



welt
hunger
hilfe



**WITH THE RIGHT TO FOOD
TOWARDS GREATER FOOD SECURITY**

The States Parties to the Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. (...)

The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international cooperation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11.



► Action for the right to food means not just increasing global food production. Rather, where hunger is prevalent, it's important that people are helped to improve their living conditions through the consistent implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines.

There is scarcely a human right which is more massively breached than the right to food.

More than one billion people worldwide are currently suffering from hunger. They do not have sufficient food available to them in order to be able to meet their daily calorific requirements. Malnutrition – due to inadequate ingestion of vitamins and minerals – is also widespread.

All these forms of mal- and undernourishment lead to the physical and mental development and capacities of children and adults being impaired, which results in large-scale economic, social and cultural damage.

Every starving or undernourished person is suffering a breach of his right to adequate food. With an estimated 25,000 deaths due to hunger per day (United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2002), this must be one of the human rights which have been most massively breached over many decades.

States have obligations – obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food.

States have the obligation to take measures to gradually make the full realisation of the right to adequate food a reality, and to strive to achieve this goal as quickly as possible.

The **duty to respect** requires that the covenant states take no measures which result in the access to adequate food being hindered.

The **duty to protect** requires the state to take measures which ensure that the right to adequate food is not denied to businesses or individuals.

The **duty to fulfil** means that the state must actively work towards facilitating people's access to, and use of, resources and means for securing their livelihood, in particular food security (facilitating). Ultimately, when an individual or a group of people, for reasons over which they have no influence, are not in a position to exercise the right to adequate food with the

means at their disposal, the states always have the duty to fulfil this right directly (the practical granting of the right). States are to report to the United Nations every five years on the status of realization of the right to food (state reports).

The international community is also obliged to work towards the progressive realization of the human right to food.

Initially, the respective governments of the individual countries are called upon to take all necessary steps to ensure that nobody suffers from hunger, and that the right to adequate food is realised for all their citizens as quickly as possible.

But the community of nations too is obliged to act jointly and individually in order to support the full realization of the right to food outside their own respective countries. They must refrain from measures which impair food production and jeopardise access to foodstuffs in other countries.

The New York Millennium Declaration in September 2000, by which the international community set itself the goal of halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger and extreme poverty by 2015 (Millennium Development Goal [MDG] 1), is an example of the international community having recognised this obligation.

Everyone has the right "to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger."
 Heads of States and Governments, World Food Summit, Rome 1996.

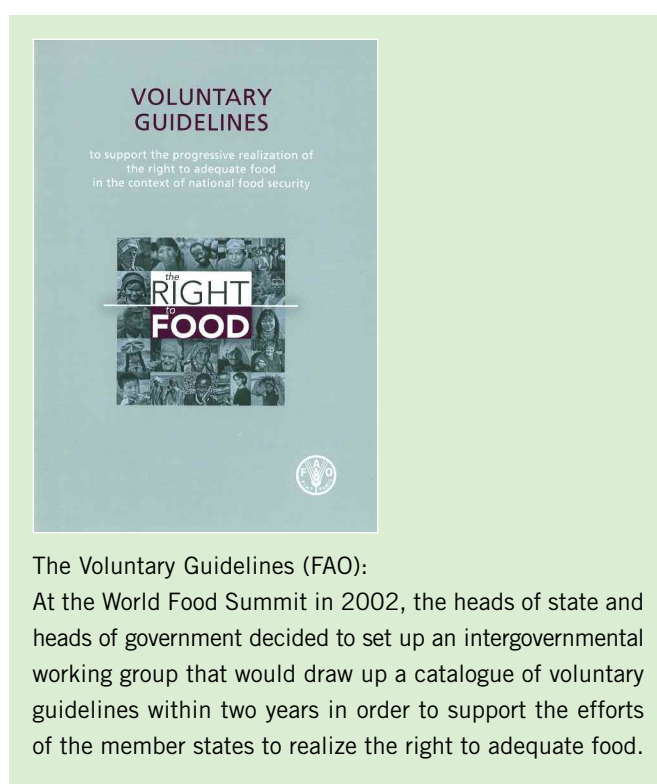
THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

The Voluntary Guidelines on the right to food were adopted unanimously.

In order to promote the implementation of the right to food, the Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security were drawn up in November 2004, following a participative consultation process, and were unanimously adopted by 187 states in the FAO Council.

The Voluntary Guidelines are a catalogue of policy recommendations whose aim is to provide practical assistance to states in carrying through the realization of the right to adequate food within the framework of national food security.

