectare in the region as in the rest of the world (FAO, 2004). Overuse of agrochemicals affects the long-term productive capacities of the soil, and affects water quality, wildlife, and human health.

Many of Asia's developing countries suffer from soil erosion and degradation. According to a 1997 UNEP study, 35% of the productive land in Asia has been affected by desertification. The main causes of land degradation are deforestation, poor irrigation and drainage practices, inadequate soil conservation, steep slopes, and over-grazing. Some 25% of soil degradation in the Asia-Pacific region is directly attributed to agricultural activities.

While Asia has 61% of the global population, it has only 36% of global fresh water resources (UNESCAP, 2011). Water withdrawals in Asia increased by almost 25% in the past 20 years (1990-2010), due mainly to the agricultural sector, which dominates water use. In all sub-regions of Asia, between 60% and 90% of freshwater withdrawal is used for agriculture (FAOSTAT). An increasing amount of water for irrigation is extracted from the ground through tubewells and mechanized pumps that deplete the aquifer, and contribute to desertification and salinization in many countries.

¹¹ During this time, global agricultural production increased by only 27%.

The new competition for Asia's farmlands and fresh water

Population growth, coupled with urbanization and industrial development, also contributes to the growing competition for land and water. Yet, in recent years, a new kind of commercial competition has come from wealthy food-importing countries and private investors who have begun acquiring farmlands overseas for the large-scale production of food, biofuel, livestock & other products.

Because of rising world food prices, many wealthy countries have decided to produce directly their own food abroad, and thereby avoid the risks of depending too much on world markets for their food supply. Yet this rush for securing farmlands overseas is driven not only by the need for food, but increasingly by *commercial profit*, as the rise in agricultural commodity prices has made production more profitable.

About one million hectares of land in Cambodia were acquired for agriculture and forestry by foreign governments and companies between 1988 and 2006, and more than 415,000 hectares acquired in two provinces of Lao PDR (Cotula, 2011). Land acquisitions in Asia have been led by capital-rich Arab Gulf States and the prosperous countries of East Asia. Based on one estimate, China, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Japan, and Saudi Arabia controlled an estimated 7.6 million hectares overseas as of the end of 2008 (Kugelman, 2009). Control of the land also brings with it the control of water resources that are locked up beneath the surface. Meanwhile, China's overseas acquisitions include fishing rights to the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of 32 countries that include Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma and Sri Lanka, as well as West Africa, Fiji and Argentina.

The new investments differ from those of the past. Foreign investors seek *resources* (land, water) rather than just commodities and markets. The

investments are also much larger in *scale*, and are now spearheaded more by *government-led investment* than in the past.

The new land deals affect domestic food production in host countries, as large tracts of productive land are ceded to foreigners, even though the host countries are chronically short on food supplies for their growing populations and have to depend on imports. Also, there are documented cases of small farmers and settlers being displaced or evicted from their lands, even when so called "public", "surplus" or "unused" lands such as forests are leased to foreign ventures. The new land deals increase the concentration of land ownership in a few corporations, and often leave the rural poor outside of both land and markets.

The "supermarketization" of Asia's food sector

With growing urbanization, Asia's food industry has also been undergoing a qualitative transformation since the 1980s. There is a shift towards vertical integration of the food value chain – linking production to wholesaling, processing, and retailing. Corporations now dominate the food sector. Profound changes are occurring in the *retail* sector through the "supermarket revolution". The spread of supermarkets and fast food chains started in East Asia, then in Southeast Asia and China, where the share of supermarkets in food retailing will double to 23% by 2015.¹² Supermarkets have expanded to include the sale of fresh produce (grains, vegetables, and meat), and they now compete directly with traditional fresh markets supplied by small producers. With the growing integration of the food production and distribution chains, the big traders and retail stores are now able to dictate the terms over their suppliers, and this leaves the small producers in a weak bargaining position.

¹² In South Asia, however, the rapid growth of supermarkets is not expected in the immediate term, because of low incomes and highly rural economies (FAO, 2008).

Throughout its long history, Asia's food security and agriculture have been built on the productivity and resiliency of smallholder farming.

For the small farmers in Asia, the opening of agriculture to trade liberalization since the 1990s has meant the abolition of agricultural credit and subsidies from government, the privatization of agricultural support services, and increased competition from cheaper imports. There has also been a decline in public investment and spending in agriculture in many Asian countries, in sharp contrast to US and European countries where agriculture continues to be subsidized heavily by the State.

With the vertical integration of the food industry, Asia's small farmers today face a new layer of barriers – difficulty in accessing services and credit, weak extension services, and pricing policies that work against farmers (e.g., price controls on the farmgate prices of staples grains and traditional food crops). Small producers are also faced with new market demands: high-value products, continuous supply of uniform products, use of new production technologies, formal contracting arrangements, and new institutional requirements (permits and certification). The new rules of the market inadvertently serve as barriers against smallholders, and these include various industry requirements and standards.¹³ Given the high costs of certification and compliance monitoring, trading companies are likely to switch from smallholders to large agribusiness farms. Companies generally prefer to source from larger producers because of the lower transaction costs involved and because these producers also have easier access to facilities such as storage, greenhouses, irrigation, and transport.

Looking forward

With half a billion people in Asia undernourished, the demand for food is expected to grow further with the increase in population. It is projected

¹³ This includes those stipulated under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme (Codex Alimentarius). However, different countries and corporations impose additional food standards – including on safety and hygiene, nutrition, labeling, traceability, processing, packaging, organic standards, etc.

that Asia will exceed 5.25 billion people by 2050, requiring a 70% increase in food production to achieve food for all.

Throughout its long history, Asia's food security and agriculture have been built on the productivity and resiliency of smallholder farming. Smallholders continue to face many constraints. They cultivate small plots often with little or no public support; they continue to count among the poorest and most food-insecure sectors in Asia and the world today. Many lack access to land and facilities, and increasingly depend on prices dictated by buyers. Recent trends in agriculture and the food industry are putting small farmers at even greater risk.

Yet even with the barriers they face, smallholders contribute a significant amount to the total value of agricultural output. In India, smallholders contribute over 50% of the country's total farm output although they cultivate only 44% of the land. Throughout Asia, smallholders continue as the main producers of staples such as rice, corn, root crops, and pulses that feed growing populations.¹⁴ Small farms also serve as conservators as they also tend to grow a wider variety of crops and cultivars; these, in turn, serve to increase the resiliency of small farms against pests, diseases, droughts, and other stresses. Small farms have higher use of labor; they have generally higher cropping intensity and are more diversified than large farms. There is a growing body of evidence that shows small farms to be more productive

per unit area than large farms. This provides a compelling argument in favor of *land reform*, as land redistribution would increase productivity, efficiency and equity.

¹⁴ Smallholders also dominate in certain tree crops. Small farmers and rural communities produce three-fourths of Indonesia's rubber, 95% of its coffee and most of its coconut/copra production. (smallholder agroforestry) are managed so that they reproduce the functions of natural forests. Cinnamon, rattan, resins, coffee, durian are cultivated among timber species and agricultural crops (Contreras-Hermosilla and Fay, 2005).

Meeting the new challenges and market demands for food security will require technological and institutional innovations, supported by government policy and public investments. In the field of agriculture, actions for food security must be based on a genuine appreciation and recognition of the central role of smallholder agriculture. □

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The Task of Reforming the FAO Committee on Food Security

THE COMMITTEE on World Food Security (CFS) is an inter-governmental body established in 1974 by the FAO following a global food crisis. It serves as a forum for discussion and coordination of policy and actions to promote food security.

Through the years, however, the CFS found itself ineffective in the face of a host of problems including spikes in commodity prices, poor harvests amidst higher demand, and protectionist measures taken by some governments. All of these combined to cause instability in the global food market, resulting in yet another crisis in 2007/08. Today, an estimated one billion people live in chronic hunger.

One of the weaknesses of the CFS then was its inability to coordinate national policies. Its mandate did not allow it.

It also lacked the authority to decide on and implement its policy recommendations. This prompted the CFS to rethink and re-evaluate its position, lest it become irrelevant. In 2009, it underwent a restructuring. It redefined its vision and mission in order to be a more effective forum towards achieving food security.

A CFS reform document states: 'The CFS as a central component of the evolving Global Partnership for

Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition, will constitute the foremost inclusive and inter-governmental platform for a broad range of committed stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner and in support of country-led processes towards the elimination of hunger and ensuring security and nutrition for all human beings.'

Purpose of this paper

This briefing paper gives an overview of the work of the CFS and the areas where the CFS engages various stakeholders on different levels to address food insecurity and hunger. This paper serves as a guide for civil society organizations in their campaign to improve the consultation process and other aspects of governance in the CFS. Included are some of the concerns of civil society groups that need to be raised in international discussions.

The Global Food Market: Then and Now

From the time of the first World Food Conference in 1974 up until the 2009 World Summit on Food Security, experts noted recurring problems in the global food market, among them high food prices, the lack of access of the world's poor to

The new CFS aims for greater inclusiveness to encourage an exchange of views and experiences and draw expertise and knowledge from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible.

food and other resources, and a serious supply-demand imbalance.

While many of the problems remain, the current environment is fundamentally different from what it was decades ago. New factors have emerged which influence the direction and behavior of the market. Experts now say that no policy or action should be taken without considering the following:

- Disinvestment by governments in agricultural support services
- Continued recognition of the productive and income-generating role of small farming
- Increased role of the private sector in service provision and marketing chains
- Globalization of phyto-sanitary regulations and long-distance food chains
- Emergence of bio-energy crops as a new agricultural frontier, thereby increasing the demand for bio-fuels that compete with production of food crops
- Impacts of climate change on agriculture
- Increased capacity of governments and the expanded role of civil society
- Access to instant information due to technology

With increased access to information, it is hoped that decision-making processes within the CFS would also improve.

What is the new CFS?

In the wake of the 2007-08 food crisis, the CFS was given a fresh mandate to engage a broader group of stakeholders in order to more effectively promote policies for reducing food insecurity. (<http://www.fao.org/cfs/en/>).

The fundamental role of the CFS is to promote coordination and policy coherence to help ensure that inter-related actions are in accord with one another. Specifically, it is tasked to:

1. Provide a platform for discussion and coordination to strengthen collaborative actions among relevant stakeholders while paying attention to countries' specific contexts and needs;
2. Promote greater policy convergence and coordination, including the development of international strategies and voluntary guidelines on food security and nutrition on the basis of best practices, lessons learned from local experience, inputs received from the national and regional levels, and expert advice and opinions from different stakeholders;
3. Improve coordination and guide synchronized action through the development of a Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF); and
4. Facilitate support and/or advice for regional and nationally-owned food security strategies, policies and programs for food security and nutrition.

The new CFS aims for greater inclusiveness to encourage an exchange of views and experiences and draw expertise and knowledge from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible. While this may result in slower and cumbersome decision-making, the CFS hopes that this will in the long run benefit the system because it will promote better transparency and governance.

New Structure of the CFS

To implement its redefined mandate in promoting policy coherence, the CFS has a new structure that allows input from different stakeholders at global, regional and national levels. It has a Bureau and Advisory Group, a Plenary, a High- Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) and a Secretariat.

The *Bureau* is the executive arm of the CFS. It is comprised of a Chair and 12 member countries that serve a two-year term.

The *Advisory Group (AG)* is made up of 14 members from five different stakeholder groups, namely:

1. Six representatives from UN agencies and other UN bodies;
2. Four representatives from civil society and non-governmental organizations particularly those representing smallholder family farmers, fisherfolk, herders, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers and indigenous people;
3. One representative from international agricultural research institutions;
4. One from international and regional financial institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, regional development banks and the World Trade Organization); and
5. One from private sector associations; and one from philanthropic foundations.