The Voluntary Guidelines include guidelines in 19 relevant subject areas and policy fields; for instance in respect of access to resources and assets, guideline 8 states: *„States should respect and protect the rights of individuals with respect to resources such as land, water, forests, fisheries and livestock without any discrimination. Where necessary and appropriate, States should carry out land reforms and other policy reforms (...) in order to secure efficient and equitable access to land and to strengthen pro-poor growth.“*



► The right to food means that people must at all times have unrestricted access to adequate food, or to the means of obtaining it. If people cannot realize this right by their own efforts, for instance in the event of natural disasters, states are obliged to support those affected by providing food aid according to their needs.



► The overwhelming majority of poor people in developing countries live in rural areas. Even if, like these farmers in Myanmar, they produce food themselves, the produce and the income earned are not sufficient to enable them to fully exercise their right to adequate food.

The international community of states is again specifically reminded of its obligations.

The implementation of the guidelines is primarily the responsibility of the individual states. At the same time however, the necessity of international cooperation and the role of the international community are stressed.

It is therefore emphasised that international trade can be one of the most effective instruments for reducing hunger and poverty in developing countries. In order to achieve this, all states are urgently called upon to implement the recommendations of the Sao Paulo (UNCTAD XI) consensus. This includes, for instance, the reduction and long-term abolition of all forms of export subsidies.

Finally, all the members of civil society, including non-governmental organisations and the private sector, are called upon to collaborate as part of a coordinated process in working towards the realization of the right to food.

The 19 Voluntary Guidelines for the progressive realization of the human right to adequate food:

1. Democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law
2. Economic development policies
3. Strategies
4. Market systems
5. Institutions
6. Stakeholders
7. Legal framework
8. Access to resources and assets
 - a. Labour
 - b. Land
 - c. Water
 - d. Genetic resources for food and agriculture
 - e. Sustainability
 - f. Services
9. Food safety and consumer protection
10. Nutrition
11. Education and awareness raising
12. National financial resources
13. Support for vulnerable groups
14. Safety nets
15. International food aid
16. Natural and human-made disasters
17. Monitoring, indicators and benchmarks
18. National human rights institutions
19. International dimension

(FAO, November 2004)

THE PROJECT FOR LOBBYING ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Using the Voluntary Guidelines in the fight against hunger: From the idea to the pilot project.

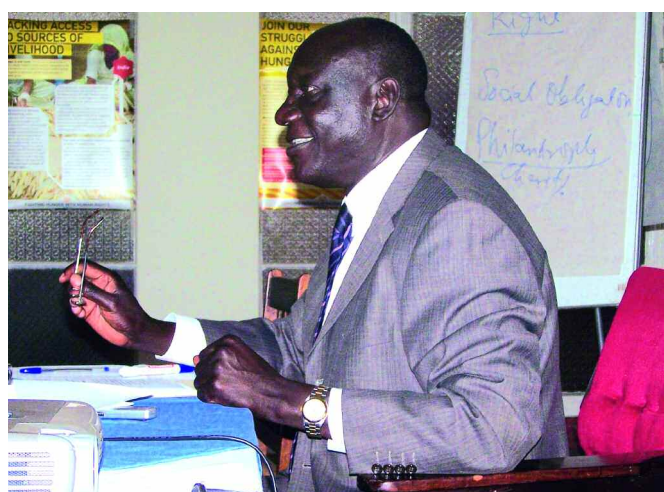
FIAN and Welthungerhilfe played an active role in the drafting of the Voluntary Guidelines. The adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines was the trigger for both organisations to consider jointly how they could support their partners and target groups in the countries of the South in contributing to the implementation of the guidelines as a means of securing the right to food.

In 2006 this resulted in a FIAN/Welthungerhilfe cooperative project on implementing the Voluntary Guidelines and on lobbying work on the human right to food in developing countries. The first stage involved promoting the use of the guidelines by groups in civil society and organisations in partner countries in order to accurately evaluate government actions for realizing the right to food. In the second stage, support was given to the organisations in exerting political pressure on their governments.

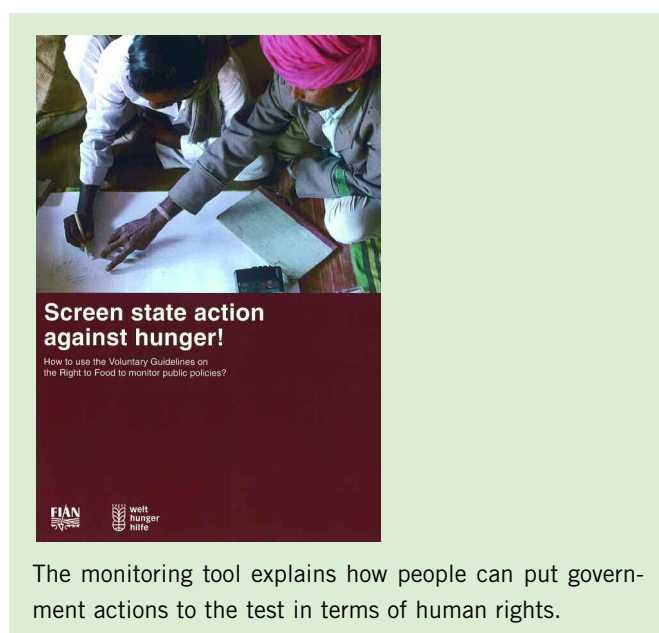
An important product of the project is a monitoring tool that was worked out jointly by FIAN, Welthungerhilfe and partner