The AG's mandate is to share with the Bureau expertise and knowledge of the broad range of organizations it represents and provide the vehicle through which participants can contribute to inter-sessional activities of the CFS. It is also tasked to maintain linkages with different stakeholders at regional, sub-regional and local levels and to ensure an ongoing, two-way exchange of information.

Meeting once a year, the *Plenary* is the central body for decision-making, debates, coordination and convergence by all stakeholders on a global level. Participants at the plenary, including member-governments and representatives of CSOs and non-government organizations, are accorded the same speaking rights.

The *High-Level Panel of Experts for Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE)* is the scientific and knowledge-based arm of the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition.

The Joint Secretariat is composed of the three Rome-based agencies – FAO, World Food Program and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Its task is to support the work of the Plenary, the Bureau, the AG and the HLPE.

Why is there a need for a panel of experts?

The creation of the HLPE is an essential feature of the reformed CFS. It was set up to provide independent and comprehensive advice and analysis on the current state of food security and nutrition and their underlying causes, as well as the latest scientific and knowledge-based analysis and advice on specific policy-relevant issues. It is also tasked to identify emerging issues and to help members prioritize actions in key areas.

The high-level panel has a two-tier structure. The first is a Steering Committee made up of 15 internationally recognized experts in a variety of food security and nutrition-related fields appointed to a two-year term. They serve in their personal capacities and do not represent their organizations or governments. The second is a roster of experts for project-specific teams who are selected and managed by the Steering Committee to analyze and report on outstanding issues.

Former CFS Chair Noel de Luna, the Philippines' Agricultural Attache to the FAO, in a conference in Paris in March 2011, said the experts panel is expected "to improve the robustness, continuity and cohesion of policy-making by providing the CFS with independent and comprehensive advice".

The creation of the HLPE is an essential feature of the reformed CFS. It was set up to provide independent and comprehensive advice and analysis on the current state of food security and nutrition and their underlying causes.

A document outlining the key elements of the HLPE says: “Decisions need often to be taken in spite of a vast field of uncertainties regarding both the knowledge base, and potential effects of policies on the ground. There is also a need to overcome the fact that at the negotiating table, competing interests often confront different streams of information leading to acute controversies, and that the fragmentation of expert debates by academic disciplines and by knowledge sources is often detrimental to strong and effective policy decisions.”

The CFS, through the HLPE, has ongoing discussions on the issues of land tenure, price volatility and international investments in agriculture, social safety nets and climate change. The panel is also providing inputs on priority issues including the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSF) and advice on the draft Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

What is the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition?

A working definition of the GSF, as approved by the CFS Bureau, is found in the Annotated Outline for the GSF. It states: “*The overall purpose of the GSF is to provide a dynamic instrument to enhance the role of the CFS and promote its vision as a platform to improve coordination and guide synchronized action by a wide range of stakeholders in support of global, regional and country-led actions to prevent future food crises, eliminate hunger and ensure food security and nutrition for all human beings.*”

At its 36th session in October 2010, the CFS launched a consultative process to develop an initial draft of the Global Strategic Framework for presentation at the 38th plenary in October 2012. The consultations are guided by the following principles:

- the GSF would not create new bureaucracies and mechanisms but build on existing frameworks including the UN’s Comprehensive Framework for Action;
- to promote convergence, the GSF would select and prioritize among existing lessons and policy recommendations, and would leverage regular CFS mechanisms;
- the GSF would be a living, flexible document to be prepared and updated through broad participation at global, regional and national levels;
- it will not be prescriptive and will highlight differing views when no consensus is reached; and
- it will not be a binding instrument, but its endorsement by the CFS would reflect a commitment by member-countries and other stakeholders of its goals.

The CFS opened a moderated online discussion on the GSF (<http://www.km.fao.org/fsn/cfs>) based on the Annotated Outline in order to stimulate debate and gather suggestions and concrete inputs from different stakeholders, including CSOs, on priority issues and policy actions for the GSF.

The electronic discussion is also being hosted by the Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition (AAHM) (<http://km.fao.org/fsn/aa hm>) in support of the CFS initiative.

The current global electronic consultation will continue with *regional* consultations in early 2012, followed by another online discussion and a CFS-led plenary review in July 2012 before the final document is presented to the 38th session of the CFS in October 2012.

That the GSF will be a non-binding global document presents difficulties. Given the different national situations and contexts, what assurance is there that governments and other stakeholders

would comply with the instrument? Civil society groups also ask how the Framework would relate operationally *vis a vis* existing food security plans at the country level. They point out the need for a regular system to monitor, assess and update the GSF to gauge its coherence with other existing mechanisms on food security.

Challenges facing the CFS

Market Information-Sharing

The volatility of food prices is a recurring phenomenon and is an immediate concern of the CFS. Commodity price fluctuations can be avoided or minimized and markets can be stabilized if there were a system to track up-to-date, reliable and accurate information on crop supply (current crop plus stockpiles) and demand.

But such information is often unavailable. The absence of relevant data during critical periods in the past had in fact affected the ability of leaders and policy-makers to make sound decisions and mobilize responses. The practice by some governments and commercial enterprises of keeping such data confidential should be replaced by a willingness to share accurate, reliable and timely information.

Because of its importance, the issue of market information and price volatility is high on the CFS agenda and a standing item at all meetings of the Committee's Bureau and AG, where experts and analysts are expected to provide updates on price situations.

De Luna had pushed for a collaborative food data initiative called the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), which he says needs support from G20 economies, which are among the major producers of basic commodities and non-G20 countries whose production or consumption has an impact on the market.

Such a system will not only contribute to improving market information and transparency, but will also strengthen dialogue between exporting and importing countries, commercial enterprises and international organizations, and overcome distrust.

The bottom line, de Luna emphasizes, is that member countries should have the political will to share reliable, timely and accurate data. Without political will and a change in attitudes by all stakeholders, nothing much can be done to prevent violent price fluctuations.

Ideal versus Reality

The CFS is just one of the global forums on food security. Civil society organizations believe that the CFS can be a viable venue that can make a difference if member-states and governments exercise political will in implementing reforms. But it remains to be seen how the benefits of its policy decisions can trickle down to the most vulnerable groups. Will its actions serve the interests of the world's hungry and most food-insecure sectors?

A challenge for the CFS is how it will be able to work with various stakeholders of widely diverse views and agendas on food security and how it can sufficiently convey the discussions, debates and decisions taking place on the global level to country-level constituents. Conversely, how can the engagement processes at regional and national levels be expanded and linked to the global processes of the Committee?

CSO representation in the CFS is important, but how can CSOs actually lobby national governments to support a global framework and implement agreements when some FAO country offices are not even aware of CFS processes?

Food security is now seen as a priority in the development agenda of governments and

The volatility of food prices is a recurring phenomenon and is an immediate concern of the CFS.

How civil society organizations (CSOs) strategize and organize themselves at this juncture is critical.

intergovernmental organizations as a means to stimulate foreign direct investments and attract development assistance in agriculture. The question that needs to be asked is: how are these investments truly affecting and improving food security and livelihoods for the rural poor in the region?

For instance, governments of many developing countries encourage foreign direct investments by food importing countries. But these very investments could displace local farmers, creating social unrest and increasing the poor and hungry populations.

Observations/Recommendations of Asian Civil Society on Engaging the CFS¹:

- CFS processes are mostly driven top-down – from the global rather than from the national levels. CSOs and social movements should adopt ways or strategies so that their perspectives can influence the CFS processes.
- The mode of consultation is mainly through electronic discussion, limiting the participation of some stakeholders including those without or little access to the internet or available information.
- Food is not merely a technical issue about production and trade, but a highly political issue involving questions about resource distribution, access and control. There should be equal footing in the dialogue process. For food security to happen, reforms in power relations (e.g., agrarian reform, food sovereignty) must likewise be included in the topics for dialogue.

¹ Points presented by ANGOC and discussed during the Regional CSO Consultation in conjunction with the FAO Asia-Pacific Regional Conference held in South Korea in September 2010.

- There are, at the global level, a number of processes and mechanisms designed to boost agriculture and promote food security. There should be tighter coherence for all these activities among UN and other international bodies. What is more important is that reforms and actions by these global institutions should cascade to the regional and national levels. National governments must coordinate and harmonize activities for achieving food security and recognize and support the efforts of small food producers and CSOs in sustainable agriculture.
- How civil society organizations (CSOs) strategize and organize themselves at this juncture is critical. While they can be participants in the CFS, they should still be observers in the other committees. They should be very clear on the parameters of their engagement, and be aware of the realistic constraints they face given the structural issues of FAO and member governments. It is imperative that they strengthen their regional platforms while also recognizing other venues and ensuring that national discussions take place. □

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UN High-Level Task Force and the Two-Track Approach Towards Food Security

THE UNITED NATIONS High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (HLTF) was formed in April 2008 in response to the extraordinary rise in world food prices that resulted in a sharp increase in the number of hungry people worldwide and unstable food security conditions in many poor countries. The market instability was aggravated by the financial crisis in 2009, which led to a recession in many developed countries and further impaired the capacity of poorer nations to adequately feed their people.

This task force is one of the many platforms that address food security under the UN system. That it is chaired by the UN Secretary-General underscores the severity of the last food crisis, the impact of which continues. It highlights the urgency of formulating an effective response not only to the immediate problem but also to its underlying causes, which require long-term and structural solutions.

The HLTF is composed of the heads of 22 UN specialized agencies, funds and programs, and multilateral agencies. Its work is facilitated by a Senior Steering Group, which also serves as a technical working group that provides the task

force with analysis and advice.

In July 2008, the HLTF produced the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) to guide policy-makers in formulating solutions to the food crisis, with the Millennium Development Goal 1 – “to eradicate poverty and hunger” – as its starting point. The action plan’s aim was to address the immediate needs of the vulnerable populations most affected by the food crisis while also looking into the more enduring solutions to the problem.

In September 2010, the task force released an Updated CFA (UCFA), which contains a wider range and a more detailed treatment of issues. It also highlights environmental sustainability and gender equity in considering interventions against hunger. The updated framework also fleshes out measures that can operationalize the options presented in the action plan, and identifies ways to involve as many stakeholders as possible in all activities at all levels.

In October 2011, the HLTF released a summary version of the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action that highlights 10 principles underpinning and driving the action points in the framework.

This briefing paper takes a look at the underlying causes of food insecurity, as articulated by the HLTF and the Asian NGO for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC). It also examines the initiatives being proposed by the HLTF, as contained in the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA), to address these concerns. It also makes the case that financial challenges to the proposed actions are real.

Lessons from the Last Crisis

According to the HLTF's September 2010 Report, the recent food and financial crises "confirmed inadequacies in the structure and functioning of food systems that prevented these from withstanding the impact of successive shocks and from improving food security in a sustainable manner."

The turbulent period also brought to the surface certain factors that have continually undermined previous efforts at addressing food insecurity. They include the lack of access by the most vulnerable groups to land and other resources, the apparent neglect in recent years of agriculture and rural development, and the lack of support for safety nets and social protection systems. Price volatility and long-ignored challenges confronting women are also among the underlying causes of hunger, which need to be dealt with in a more sustainable way, the report adds.

In recent years, access to land has gained increasing prominence in the discussion of food security. Dr. David Nabarro, the UN Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition, describes land as being part of the resilience of poor people, and says that predictable access to land is necessary. This is one of the lessons from the last crisis factored into the updated CFA.

At an International Land Coalition (ILC) Conference in May 2011, Nabarro, also Coordinator of the HLTF, said that access to land and tenure issues

should be fully addressed in policy making and that local institutions and communities should be engaged in formulating strategies or solutions to problems.

Land, Sustainable Agriculture, Women Empowerment: A Perspective from Civil Society

The recognition by policy-makers of the primacy of the land issue in the food security debate resonates with other stakeholders, especially the civil society groups that have long been campaigning for the issues of access to land, women empowerment, sustainable agriculture, and the need for better governance. The Asian NGO Coalition on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) articulates its position on these critical issues in this section:

Link between poverty and landlessness

ANGOC believes that the high incidence of poverty and hunger among landless and small-scale farm producers is primarily due to lack of secure rights and tenure over land. In Asia, between 13% to 71% of farmers are landless or near-landless, without security of tenure over their farms and homestead. This severely limits their choices and decisions about their lands, crops, and means of livelihood. On the other hand, access to land brings a source of livelihood and survival to the rural poor and increases their sense of human dignity and security. It also increases the level of their resilience and provides them an opportunity to break out from the vicious cycle of poverty.

Sustainable agriculture is a key

Civil society groups believe that agriculture can be a major driver of poverty reduction, wealth creation, and employment in rural areas. But caution should be exercised in considering the types of investment to be sure that they are not detrimental to the environment, and are not made at the expense of poor farmers. ANGOC believes

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that a paradigm shift to sustainable agriculture is central to stimulating rural development and reducing poverty in poor countries in Asia.

While the Green Revolution was hailed a success in increasing food production, a closer look at the impact of the program also exposed its negative effects on biodiversity, indigenous farming systems, and the environment. It proved beneficial largely to better-off farmers in well-endowed ecosystems, but not to poor farmers working in marginalized lands. ANGO's position on the issue is that shifting to high-input conventional agriculture is not a guarantee of food security. It is wise to develop appropriate farm technologies consistent with the principles and practices of sustainable agriculture.

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups

ANGOC believes that a more promising strategy for reducing poverty and hunger must start with a clear targeting and identification of the most affected and vulnerable groups composed of marginalized smallholders, indigenous peoples, landless rural workers, marginalized fisherfolk, upland dwellers and women. These rural poor must be given access to and control over land and water resources, agricultural inputs and extension services. These same groups must be given an opportunity to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of rural development programs.

In the Asian region, the participation of vulnerable groups and civil society is key to the democratization process starting from the grassroots, then national up to international levels. People's participation is a prerequisite for improving food production and sustaining access to food. Increasing food production locally will be the best option to reduce the vulnerability of the rural poor to risks, including market fluctuations and climate change variations.

Women and food security

In many Asian countries, women constitute a disproportionate number of the chronically poor. This is partly due to discrimination, and existing laws and customs that curtail women's equal rights to land and property. Especially in rural areas with a high out-migration of men, rural women are increasingly left with the prime responsibility for incomes and farming with neither titles to the lands they cultivate, nor access to the credit and services they need. The result is increased feminization of food insecurity. Development planners should address the present gender inequality in crafting any food security interventions. All strategies for the implementation of modern agricultural technologies and mechanization must take into account the crucial role of women for food security and the conservation of the environment and agro-biodiversity.

Is food sovereignty possible and can the rural poor achieve food security?

The answer is yes, the poor can achieve food security with a more holistic framework to guide programs and interventions. Sustainability should not only target better food security and livelihoods for increased incomes but for the sustainability of resources and the quality of life. The lives of future generations depend on a sustainable framework now. ANGO believes that food insecurity stems from unequal distribution of resources and the inequitable access to productive assets by the rural poor. The prevailing unjust structures and social systems are further aggravated by the state policies supporting trade liberalization and commercialization of agriculture. It is imperative that the structures and patterns of international trade and external investments be superseded by the more important tasks of poverty reduction and ensuring food for all.

The Updated CFA in a Nutshell

The Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (UCFA) promotes a twin-track approach and encourages policy convergence and synergy of the various initiatives of different stakeholders engaged in promoting food security. It prioritizes sustainable agriculture, better ecosystem management, gender equality, the prerequisites for improved nutrition, and the human rights of those least able to enjoy the right to food.

The two-track approach consists of (a) the *First Track*, which focuses on meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable populations; and (b) the *Second Track*, which aims to build resilience to better address the root causes of hunger.

The HLTF points out that the two sets of actions designed to promote a comprehensive response to food insecurity are equally important, hence they need to be addressed simultaneously at local, national, regional and global levels. To support these two sets of actions, the Framework proposes stronger coordination, assessments, monitoring, and surveillance systems in country, regional and global levels.

The Key Principles for Actions are broken down into three parts (see box). These 10 principles feed into the following **Outcomes and Actions** that are meant to operationalize the twin-track approach:

The objective of the **first track** is to improve access to food and nutrition support and take immediate steps to increase food availability. To achieve the outcome of meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable populations facing hunger now, the CFA proposes four key actions. Below are the suggested main actions, along with examples of current activities, as enumerated in the UCFA.

1) Emergency food assistance, nutrition interventions and safety nets to be enhanced and made more accessible

- a. Scaling up internationally-supported safety nets, such as school feeding, supplementary feeding for mothers and children, management of severe and moderate malnutrition, promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding practices, delivery of primary health care services, promoting food hygiene and safe food supply, employment and cash voucher programs, resettlement grant for returnees;
- b. Ensuring that conditions exist for emergency operators to deliver emergency food assistance and related support;
- c. Providing grants to respond to the most immediate, life-saving activities.

Key Principles for Actions

Overall Approach

- Twin-tracks to food and nutritional security
- Comprehensive approach

Issues to be highlighted

- Smallholders, particularly women at the center of actions
- Increased focus on resilience of household livelihood
- More and better investments
- Open and well-functioning markets and trade

Process

- Multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships
- Sustained political commitment and good governance
- Country leadership with regional support
- Accountability for results

In the Asian region, the participation of vulnerable groups and civil society is key to the democratization process starting from the grassroots, then national up to international levels.

2) Urgent increases in food availability from smallholder farmer food production

- a. Providing financial and technical support for small farmers/net food buyers to increase production and productivity; direct distribution of seeds, fertilizer, provision of vouchers, credit schemes, quality control, use of existing supply mechanisms and strengthening of local financial institutions;
- b. Supporting rapid interventions to link small farmers to markets, increase access to inputs, markets, and development of market information services;
- c. Purchasing food assistance locally in ways that benefit low-income farmers and producers.

3) Adjustments to trade and tax policies

- a. A review of the trade and taxation policy options and their likely impacts;
- b. Advising governments on trade policy adjustments and trade facilitation measures to reduce the cost of imported food and agricultural inputs;
- c. Temporary reduction of VAT and other taxes.

4) Management of macroeconomic implications

- a. Mobilization of external support to finance additional food imports;
- b. Assistance to countries in assessing the impact of higher food and fuel prices on the balance of payments;
- c. Providing more rapid financing in case of shocks to help address balance of payment impacts.

The **second track** aims to strengthen food and nutrition security in the longer term by addressing the underlying factors driving the food crisis. To build longer-term resilience to similar problems in the future, the CFA lists four critical outcomes. Below are the four main actions and the elements

of each action or examples of the activities now underway:

1) Expanded social protection systems

- a. Balancing the need to ensure effective coverage of the vulnerable with the need to maintain efficient use of resources;
- b. Improving the quality and diversity of foods;
- c. Promoting the implementation of human rights and governance principles in the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection measures.

2) Sustained increases in food availability through growth in smallholder farmer food production

- a. Stimulating private investment in agriculture with focus on small-scale farming;
- b. Supporting land tenure security programs;
- c. Financing rehabilitation of rural and agriculture infrastructure.

3) Better managed ecosystems for food and nutrition security

- a. Promoting a low-energy productive agriculture source of diversified and nutritious food;
- b. Investing in long-term monitoring of environmental service delivery under different land management options;
- c. Analyzing and isolating practices that improve food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change.

4) Improved performance of international food markets.

- a. Monitoring food and nutrition policies at national level and link to international trade policies;
- b. Increasing trade finance;
- c. Assessing feasibility of regional food reserve systems.

The menu of options in the two-track approach comprises practical actions that are doable and sustainable. But as the HTLF itself admits, the actions are neither exhaustive nor exclusive but are intended to guide country-level strategies and support international coordination efforts.

Another important outcome of the updated comprehensive framework is **improved information monitoring and accountability systems**.

Reality Check

Turning the broad action points into activities and real outcomes will require years of committed and coordinated efforts by a broad range of stakeholders. Partnerships should be forged at national, regional and global levels, but should bear in mind that country-owned plans have the biggest potential for effectiveness where there is strong national ownership.

Beating hunger will also require massive and sustained funding. A big challenge for national and world leaders and support institutions is how to raise adequate funds for their food programs. As well as national budgets, official development assistance and support from multilaterals, private and public groups will contribute to food security initiatives.

But while continued support for anti-hunger programs are expected to come from international donors and industrialized countries, it is believed that private sector investments within developing countries themselves, including the smallholder farmers, will be the most significant source of funding now and in the future). The FAO estimates that about 25% of the investment required by 2025 will have to come from the private sector in developing countries.

The availability of funds from both domestic and international sources is of paramount importance,

but equally significant is the integrity of the entire funding process.

“There is increasing recognition that the sources of these funds, the conditions under which they are available, the amounts actually committed, their alignment and the way the funds are used and accounted for are all important issues in determining the results achieved in relation to long-term food and nutrition security. Transparency on all these elements of both domestic and international financing is of vital importance as a contributor to trusting relations between the partners that support investments in food and nutrition security,” says the UFCA document.

International donors, meanwhile, have pledged support for programs targeted mostly at the most vulnerable groups in poor countries. At the 2009 G8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, world leaders committed \$22 billion for food programs. At the 2010 G8 Summit in Muskoka in Canada, leaders announced that \$6.5 billion of the pledged amount had been disbursed with the rest of the funds expected to be released in 2012.

The World Bank also set aside \$2.0 billion under its Global Food Crisis Response Program to help mitigate the initial shock of the high food prices on vulnerable groups. The European Union's Food Security Facility committed one billion euros for projects worldwide.

To date, over \$900 million have also been pledged to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) by six countries and a major U.S. foundation. The GAFSP is a multilateral mechanism set up to assist in the implementation of pledges made at the L'Aquila Summit.

But it seems that these commitments have not materialized. And there is always the likelihood that plans will go awry.

That is one of the observations posted on a food security dialogue website, which says that despite best efforts and good intentions, commitments sometimes get derailed.

“Backing out of Commitments: History Repeating Itself” is the title of a posting on the Global Food Security and Nutrition Dialogue website, which takes a critical look at donor behavior. “Sadly, but predictably, history is repeating itself, and it seems that the ‘commitments’ made by donor governments with much fanfare at the height of the 2006-08 food price crisis are already unraveling,” says the article (<http://foodnutgov.ning.com/forum/topics/backing-out-of-commitments>).

It says there is a long history of gaps between what countries promise and what they end up doing and a reason for this is the absence of any mechanism under which a country can be held accountable for its action or inaction. Tracking these funding commitments is an area where civil society groups can take the lead by raising public understanding of the issues and putting greater pressure on governments to tackle hunger. □

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FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security

SECURE and equitable access to land is central to achieving food security, eradicating hunger and reducing poverty. It is also crucial to promoting sustainable livelihood and healthy ecosystems.

This is one of the biggest lessons from the food crisis from 2007 until 2008 and the rationale behind the formulation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (hereafter referred as Voluntary Guidelines).

Landlessness or the lack of secure and equitable access to and control over land, fisheries and forests by local communities has long been argued by civil

society groups as one of the major causes of perennial hunger in rural areas. Among Asian countries, between 13 to 71% of farmers are landless or near-landless and without security of tenure over their farms and homesteads.

This problem has been particularly dire for small-scale farmers, rural women, indigenous people and other marginalized groups, hence the need to prioritize their interests in the Voluntary Guidelines now being discussed.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) began work on the voluntary guidelines in 2005, but consultations with experts, private sector,

On 11 May 2012, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) officially endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security in Rome. FAO led 15 multistakeholder consultations from 2009 to 2011 across 130 countries. The Guidelines were finalized through CFS-led intergovernmental negotiations. These negotiations involved 98 countries, and included participation by nongovernmental groups, civil society organizations, international agencies, farmers' associations, private-sector representatives and research institutions. For more information, visit <http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/lt-home/en/>. This ANGOC article was written as negotiations were finalized, hence, some final points may have been missed. (Editor)

Women with land would have greater bargaining power, which would enable them to negotiate more equal allocations in the family and higher wages in the labor market.

civil society, and other stakeholders started in 2008. From 2009 to 2010, the FAO's Committee on World Food Security (CFS) carried out an expanded consultative process. The result was a Zero Draft of the guidelines, released in 2011. Further consultations took place leading up to the 37th session of the FAO's Committee on Food Security in October 2011, where the First Draft of the guidelines was presented.

These guidelines are intended for adoption by governments. They are "voluntary", or non-binding, unlike an international treaty or convention.

This briefing paper looks at the process of consultations among the different stakeholders in the preparation of the draft document, highlighting civil society's participation as well as its concerns over some parts of the guidelines. A section is devoted to the position of the Asian Non-Government Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), for whom the issue of land rights and tenure is particularly important.

ANGOC and Agrarian Reform

The guidelines on tenure are particularly important to ANGOC, because its advocacy is rooted in land and its inextricable link to livelihood. For more than 30 years, ANGOC has advanced the agrarian reform agenda in the Asian region, which is home to about 70% of the world's farming households.

Ensuring land rights for the millions of rural poor who depend on land for livelihood – through policy advocacy and capacity-building – has been a priority of ANGOC's work in the past three decades.

Together with Land Watch Asia partners, ANGOC recently carried out a scoping study of eight countries in South and Southeast Asia

(Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines) to the legal and policy environments relating to access to land and agrarian reform. The findings show that while land reform laws are in place, their execution has been poor, and governments have been ambivalent and half-hearted in implementing genuine reforms. Instead, land is increasingly being allocated for special economic zones, agribusiness ventures, and capital and labor-intensive extractive industries like mining and similar commercial undertakings.¹

ANGOC's general comments below on the issue of governance have been articulated in

various consultations, including those that took place with the International Land Coalition. They also form part of its preliminary inputs to the zero draft of the Voluntary Guidelines.²

On Land and Markets

As a guiding principle, prior redistributive reforms must be instituted before land markets can be considered. Market-assisted land reform policies (including market mechanisms and land funds) are insufficient instruments in the context of highly unequal societies, where there is no level playing field.

On Conflict Resolution

In terms of resolution of disputes over tenure rights, to the extent possible, the capacities of local institutions should be strengthened for resolving local conflicts. Also, several CSO experiences have highlighted the vital importance of involving women in major peace negotiations;

¹ See ANGOC (2009). *Securing the Right to Land: A CSO Overview on Access to Land in Asia*. Quezon City: Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. Note that an expanded second edition of this book is to be published in 2012.

² Refer also to ANGOC (2005). *Asian NGO Perspectives on Agrarian Reform and Access to Land*. ANGOC Policy Discussion Paper prepared by Antonio B Quizon. Quezon City: Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development.

hence it is important to include women as conflict mediators.

Need for Emphasis on Women's Access to Land

Women with land would have greater bargaining power, which would enable them to negotiate more equal allocations in the family and higher wages in the labor market. Formal land titles and entitlements would contribute to improving women's access to production credit. Titles would also empower women to assert themselves better with external agencies that provide inputs and extension services. Until today, many extension service providers still do not recognize women as farmers. Land rights would further empower women by improving the treatment they receive from other villagers, and by increasing their access to rural decision-making bodies as well as to farmers' institutions.

On Land Rights for Indigenous Peoples

Ensuring "land rights and access" for indigenous peoples goes far beyond common definitions of "land reform" or "agrarian reform". It includes the right to self-governance, through indigenous cultures, institutions, systems of law and justice, and use of resources. Beyond the uplands and forestlands, ancestral domains extend over rangelands, plains, river systems, and even coastlines, and traditional waters and fishing grounds.

On Land Administration

Reforming land administration itself is *not* land reform; nor should land administration projects be designed to replace *redistributive* agrarian reforms. Good land administration may indeed ensure the efficiency of the land titling system. A technically-sound cadastral system will establish the territorial boundaries between two plots of land, but the system itself will not (and should not) determine ownership or proprietary rights.

Rationale and Features of the Voluntary Guidelines

Why governance of tenure?

The FAO acknowledges that land is the most valuable resource on which continued progress depends; the organization further recognizes that ensuring equitable access and secure tenure to land and other natural resources is an issue of governance. FAO also believes that weak governance creates tenure problems and should therefore be addressed.

Weak governance is found in both formal statutory land administrations as well as in informal and customary tenure arrangements. It flourishes where the law is complex, inconsistent or obsolete; where people who work in land agencies lack motivation and are poorly trained and paid; where decision-making processes are not transparent; and where civil society is weak. Weak governance of tenure discourages social stability, investment, widespread economic growth, and sustainable use of the environment. The impact of weak governance can be severe for vulnerable groups and to women who have weaker rights to land. – Excerpt from *Governance of Tenure: Finding Common Ground*, an FAO brochure on the Voluntary Guidelines.

The Voluntary Guidelines, developed as a result of collaboration among different groups of stakeholders – governments, civil society, private sector, academe – are intended to provide a framework for responsible tenure governance that supports food security, poverty reduction, sustainable resource use, and environmental protection. They set out principles and internationally-accepted practices that may guide the preparation and implementation of policies and laws related to tenure governance. They will neither establish binding applications nor replace existing laws, treaties and agreements.

Reforming land administration itself is not land reform; nor should land administration projects be designed to replace redistributive agrarian reforms.

The proposed document will have a global nature and will recognize the national sovereignty of member-countries, and the cultural and religious sensitivities and diversities of groups concerned with tenure governance. It will be consistent with international human rights principles.

While voluntary, the guidelines are supposed to be negotiated with government. The Voluntary Guidelines will follow the format of other FAO voluntary instruments that set out principles and internationally-accepted standards for responsible practice. Examples of these are the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food, the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, among others.

The non-binding character of the Voluntary Guidelines has been a sticky point especially among civil society organizations (CSOs), demanding a firm commitment from governments and accountability by the private sector, especially transnational corporations (TNCs). CSOs say it would be worthwhile to examine the experience of implementing similar non-binding international instruments.

The FAO argues, however, that the non-binding nature of the guidelines is in fact an important element of the framework. Because of the sensitive nature of land tenure, the FAO believes that reaching an agreement among various groups would be close to impossible. With a voluntary document, there is greater chance of incorporating strong issues than with a binding document.

Consultation Process and CFS-led negotiations

From 2009 to 2010, the FAO Secretariat conducted 15 meetings involving around 1,000 people from 133 countries, including participants

from civil society groups. Separately, civil society took part in 10 regional consultation meetings.

Each FAO-led meeting produced an assessment report and all these reports were compiled in an outcome document, becoming the basis in producing a “zero draft” of the guidelines. The zero draft was the subject of a month-long electronic consultation among various stakeholders (April 2011). The suggestions and comments on the zero draft were incorporated into the first draft. One of the global organizations that have been working alongside the FAO since the beginning of the consultation is the International Land Coalition (ILC). The ILC is an alliance of 116 member organizations in more than 50 countries, including UN agencies and other global organizations, farmers’ organizations, research institutes, NGOs and community-based organizations.

Using the zero draft, the ILC Secretariat undertook wide consultation with members, experts, organizations and individuals belonging to its broader network. The process yielded 36 submissions representing the vast experience and expertise of a significant range of stakeholders, with the aim of strengthening the profile of people-centered land governance within the Voluntary Guidelines.³

The first draft of the Voluntary Guidelines was then negotiated in July and October 2011 by States Members of the CFS through an Open-Ended Working Group. Civil society participated in this Working Group through the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), which is the autonomous mechanism for international civil society groups’ participation in the discussion, negotiation and decision-making processes within the framework of the CFS.

In October 2011, consensus was reached on 75% of the reviewed parts of the voluntary guidelines.

³ For the ILC Network Submission please visit: <http://www.landcoalition.org/news/ilc-network-submission-voluntary-guidelines>

Hence, an additional meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group of CFS is still necessary to complete negotiations, whilst adoption is expected for the 38th session in 2012.

What are the concerns of Civil Society?

The Civil Society Mechanism under the CFS has taken positions on several contentious issues around which it is drafting concrete proposals for discussion in thematic working groups and plenary sessions.

These issues pertain to: a) the primary purposes of the guidelines; b) reference to international human rights and the states' obligations; c) protection of local communities from market mechanisms, investments and concessions; d) inclusion of water and other natural resources in the guidelines; e) the need for restitution and redistributive reforms; f) the coherent distinction of the respective roles of states and non-state

actors; and coherent spatial planning from a *sustainable development* perspective.

For the full report of the CSM consultations, see <http://cso4cfs.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/cfs-vg-civil-society-negotiating-positions.pdf>.

Similar concerns emerged during the consultations conducted by the ILC. Based on these, a report was put together and made the basis for a Briefing Note to participants in the 11-15 July 2011 negotiations of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on the voluntary guidelines.

An outcome from this consultation is a consensus that the initial draft of the guidelines fails to address adequately the linkages between land governance and food security, and to prioritize the needs and interests of the vulnerable groups. In order to advance and strengthen people-

centered governance, the outcome report cites four cross-cutting elements that should be covered in the guidelines. They are:

1. People-centered land policies that prioritize the interests and vulnerable groups, whose livelihoods depend on land, including the landless, land-poor and rural workers

Land policies should support the diverse interests of land users, with special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable. Such includes promoting and respecting human rights, including labor rights, and addressing power asymmetries by prioritizing explicitly the interests of vulnerable groups, whose livelihood depend on land and other natural resources. This should take into account models of investments in agriculture and other natural land-based activities that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable, that respect the free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities and that reduce poverty and hunger.

2. Democratic decision-making over land that includes the full spectrum of land users

Land governance should allow for meaningful and timely participation of the full spectrum of land users and their organizations – in national policy dialogues and local decision-making over territorial development. Democratizing decision-making over land also implies promoting gender equality in access to land and land tenure; ensuring political and administrative decentralization; and supporting national-level monitoring based on transparent and accessible land-related information. Land users and their organizations, as well as grassroots communities, should be empowered to participate in decision-making at all levels.

3. Diverse, flexible and plural tenure systems and the protection of the commons

Land policies should recognize and protect diverse, flexible and plural tenure systems, including those of indigenous peoples and pastoralists, fisherfolk,

Land policies should support the diverse interests of land users, with special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable. Such includes promoting and respecting human rights, including labor rights, and addressing power asymmetries by prioritizing explicitly the interests of vulnerable groups, whose livelihood depend on land and other natural resources.

Given the intensified and unequal competition for land and natural resources, there is a need for models of investment that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable.

and users of collectively-owned, used or otherwise acquired common pool resources.

4. Agrarian reform and land redistribution to counteract excessive land concentration and landlessness

Secure and equitable access to and control over land are preconditions for sound and sustainable land governance, but also for peaceful and stable societies. Agrarian reform and land distribution are an important policy tool, particularly in countries where past policies have created vast inequalities, and where control of land is highly concentrated in the hands of the few due to the intensified and increasingly unequal competition for land and natural resources.

In addition, the *ILC Briefing Note to the OEWG* breaks down major observations/comments

under seven different themes⁴, consistent with a people-centered land governance:

Theme 1: Scope and purpose of the VGs: The lack of secure and equitable access to land for the rural poor is widely recognized as one of the main factors leading to the 2007-08 global food crisis. Yet the First Draft of the VGs fails to adequately address the links between land governance and food security, and to prioritize the needs and interests of vulnerable groups.

The ILC Secretariat proposes the explicit mention of the promotion of people-centered policies in the guiding objectives and principles of the Guidelines.

The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food proposes the following insertion in the section on implementation, monitoring and evaluation: *States should implement these guidelines at national level as a full part of their national strategies for the*

⁴ For the full ILC Briefing Note, including amendments proposed, visit: <http://www.landcoalition.org/news/ilc-network-submission-voluntary-guidelines>

progressive realization of the right to food in order to improve consistency with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food.

Theme 2: Land reform, including redistribution and expropriation:

Secure and equitable access to land and other natural resources is a precondition for responsible governance. Policies that improve access to resources are fundamental to the sustainability of smallholder farming systems, improving the potential of all rural producers, mitigating their risks related to food price volatility and achieving long-term food security. Yet the First Draft does not address the negative implications that excessive land concentration has for the environment, economies and societies at large. It ignores the power asymmetries and does not go far enough to secure land rights for women and vulnerable groups.

The ILC Secretariat proposes the following insertion in the Document's guiding objectives and principles: *Promote secure and equitable access to and control over land, fisheries and forests to reduce poverty, promote sustainable development, sound land governance, healthy ecosystems, and contribute to identity, dignity and inclusion.*

Theme 3: Investments and concessions (balancing pro-investment and safeguards):

Given the intensified and unequal competition for land and natural resources, there is a need for models of investment that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. The particular section on investments and concessions in the First Draft is still prone to critical misinterpretation in its provisions. States should not merely *encourage* responsible investments, but instead authorize only responsible investments and concessions.

The ILC Secretariat proposes the following statement to be incorporated in the investments and concessions section of the guidelines: (i) *The state should nominate an independent appeal*

body, such as a court, human rights commission, or ombudsman, to which tenure holders, corporations and other key actors may refer complaints and bring actions concerning the non-observance of the conditions of any investment. States should write into the law provisions for the termination of a concession or land lease for non-observance of the conditions of a concession or land lease. (ii) States must ensure that labour rights in national and international law are reflected in all contracts and agreements and subsequently realized for all workers and producers, both women and men. Guarantees about employment as an alternative or supplementary livelihood for those who lose tenure rights to land and other natural resources must be clear, specific and enforceable.

The ILC Secretariat further proposes the following in the same section: *States and non-state actors should avoid investments that contribute to land grabbing. This includes local-level land grabs, particularly by powerful local elites, within communities or among family members. It also includes large-scale land grabbing, which is land acquisition or concession that is one or more of the following: (i) in violation of human rights, particularly the equal rights of women; (ii) not based on free, prior and informed consent of the affected land users; (iii) not based on a thorough assessment, or are in disregard of social, economic and environmental impacts, including the way they are gendered; (iv) not based on transparent contracts that specify clear and binding commitments about activities, employment and benefits sharing, and; (v) not based on effective democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation.*

This new paragraph is proposed for inclusion in the same section by the European Union: *Investors have a corporate responsibility to respect human rights. Business enterprises must act with due diligence to avoid infringing on human rights within their sphere of influence. They should include appropriate risk management systems to prevent or address adverse human rights impacts. Investors have the responsibility to provide adequate non-judicial access*

to remedy including effective grievance mechanisms for victims of human rights abuses. Investors should consider assessing the human rights impacts of their investments. States have the obligations to provide access to effective judicial access to remedies from human rights abuses by investors. Investing nations or nations supporting investments in other nations must ensure that their actions are respecting their relevant obligations and voluntary commitments to applicable international and regional human rights norms and standards.

Theme 4: Language harmonization with international agreements: The VGs should be adequately linked to the existing and binding international human rights framework. The language used should be fully consistent with international human rights standards and definitions, so that the VGs will not be used to avoid compliance with existing norms, especially on critical issues.

The language in some sections of the guidelines appears to set the bar lower than already-accepted human rights commitments. Language should be strengthened to reflect the commitments that state parties have made.

Theme 5: States and non-state actors and their roles: Democratic land governance, through the meaningful participation of the full spectrum of land users, allows governance of land tenure to be shaped by all who use land and natural resources, in particular those whose livelihood are land-based, and who are at risk of being marginalized in non-participatory land-related processes.

The VGs fail to respond to a world that is more and more democratically defined. Rights, roles and responsibilities of different actors within societies are not addressed. Beyond the welcome concepts of transparency and accountability, the need for a democratization of decision-making over land governance and territorial development is not recognized.

Women play key roles as farmers, yet their access to land and control over land are extremely limited, as is their participation in decision-making at all levels over land governance.

To address this weakness in the Guidelines and emphasize the role of land users and actors as equal partners, the ILC Secretariat proposes the following new paragraph in the section on rights and responsibilities: *States should facilitate efforts by organizations representing various groups of land users to be involved as equal partners in the governance of land and other natural resources, and should ensure that they promote human rights through democratic governance, promotion of gender equality, and pro-poor policies for marginal groups and individuals.*

The ILC Secretariat also suggests the following text for the section on implementation, monitoring and evaluation: *States should periodically report on the relevant activities and progress achieved in implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) within its reporting procedures. The Committee welcomes country-specific information arising from multi-stakeholder national dialogues and civil society. Once received, the Committee will publicly share and disseminate documents containing this information.*

Theme 6: Women's land rights: Women play key roles as farmers, yet their access to land and control over land are extremely limited, as is their participation in decision-making at all levels over land governance. Given this context, the VGs should be instrumental in addressing and overcoming gender disparities in tenure of natural resources, while recognizing and unleashing the potential of women farmers.

The United States says the following paragraph should be inserted in the section on rights and responsibilities: *State should remove and prohibit all legal and regulatory forms of discrimination and, where appropriate, address discriminatory social norms.*

The EU proposes the following provision in the policy, legal and organizations frameworks of the

Guidelines: States should consider the particular obstacles faced by women and girls with regard to tenure and associated property rights and take measures to ensure that legal and policy frameworks provide adequate protection for women, and that laws that recognize women's tenure rights are enforced and implemented. States should ensure that women can legally enter into contracts concerning tenure rights on the basis of equality with men and should provide legal services and other assistance to enable women to defend their tenure interests.

Theme 7: Customary and informal tenure and the commons:

A small minority of poor people who use land for their livelihood holds private titles to land; many users depend on customary tenure systems that have no legal support. The commons are an important safety net against absolute hunger or poverty for those unable to lay claim to their own land, or those who have few other livelihood options.

The First Draft treats the commons and indigenous/customary rights as permissive/use rights awarded by the state rather than as primary territorial rights, recognized and protected by the state. Where necessary, in accordance with the principle of diversity, the VGs should recognize the diversity of tenure systems and promote the recognition of customary land law, in accordance with the international human rights law.

In relation to this, the ILC Secretariat proposes the incorporation of the following in the section on land investments and concessions: *States should refrain from entering into and endeavor to amend investment treaties which allow or encourage land-based investments that do not recognize or protect existing customary or informal land rights.*

The Committee on Food Security held its 37th Session from the 17 to 22 of October 2011 in Rome, Italy. Prior to this, intergovernmental negotiations led by the CFS took place (10 to 15 of October 2011) at the FAO Headquarters and

were attended by approximately 70 countries, 45 CSOs, and one private sector organization.

The negotiations were seen as a success and took place in a positive, constructive and inclusive atmosphere. Significant progress was made with 75% of the Voluntary Guidelines reviewed. A strong sense of ownership of the Voluntary Guidelines was shared by members, civil society and private sector organizations.

The Committee on World Food Security, at its 37th session:

- acknowledged the outstanding efforts of all stakeholders regarding the negotiations of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security;
- recognized that additional time will be required to complete the process, and endorsed its continuation and finalization;
- acknowledged the substantial progress gained to date and recommended building on the solid base which has been achieved, while concentrating on remaining paragraphs and respecting and maintaining the spirit of understanding reached during the July and October negotiations;
- appreciated the commitment of Member States to the completion of the Voluntary Guidelines; and
- mandated the CFS-Bureau, in consultation with the Advisory Group and the Secretariat, to call for an additional negotiation session with the intent of finalizing the Voluntary

Guidelines as soon as possible, taking into consideration the Committee's overall work program and available resources.

POSTSCRIPT:

At the time of writing, the intergovernmental negotiations of the VGs has been successfully finalized in March 2012. A special session of CFS in May 2012 will be convened for its final approval. □

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Is This The Future We Want? The Zero Draft Paper for the Proposed Agenda for Rio+20

Rio and Rio+20

In June 1992, some 2,400 representatives of non-government organizations (NGOs) participated in what was to be known as the Earth Summit. Moreover, around 40,000 civil society representatives from more than 150 countries and all walks of life gathered in a week-long series of parallel events dubbed as “Tent City”. Held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) followed up on the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. Participated in by 172 countries, the conference asked governments to rethink traditional models of economic development and find ways to stop pollution and the destruction of natural resources on earth. Rio, as the conference came to be known, was unprecedented in size and scope, and resulted in several official documents: Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Statement of Forest Principles, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC) is actively engaged

in food security, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance, and rural development. With its concern for sustainable development, ANGOC has continually reviewed and assessed the performance of relevant governments with regard to the Rio principles. In 2002, ANGOC conducted the study contained in the document “Sustainable Development in Southeast Asia: *Reviving the Bond of Communities and the Environment for a Sustainable Future*” to assess progress in Southeast Asia ten years after Rio¹. The study evaluated several parameters including government policies and civil society initiatives impacting on sustainable development.

Twenty years after Rio, the UN will hold the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). Dubbed as Rio+20, the Conference seeks to renew the political commitment of governments and other stakeholders for sustainable development. The conference will also assess the progress so far achieved and the remaining gaps in the implementation of agreements from major summits on sustainable

¹ The paper was prepared by ANGOC on behalf of Stockholm Environment Institute for the United Nations Environment Programme. It drew inputs from various publications of ANGOC related to sustainable development, and from the proceedings of an electronic consultation facilitated by ANGOC.

development, and address new and emerging concerns. The conference will focus on the major themes of the “green economy” in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development. Rio+20 will be held in Brazil from 20 to 22 June 2012.

Purpose of this Briefer

This briefing paper highlights the main points of “The Future We Want” Zero Draft (downloadable from <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/futurewewant.html>) and reactions to the Draft from various civil society organizations (CSOs). The Draft was prepared by the UNCSD Preparatory Committee to set the discussion agenda for Rio+20. It has five major sections comprising 128 paragraphs.

In sum, the Zero Draft calls for cooperation among countries through the exchange of information, knowledge, and technology. Governments are called upon to improve governance; civil society is encouraged to participate in processes; and the private sector is urged to institute practices that support and exemplify sustainable development. Developing countries are recognized to be at a disadvantage, thus special consideration is given to such countries in every field of endeavor that affects sustainable development. International aid agencies are called upon to change their usual way of doing business so that aid would support sustainable development. Lastly, a mechanism to measure progress regarding sustainable development is urged to be formulated under the auspices of the UN Secretary General. It should also be noted that the Draft places much emphasis on green economy.²

² There is as yet no official definition of green economy as the concept is still evolving, but the UN Environmental Programme- Green Economy Report (February 2011) states that a green economy is one that (a) produces low greenhouse gas emissions; (b) uses resources more efficiently; (c) continually generates growth, income and jobs; and (d) observes social equity and inclusiveness.

The Zero Draft has been circulated among UN Member States to solicit their comments. These comments will be the basis for further negotiations scheduled in March 2012. By the time the conference is held, the Draft will have been finalized to contain the commitments of governments and other stakeholders.

CSOs are making the most out of this period of review from January to May 2012 by member states to make their own review for the possible consideration of the Conference Secretariat.

“The Future We Want”

Renewing Political Commitment

The Zero Draft (hereafter referred to as Draft) begins with the countries reaffirming their commitment to end hunger and poverty, and building equitable and inclusive societies. The countries also commit to accelerate progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, enhance cooperation, and address current and emerging issues. Lastly, the countries renew their commitment to sustainable development and the pursuit of green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The Draft cites the legal and policy premises of the above commitments, namely, the United Nations Charter, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development: the Political Declaration on Africa’s development needs, and the Istanbul Programme of Action

CSOs are making the most out of this period of review from January to May 2012 by member states to make their own review for the possible consideration of the Conference Secretariat.

for Least Developed Countries. The need to reinforce sustainable development globally through international and national efforts considers the sovereign right of states over their natural resources.

The document recognizes that there has been much progress since the Earth Summit in 1992, spurred mostly by new information technologies that have empowered people. But there were also setbacks due to financial and economic crises, as well as unstable energy and food prices. Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States, and middle-income countries and African countries were pointed out for the special challenges they face.

Engaging major groups

In calling for a holistic approach to sustainable development, the Draft recognizes the contribution of the world's different cultures and civilizations in protecting the Earth.

Sustainable development requires broad public participation in decision-making. Thus, the Draft wants civil society to be actively engaged in sustainable development by being involved in making national and local policies and demanding accountability from decision-makers. This is to be done by governments facilitating access to information supported by communications technologies. Thus, the draft also acknowledges the role of lawmakers in furthering sustainable development.

Business and industry are encouraged to lead in advancing a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The importance of local governments, children and youth, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is also acknowledged.

The Draft's framework for action consists of improving governance and capacity at the global, regional, national and local levels; and reinvigorating the partnership for sustainable development among states. It calls for a global policy framework that requires big corporations to consider sustainability issues.

Framework for Action

The Draft pushes for a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Its advocacy for a green economy, however, does not presuppose as a rigid set of rules but a decision-making framework that considers sustainable development in public and private decision-making. The Draft asserts that green economy policies can be pursued by all nations regardless of level of development, but recognizes that developing countries need structural changes that may involve additional costs. The help of the international community is thus encouraged, but the Draft cautions against new challenges to sustainable development arising from such assistance, such as trade barriers and conditions on aid and finance.

The Draft proposes guidelines to provide support to developing countries, and recommends parts of the institutional framework for sustainable development. It further recognizes the roles of UN bodies, namely the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development/Sustainable Development Council, and the UN Environmental Programme. International Financial Institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are asked to give "due consideration" to sustainable development. The draft supports the creation of a knowledge-sharing platform to be established by the UN Secretary General where different stakeholders can share their experiences.

A regular review of the state of the planet is urged, with the Secretary General tasked to coordinate efforts to that end. The Draft wants to enhance the interface between science and policy-making so that there is stronger scientific basis for decisions across the UN system. The countries will consider the establishment of an Ombudsperson, or High Commissioner for Future Generations, to promote sustainable development.

Priority Areas for Action

The Draft proposes actions on the following key issues:

Food security:

Prioritize sustainable intensification of food production through increased investment in local food production, improved access to local and global agri-food markets, and reduced waste; more transparent and open trading systems; improve access to information and enhance interaction among farmers and experts.

Water:

Set goals for wastewater management; implement integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans as provided in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation; encourage cooperation in the management of water resources through capacity development, exchange of experiences and sharing of appropriate technologies.

Energy:

Provide universal access to a basic minimum level of modern energy services for both consumption and production uses by 2030; improve energy efficiency at all levels; and double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030. The Draft calls for adequate financial resources for developing countries. Each country is expected to work for low-carbon development.

Cities:

An integrated and holistic approach to city planning is needed.

Green jobs:

Grant workers the skills and protections necessary to participate in and benefit from the transition to a green economy; create job opportunities through investments in public works for the restoration and enhancement of natural capital and other sustainable development efforts; encourage business and industry to contribute to green job creation.

Oceans and Small Island Developing States (SIDS):

Support the completion of the first global integrated assessment of the state of the marine environment by the Regular Process for the Global Marine Assessment, and consider the assessment findings in the formulation of national, regional and global oceans policy; initiate, as soon as possible, the negotiation of an implementing agreement to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction; advance the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; implement an international observing network for ocean acidification and collectively prevent further acidification; maintain or restore depleted fish stocks to sustainable levels and implement science-based management plans to rebuild stocks by 2015; maintaining or restoring depleted fish stocks to sustainable levels and to further commit to implementing science-based management plans to rebuild stocks by 2015; consider SIDS as special cases for sustainable development and assist SIDS to achieve sustainable development.

Natural disasters:

Continue to address disaster risk reduction even after 2015; increased coordination at the national, regional and international levels for a

robust response to environmental emergencies and improved forecasting and early warning systems; closer coordination between emergency response, early recovery, and development efforts, including adoption of a post “Hyogo Framework” and its integration into development policy.

Climate change:

Urgently implement all agreements reached at COP17 at Durban; encourage international initiatives and partnerships to address the interrelationship among water, energy, food and climate change to achieve synergies and minimize conflicts among policy objectives.

Forests, biodiversity, land degradation, and desertification:

Support policy frameworks and market instruments that effectively slow, halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation and promote the sustainable use, conservation, restoration, and management of forests; support mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem services in policies and decision-making processes; call for enhanced support by the international community to implement the UN Convention to Combat Desertification; support partnerships and initiatives to safeguard soil resources; encourage scientific studies and initiatives to raise wider awareness of the economic benefits of sustainable land management policies.

Mountains:

Explore global, regional, national, and local mechanisms to compensate and reward mountain communities for the services they provide through ecosystem protection.

Chemicals and waste:

Strengthen the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management to step up efforts towards a more robust, coherent, effective, and efficient international regime for chemicals throughout their lifecycle; address

emerging challenges of electronic waste and plastics in the marine environment through appropriate programs and environmentally sound technologies for material and energy recovery.

Sustainable Consumption and Production:

Establish a 10-Year Framework of Programmes on sustainable consumption and production.

Education:

Strengthen the contribution of educational systems to the pursuit of sustainable development; call upon universities to become models of best practice and transformation by setting an example of sustainability in their campus facilities and teaching sustainable development as a module across all disciplines; encourage international education exchange activities on education for sustainable development; promote education for sustainable development beyond the end of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2014.

Gender equality:

Remove barriers that have prevented women from being full participants in the economy and unlock their potential as drivers of sustainable development; prioritize measures to promote gender equality in all spheres of society; support the work of UN Women in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Measuring progress and means of implementation

To measure progress in sustainable development, the Draft requests the UN Secretary General to coordinate the preparation of a set of global Sustainable Development Goals that reflect an integrated and balanced treatment of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The Draft calls for the prioritization of sustainable development in the allocation of resources, and increased aid effectiveness. It also recognizes the

limitations of GDP as a measure of well-being, and thus urges the development of indicators integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions to complement GDP.

To enable the implementation of the agreements within it, the Draft calls for the fulfillment of all official development assistance commitments, including those made by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7% of GNP for official development assistance to developing countries by 2015, as well as a target of 0.15% to 0.20% of GNP for official development assistance to least developed countries.

Recognizing the role of the private sector in promoting sustainable development, the Draft suggests that public policy should create an environment conducive to long-term investment and socially and environmentally responsible behavior by business and industry.

With regard to trade, the Draft urges members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to redouble efforts for a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system. It supports the phase out of market distorting and environmentally harmful subsidies that impede the transition to sustainable development.

Comments from Stakeholders

CSOs from Asia and the Pacific region have gathered their views and remarks on the “zero draft” during the initial discussions at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20) held from 25-27 January 2012 at the UN Headquarters in New York and through electronic consultation. For many of them the draft lacks urgency, ambition, and detail (UN NGLS Newsletter, February 2012).

The Draft is praised for recognizing failures in efforts to attain targets identified at the Rio

Summit, but some organizations find fault in the Draft’s attribution of such failures to economic and financial crises, effectively absolving governments from their failure to respond to the needs of their constituents. Also, while the Draft identifies a number of issues that have arisen or worsened since Rio, it appears silent on the growing disparity between rich and poor people as well as rich and poor countries.

There is also a prevalent view that the Draft is phrased in general terms to produce a document that can be widely accepted by conference participants, to avoid difficult intergovernmental negotiations. By doing so, the implementation aspect of the Draft becomes weak.

Some organizations see inconsistencies between some of the Draft’s provisions and current trends in governance. An example is the Draft’s call for governments to create a regulatory framework conducive to long-term investment and socially and environmentally responsible behavior, which some organizations say runs counter to demands in many countries for their government to take on more responsibility in protecting the public interest.

This brings to focus the Draft’s call for increased private sector participation. This, too, is not entirely welcomed by stakeholders, given the profit motive of private entities. The Draft is silent on the flawed financial system that creates global instabilities. The Draft also fails to note that private entities, especially transnational corporations, have unduly influenced domestic and international policies.

There is also irony in the Draft’s encouragement to address the three pillars of sustainable development, but the Draft focuses heavily on the environment and does not address the human rights and socio-economic aspects of sustainable development. Thus, the Draft itself is wanting with

Some organizations see inconsistencies between some of the Draft’s provisions and current trends in governance.

ANGOC echoes many of the sentiments other CSOs have expressed, especially those concerning the “Green Economy”.

regard to the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

It is also notable that the Draft has minimal discussion on indigenous peoples (IP), both as a sector that needs attention and as a key to attaining sustainable development. The only significant mention of IPs, and cryptically at that, is as mountain communities responsible for protecting the ecosystem.

The Draft’s endorsement of *green economy* is not entirely embraced by CSOs. Reactions range from caution to rejection. Part of the critique may be due to the still ongoing evolution of green economy. Additionally, it is unclear if green economy discourages the intensifying cross-border practices of some States such as land-grabbing and patenting of indigenous genetic resources of other nations. The consensus is that the Green Economy should not justify investments that will alter the use and management of natural resources, and compromise food security and access of small holders to land and other productive resources. Green economy should also not confuse or obscure commitments to sustainable development; instead, sustainable development should be the overarching goal.

In this light, it is worth noting the role that the Draft attributes to trade. The Draft calls for the removal of “harmful” subsidies and the institution of non-discriminatory policies. As applied to struggling economies, this formula may not necessarily lead to sustainable development since stronger economies may dominate the weaker ones. Some organizations note that other factors must be considered such as the effective transfer of technology from developed to developing countries, which can better realize a level playing field.

Stakeholders likewise lament that while the Draft recognizes the shortcomings of the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of national wellness, it is not abandoned as such. Instead, the Draft calls for the integration of other factors into the GDP. Some organizations prefer replacing GDP with measures more attuned to sustainable development, and suggest building on such examples as the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, the Gross National Happiness Index of Bhutan and the current revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) under the Statistics Division of the UN Secretariat.

ANGOC echoes many of the sentiments other CSOs have expressed, especially those concerning the “Green Economy”. The model aspires for a more sustainable way of using and managing natural resources while achieving poverty eradication and inclusive growth. Although sustainable land and natural resource use planning was mentioned by some governments as a critical element in achieving sustainable development, ultimately, the states’ priorities will define their land use plans. Furthermore, the issues around equity for small holders in the region should be addressed equally alongside the economic and environmental goals of sustainable development.

Meanwhile, resources are still seen as factors of production and growth. But if considered as essential elements for the survival of humankind, they must be conserved and protected. In the end, fertile land and waters, safe seeds and farming methods, and the nurturing hands of small food producers will spell the sustainability of global food security and not enhanced global or greener trade.

Critical action at this point is for CSOs and community organizations to continue monitoring and influencing the implementation of each country’s sustainable development commitments and programs for the Millennium Development Goals and inconsistencies with national policies.

Both government and the private sector must be enjoined to make sincere efforts at sustaining this planet's natural resources sans the economic motive or incentives to go green.

The UN CSD is currently gathering the comments to the Zero Draft from various stakeholders worldwide. Another round of regional meetings will be done in May 2012 before the RIO + 20 Conference in June at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Surely, much debate will still take place on contentious provisions of the Draft at the Summit itself. But given the volume of comments, one can pause to ask, what is the future do we really want? □

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Critical action at this point is for CSOs and community organizations to continue monitoring and influencing the implementation of each country's sustainable development commitments and programs for the Millennium Development Goals and inconsistencies with national policies



The Search for a Sustainable Framework for Food Security and Livelihoods of the Rural Poor

IN 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that of the 925 million hungry, 578 million are found in Asia. Among these are Asia's small food producers, majority of whom continue to live on less than \$1.25 per day. The International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) also attests that 70% of the world's very poor people are rural. They are chronically poor due to lack of assets, limited economic opportunities, poor education and skills, and socio-political inequities (by gender, age or indigenous roots).

This article^a intends to provide a perspective or how food security and livelihood of the rural poor in Asia can be strengthened and sustained by following the framework of sustainable agriculture.

Livelihood in rural areas are mostly derived from smallholder farming, including agricultural labor, livestock production, and artisanal fisheries. Usually the poorest households depend on farming and agricultural labor. Many farming households tend to diversify their livelihood since income is seasonal from one type of crop alone. Usually,

this involves a mixture of on-farm and off-farm activities of various family members. Thus, there is higher pressure to create a dynamic agriculture sector, which can play a major role in reducing poverty and hunger.

With the food crisis of 2008, food security regained top priority for governments and intergovernmental organizations. And as can be expected, investments and development assistance are shifting back to agriculture and food security programs. But how are these truly affecting and improving food security and livelihood for the rural poor in Asia? Several key challenges need to be considered:

High vulnerability of the rural poor. The State of Food Insecurity 2010 produced by FAO noted the lack of resilience to economic shocks of poor countries and vulnerable households. Such shocks could be death or illness in the family, calamities or even price increase of basic goods or inputs. To cope with crisis, rural households tend to sell assets that are difficult to recover (such as land and livestock), reduce food intake in quantity or

Condensed from the full paper (same title) presented by Fr. Francis Lucas, ANGOC Chairperson Emeritus at the International Conference on Agriculture and Food Security (ICAFS), Singapore, August 10-12, 2011.

quality, or cut down on health and education expenses. These risks for poor rural households need to be managed or minimized.

Unsustainable food production systems.

Unsustainable methods of agriculture have caused soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, excessive water extraction from irrigation, to name a few.^b Around 75% of biodiversity in agriculture was lost in the last 50 years.^c Up to 90% of crop varieties have disappeared from farmers' fields.^d Half of the breeds of domestic animals are lost; fishing grounds, overfished.

Limited resources, limitless demand.

Land, water, energy --- these are but the most critical elements for life on this planet to survive and yet, are becoming scarcer with the growing population and their competing use. Deforestation and mining are destroying watersheds, biodiversity, and indigenous cultures. The stability in the food production and consumption of the rural poor is being threatened by increasing competition for land due to agricultural investments and urbanization. Around 15-20 million hectares of land are under negotiation for acquisition or leasing by foreign investors (IFAD Rural Poverty Report, 2011). While the government may have the right intention of encouraging agricultural investments, the food security of the rural poor should be included in their economic equation.

On the other hand, demand for water used for agriculture could rise by over 30% by 2030. Agriculture currently consumes 70% of water withdrawals from rivers and aquifers (Foresight, 2011).

Climate change. The changing climate pattern will also have a tremendous impact on the rural poor's food security. Desertification, salinization, and sea level rise will further diminish arable land. Agriculture's specificity to location and sensitivity to weather, will affect greatly the types of crops and

their productivity. In turn, food intake is affected as there will be changes in taste, nutrient content, and social acceptability. Biofuel requirements for climate change mitigation will also reduce lands for growing food crops.

Rural undernourishment. In the Philippines, the rural population is eating less than those living in the urban areas (XUCA, 2011). Within the food groups, people in the rural areas eat more cereals, starchy tubers and vegetables, and very little of milk and milk products, meats, and surprisingly, fruits. The bigger percentage intake of carbohydrates and starchy foods is related to the availability and affordability of these food products in the rural areas.

Can the rural poor achieve food security and sustainable livelihoods from agriculture?

YES, they can, with a more holistic framework to guide programs and interventions. Sustainability should not only target better food security and livelihood for increased incomes but the sustainability of resources and the quality of life. Hence, ANGOC has heavily espoused mainstreaming sustainable agriculture as a key strategy to achieve these goals.

Sustainable agriculture as basis for agricultural systems

Organic and agro-ecological agriculture is part of the larger approach of sustainable agriculture (SA), the more fundamental framework which is essentially principle and value-laden. Today, it is inaccurately branded as an alternative agricultural method perhaps only to differentiate it from the "conventional", high-yielding agricultural practices propagated by the Green Revolution. Yet, it has been embedded in Asia's long tradition of food self-sufficiency and community survival. Sustainable Agriculture is one of the most effective programs for food security, especially for the underdeveloped rural and agricultural countries.

Communities of small food producers have partnered with civil society organizations (CSOs) for half a century to defend and promote the practice of sustainable agriculture that conserve and improve the environment.

SA, with its agro-ecological system, conserves the natural resource base made up of water, soils and biodiversity, and at the same time entails economically-viable activity because of the diversity of animals, plants and microorganisms, and crops involved. Emphasis is put on **small-scale and medium-sized farms** instead of large-scale farms. Community-based and family-based agricultural systems will be more prominent and a closer link between rural and urban populations is envisioned – that is, consumers and producers are more interconnected.

The FAO report on the State of Food Insecurity in 2002 also emphasized that farmers who owned their lands tend to invest more on making them productive than those who still leased land or work as farm laborers. Furthermore, small farm owners have more freedom to decide how to diversify their farm activities according to their needs, which helps achieve household food security. Farmers who practice sustainable agriculture are usually those who have no tenure issues and can choose freely their preferred farming approach.

Communities of small food producers have partnered with civil society organizations (CSOs) for half a century to defend and promote the practice of sustainable agriculture that conserve and improve the environment. SA protects the seeds, the genetic resources that could feed the planet, in a sustainable, equitable, ecological, and healthy manner. The UN official statistics estimate around 1.5 billion smallholder families that practice traditional and ecological forms of agriculture, pastoralism and fisheries for a living.^e

Studies attest that growth in agriculture can still generate the best improvements for the poorest people (IFAD Rural Development Report, 2011), especially through sustainable agriculture. SA promotes diversified livelihood, like crop and farm diversification, to address seasonal harvests, nutritional deficiencies, and environmental

conservation. SA is labor-intensive, which promotes agricultural employment or family/community integration. There is also a need to balance on- and off-farm activities to reduce the risks that keep rural households in the cycle of poverty.

For the past decade, ANGO has been involved with two programs that has been working to strengthen the link between sustainable agriculture practitioners and the market to respond to growing opportunities for better income and to promote healthier, more nutritious food to a wider public.

1. Enhancing capacities for sustainable agriculture towards poverty reduction^f

In partnership with the Asia-Japan Partnership Network (AJPN), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), NGOs and People's Organizations, ANGO implemented “*Enhancing Capacities for Sustainable Agriculture Towards Poverty Reduction*”, which aimed to contribute to the goal of poverty reduction by enhancing capacities of Asian rural communities to increase agricultural productivity through the promotion of sustainable farming systems. By adopting these technologies, the Project enhanced capacities of farmers in selected rural communities in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines towards sustainable utilization of land and labor resources.

Site activities were identified following a site resource development planning activity, making the process highly demand-driven. Such approach enabled farmers to formulate with appropriate interventions on the basis of available resources. The table next page provides an overview of the interventions undertaken:

The project sites were subjected to resource assessments to decide on which stage in the commodity chain each should focus, while considering vulnerability factors and strategies to achieve their objectives.

Project Sites	Local Support Group	Crops
India		
Khamkalan, Kaimur, Bihar and Parmalpur, Kaimur, Bihar	Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD)	Pigeon Pea, Niger, Tomato, Potato, Rice and Wheat
Moravapalli and Kothapalli Villages, Pulicherla Mandal, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh	South Asia Rural Reconstruction Association (SARRA)	Tomato, Brinjal, Chilies, Ladyfinger, Onion, Double Beans, Cluster Beans, Radish, Pumpkin, Ridge Gourd, Bitter Gourd, Drumstick and Leafy Vegetables
Indonesia		
Banjaroya, Banjarasri, Jatisarone, Pagerharjo, Giripurwo and Hargorejo, Kulon Progo, Jogjakarta	Hari Pangan Sedunec (HPS)	Cassava, Rice, Ginger, Clove, Corn, Lima Bean and Banana
Banjarmangu, Punggelan and Paseh, Propinsi Jateng, Banjarnegara	Bina Desa	Organic rice and Zallaca fruit
Philippines		
Barangays Tongantongan, Sinayawan & Kahaponan, Valencia City, Bukidnon	Philippine Development Assistance Program (PDAP)	Organic rice
Barangays Tual and Tuato, President Quirino & Barangay San Emmanuel, Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat	Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA)	Sugarcane

Source: *Sustainable Agriculture as a Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Asia: The AJPN Experience, 2005, ANGOC-AJPN*

India worked on improving diversification through crop and livestock production with training, exposure programs, and the establishment of demo farms for pigeon pea, tomato, rice and wheat. While access to land was not a problem in the Indian sites, productivity was constrained by the low supply of irrigation water, high input costs, and the farmers' lack of skills.

In Indonesia, most of the farmers had lands, but very small. Thus, they also needed to diversify their income sources and add value to their agricultural products (i.e., rice, corn, lima beans, cassava, zallaca fruit). Food processing and cottage industry development were selected strategies to augment their income.

In the Philippines, interventions focused on marketing and industry development to enhance the producer groups' competitiveness in the market for organic rice and muscovado sugar. Interventions were related to product consolidation, quality control, standards development, and cementing market linkages.

Results. The project demonstrated the potential of SA for raising farm productivity, while keeping inputs to a minimum. Although labor costs increased due to the labor intensiveness of an organic farm, jobs were created for unemployed rural workers. With premium prices commanded from natural or organic products, this significantly improved the farmers' incomes. The corn farmers of Jogjakarta, Indonesia saw a 32% increase in corn production. The pigeon pea and tomato harvests of Khamkalan farmers from India shot up to 58% and 35% more, respectively. The muscovado sugar farmers from the Philippines yielded a net return on investment of 15.41% after they upgraded product quality and established better market linkages.

But the best capability perhaps instilled in the food producers was independent decision-making on farm management. While conventional agriculture may have raised their yield to impressive levels, it would have prescribed varieties to grow, and fertilizers and pesticides to use. Farmers ultimately have little room for their own choices.

On the other hand, since sustainable agriculture is knowledge intensive, training investments are required for extension workers, with the incorporation of SA in academic curricula and the allocation of a budget for SA researches.

The Project was also able to strengthen local development planning through the formulation of Master Plans for organic products that have significant potential in local and export markets. Under these plans, the local government unit (LGU) could facilitate the consolidation of organic products from small farmers by setting up a common framework and program for participation of various stakeholders in the area. Business plans could also be developed from these Master Plans.

2. Promoting Rural Industries and Market Enhancement (PRIME)^g

In 2005, the Philippine Development Assistance Programme, Inc. (PDAP)^h, a consortium of rural development NGOs based in the Philippines, with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), embarked on a six-year program called PRIME with a financial contribution of CDN\$ 4.8 million. ANGO is a founding member and current board member of PDAP.

PRIME has four major components/target outcomes, namely micro-enterprise development, enhancing participation in the market, program and policy analyses in support to rural micro-enterprises/industries, and strengthened institutional capacity of PDAP. These four components were envisioned to achieve the three interrelated program goals of enhanced food security, increased income, and jobs creation towards poverty reduction. Result specific for food security is expected to be addressed by one major target outcome, that is, increased household income.

Of the 42 micro-enterprises (MEs) under PRIME, 26 MEs are devoted to organic rice, 13 to

muscovado, and 3 to seaweeds. PRIME areas are national in scope. The geographical concentration is in Mindanao with 29 MEs; there are 9 in Visayas and 4 in Luzon.

To enhance farmer participation in the market, PRIME adopted as its core strategy the **rural industry development (RID)** approach to support MEs in poor rural communities that are engaged in organic and natural commodities. RID looked into the entire chain of the three (3) commodities from production, processing, and distribution. It facilitates the effective participation of farmers and rural producers in the market through organizational capacity building of rural enterprising communities (RECs).

The RECs are communities who have gone up from survival and productivity stage to communities that have exhibited growth through micro-enterprise development and industry-oriented enterprise. RECs have secured their production assets and increased productivity with some surplus, and have organized themselves into small micro-enterprises. Furthermore, they now have substantial production volume, were linked to the value chain and demonstrated a certain level of expertise in technical and marketing aspects. RECs, while still in incipient and formative stages, have some capacities to engage the market. However, these RECs or their respective MEs have limited growth prospects due to financing constraints, which PRIME also sought to address.

The value chain approach in the previous page aptly reflects the interventions of PRIME along the value chain of the priority industries. At one end of the value chain were individual farmers belonging to RECs who produced the commodity and did primary value-adding activities, such as milling and processing. The produce were then aggregated at the Local Market Consolidation (LMC) level for common marketing, and further leveraged with the distributors at the other end of the chain. The distributors oversaw product

availability to the institutional markets and the ultimate consumers.

In partnership with key players (e.g., financing institutions, NGOs, business development service providers, marketing groups, private businesses), PDAP played a vital role in developing three organic and natural commodities. PRIME provided RECs with the necessary financing, technology, entrepreneurial capability, and other capacity development interventions so they can actively participate in the dynamic and fast-growing organic and natural products market.

PRIME also worked with national government agencies and LGUs, along with the academe, NGOs, multilateral and bilateral agencies, and the private sector to improve public policy and influence the development of programs and allocation of resources that support rural industry development towards poverty reduction. The PRIME itself led to the creation of local clusters, value chains and industry associations on organic rice and muscovado. The Global Organic and Wellness Corporation (GlowCorp), a business corporation composed of PRIME MEs and LMCs geared towards institutional and export markets, was also incorporated.

Insights from the Projects

The path out of poverty in the rural areas is by no means easy nor brief. There are still challenges to sustain the target of an average 15% increase in income. Some of these key challenges are posed by conditions in the larger economic and political setting, chief of which are the price movements in the world market of the three commodities and rice importations.

1. Land Tenure Security: An important first step to food self-sufficiency. It is critical to note that the successful community efforts presented above confirmed the need to secure their access and control of their resources first before attaining the higher goals of household

Main Results of PRIME

Sustained jobs, households served. PRIME interventions resulted in additional and/or sustained jobs. As of September 2010, PRIME micro-enterprises now serve 5,138 rural households or 30,828 Filipinos. As members of MEs, farmers also benefited from the ME's profitability by way of interest on capital and patronage refunds and dividends.

Increased income, diversified sources, enhanced food security. Organic and natural products command premium prices in the market. The PRIME package of services from production to marketing ensured that, like other players along the value chain, small farmers and rural enterprises also benefit.

Diversified income sources through livelihood from the MEs enabled farmer members to augment their primary incomes. The particular support of PRIME for women's enterprises covered production of mushrooms, rice cookies, and sugarcane-based processed products in Luzon; processing of sugarcane-based products in the Visayas as well as of the by-products of the three priority commodities in Mindanao.

Facilitation of market linkages. Through the Local Market Consolidators (LMCs) scheme of PRIME that facilitated market linkages, pricing of the products of the partner MEs became more competitive (i.e. favorable to the farmer members, the MEs, LMCs, and distributors). LMCs and distributors were able to expand market outlets from local (within the community, province) to inter/regional and national markets.

Policy support and advocacy. The enactment in 2010 of the Organic Agriculture Act or Republic Act 10068 was a landmark outcome of PRIME. The law provided the institutional framework for the growth of organic agriculture in the Philippines. PDAP sat as the NGO representative in the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB). PDAP and another PRIME partner, the Organic Certification Center of the Philippines (OCCP), were again at the forefront in the formulation of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Organic Agriculture Act.

food security, excess production, and industry focus. The two projects purposely selected food producers who have security of tenure over their land. With this critical stage already resolved, the farmers were more focused on food security and productivity issues. They were also free to decide on the use and management of their resources.

2. Exercising greater control on food. The underlying assumption here is that food is more secure when produced in the backyard or by the community. There is less risk of going hungry even if shocks (i.e., natural, health, etc.) move the rural households in and out of poverty. Moreover, locally produced food have better quality and cheaper prices. Food nutrients are conserved and preservatives are not added. Handling costs are also minimal.

Though a number of countries have relied on the market to augment their food supply, most of them still depend mainly on domestic production. The volume of rice traded in the world market, for example, is less than 5% of the total production. The current Philippine Department of Agriculture has crafted a rice self-sufficiency plan over three years. They have committed to satisfy the local demand for rice and even export excess supply. Though others may take this with a grain of salt considering the Philippines has been a rice importer for the past three years, this objective is worth supporting. The goal of DA is consistent with the agenda of having greater control over our food.

3. Facilitate access of the rural poor to the market. Filipino farmers of muscovado sugar showed that upgrading product quality and establishing better market linkages have a positive effect on price, which later yielded a net return of 15.41%.

It is also necessary to invest in enhancing the farmers' capacities for product processing and promotion, or at least the organizational mechanisms that should assist them. Finding the value-added of specific products is not easy and requires appropriate marketing linkages and strategies.

Furthermore, organizing the suppliers (millers/traders/farmers) and linking them with reliable buyers/consolidators of SA-grown products can stimulate demand for the product, as in the case of muscovado sugar.

4. Securing the food and nutrition needs of the rural poor through diversification. In enhancing the food security of the rural poor, a big bulk of the challenge is assisting rural communities meet food requirements by producing diverse crops locally. This can be done by producing substitute products, fortifying existing foods or

introducing new commodities. An example of this initiative is the introduction of a legume that has high protein content. It may not be a complete substitute for meat and meat products but is at least a viable solution for combating protein deficiency. The introduction of a new commodity or new variety may, however, require training and technical assistance.

5. Reducing risks from unexpected shocks. Illness, death, education, natural disasters --- these are among the most common risks of a rural poor household that root them to destitution. We need to pay greater attention to these and to territorial characteristics that could be crucial dealbreakers in rural families' struggle out of poverty.

6. Strengthening a marketing system tailored to support SA products. Both projects had to deal with a marketing system that still caters to the needs of conventionally-grown agricultural products. A new system which considers the unique processing, storage, and even packaging needs of organic producers must be established.

At the community level, local institutions led by local governments can provide support facilities like seed banks, processing plants, and distribution channels. This support will increase community productivity and participation in the local market. Linking local food production directly to the local market through a value chain will generate local employment and maximize labor. Hopefully, it will boost the local economy, as well as improve the local community's health and food security, particularly those of the rural poor.

Key interventions in the establishment of these food chains are the organization of the rural poor into commodity clusters to attain marketable volume, provision of postharvest and storage facilities, and enhancement of their entrepreneurial capacities.

Given the fragile food sub-system of the rural poor, their control over productive resources for producing their own food should be strengthened, their local food production should be enhanced, and their link to the market should be facilitated, prioritizing the local market that is easily accessible and familiar to the small food producers.

Promoting community-centered enterprises for sustainability

Finally, we need to shift our focus again to making the community the center of development and not be purely profit-motivated. People-centered enterprises treat natural and human resources not merely as factors of production, but as resources that fulfill present and future human needs. The motivations and decision-making processes of the capital and community-centered approaches are thus differentiated in the table on this page.

A community-centered enterprise appears to be the more appropriate strategy to achieve both the goals of sustainable livelihood and food security. This approach encourages people to do work that ensures the sustainability of the ecology and the well-being of the community as the core principles of production.

As CSOs, we must continue to engage in reforming the policy environment to support community enterprises, build knowledge and capacity among community entrepreneurs, and conduct research and development for effective methods in managing these enterprises. We must ensure that development will not be defined by economic growth alone. It should be a more holistic growth that includes social justice, economic productivity, sustainable environment, political participation and a vibrant culture.¹ □

Capital-centered	Community-centered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What can I sell? ■ How much can I make? ■ How to produce it cheaply? ■ Market development – promoting consumer cultures ■ Individualism ■ Profit and wealth accumulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What do people need? ■ How much will people benefit? ■ How can production involve the community and sustain the habitat? ■ Community Development: responsibility of stewardship ■ Community well-being ■ Resource sharing and quality of life

Source: ANGOC. *Sharing the Fruits of Our Labors, Report of the Third Asian Development Forum, Quezon City, 1995*

Endnotes

- a Written by Fr. Francis Lucas, Roel R. Ravanera, Casandra Hilary B. Emata and Maricel Almojuela-Tolentino for the Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Development (ANGOC), 2011. Fr. Lucas is Chairperson Emeritus of ANGOC and an SA practitioner and advocate. Mr. Ravanera and Ms. Emata are the Dean of College of Agriculture, Xavier University and Research Assistant of Xavier Science Foundation, respectively. Ms. Tolentino is a Senior Program Officer of ANGOC for Access to Resources.
- b Foresight. The Future of Food and Farming (2011) Executive Summary, The Government Office for Science, London.
- c ETC Group, GRAIN, ITDG, 2002.
- d FAO
- e ETC Group, *Who will feed us?*
- f Sustainable Agriculture as Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Asia: The AJPN Experience, Teresa L. Debuque (ed), Asia-Japan Partnership Network for Poverty Reduction (AJPN)-ANGOC, 2005.
- g PDAP Paper for the Roundtable Discussion: Imperatives on Agriculture and Food Security for the New Administration, 4 July 2011, Quezon City, Philippines
- h Established in 1984, PDAP is composed of the Asian NGO Coalition, Assisi Development Foundation, Association of Foundations, National Council of Social Development, Philippine Business for Social Progress, and Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas
- i Sharing the Fruits of Our Labors, Report of the Third Asian Development Forum, ANGOC, 1995.



The Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition is a forward-thinking global initiative that links like-minded organizations and institutions that

are involved in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. The Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition provides a unique middle ground – a multi-stakeholder platform and forum where those who run top-down and bottom-up development initiatives can meet in a neutral and open environment, share ideas, learn from each other’s successes and lessons, and establish networks for supportive communication within countries, across national borders or with countries in distant parts of the world.



The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of civil society

and intergovernmental organizations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue and capacity building.



As the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Germany,

MISEREOR works in partnership with all people of goodwill to promote development, fight worldwide poverty, liberate people from injustice, exercise solidarity with the poor and persecuted, and help create “One World”.



Founded in 1979, ANGOC is a regional association of 17 national and regional networks of non-government organizations (NGOs) in Asia actively engaged in food security, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance and rural development. ANGOC member networks and partners work in 14 Asian

countries with an effective reach of some 3,000 NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). ANGOC actively engages in joint field programs and policy debates with national governments, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and international financial institutions (IFIs).

The complexity of Asian realities and diversity of NGOs highlight the need for a development leadership to service the poor of Asia—providing a forum for articulation of their needs and aspirations as well as expression of Asian values and perspectives. ANGOC seeks to address the key issues related to food sovereignty, agrarian reform, sustainable agriculture, participatory governance, and rural development in the region.

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