organisations in six pilot countries (Benin, Uganda, India, Bolivia, Guatemala and Columbia). The product “Screen state action against hunger!” is aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines. It constitutes a practical guide which allows the systematic recording of the extent to which government measures to implement the right to food have been initiated, and of where governments are falling short of their commitments.

Using the monitoring tool, groups in civil society drew up reports on the food security situation and on the right to food in their country. Some of these reports also examine, often in contrast to the government reports, cases in which the right to food is being breached, and where the government has not fulfilled its duty to respect, protect and to guarantee that right. The reports by civil society groups were presented and discussed in local workshops and in Geneva in the United Nations committee for the monitoring of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and they were used for lobbying work.



► February 2007: Aliro Omara, a member of the Ugandan human rights commission, leads a seminar on the right to food in Kampala, Uganda. Only when people are informed about their right to food are they able to demand that their government takes concrete steps to implement it.



The monitoring tool explains how people can put government actions to the test in terms of human rights.



► Over two billion people worldwide are affected by “hidden hunger”: inadequate nutrition due to a lack of important nutrients and vitamins, which has serious consequences. Mothers receive nutritional advice at a mother-and-child centre in Sundarbans in eastern India that provides care services for pregnant women and newborn babies.

**Lobbying on the right to food is effective!
With targeted support, good results can be achieved – both locally in the partner countries, and at international level.**

On the one hand, the pilot project allows the activities of networks and of partner organisations of FIAN and Welthungerhilfe, which have already done work on the right to food, to be strengthened, for example in Bolivia and Columbia. On the other hand, the project has contributed towards bringing together partner organisations and other interested organisations in civil society, creating national networks (National Coalitions) on the right to food, and setting in train activities relating to the right to food, for example in Uganda and Benin.

The reports, which were drafted on a participative basis by civil society organisations, provide important, and systematically collated and edited information on the status of the realization of the right to food in the selected partner countries. They help to identify deficiencies which have to be addressed in the subsequent steps. Thus, the report in Bolivia contributed to the partner organisation AIPE (Asociación de Instituciones de Promoción y Educación) dealing on a targeted basis with the economic policies, the legal framework conditions, the access to resources and assets, as well as education and awareness raising, and to it entering into a dialogue with the government on these issues. These themes and policy fields reflect guidelines 2, 7, 8 and 11 of the Voluntary Guidelines.

Overall, the involvement of civil society supplements the activities of the responsible state agencies, or causes them to tackle subject of the right to food more thoroughly than previously. For example, in Bolivia the right to food is now anchored in the constitution. Of course, this cannot be attributed solely to FIAN's and Welthungerhilfe's pilot project. However, all those involved agree that this project has also made a contribution to this happening.

Implementing the right to food empowers the poor and those suffering from hunger. This is help towards self-help.

Interested parties and those concerned in the organisations which are actively committed to the right to food repeatedly fear that the introduction of a new, human rights-based approach leads to additional work, and overtaxes capacities which are already meagre anyway. However, experience has shown that this is not the case.

On the contrary: AIPE's work in Bolivia and the work of its Indian partner organisation CWSY (Centre for World Solidarity) have shown that focusing on the right to food can actually be successful in practice in better living up to the claim of providing help towards self-help, i.e. the empowerment of the poor and starving. It is simply a totally new feeling, and it strengthens self-confidence if those suffering from hunger know that they have a right to food and are not dependent for their food security on the goodwill of governments and other agencies. Consequently, the human rights approach actually also has an additional value. Because people can commit themselves much more strongly and in a much more targeted way if they see themselves not as supplicants, but as possessors of rights. This lets them drive development forward on their own initiative and take responsibility for projects themselves.

A central aim of the project is to tell the people concerned about their rights, to inform them about their actual rights in the context of existing development programmes of the government and other organisations, and to involve them in decisions.



► Investment in rural development is indispensable in order to combat poverty where it is most marked: in rural areas. By using more efficient methods of cultivation, farmers such as this man in Indonesia can increase their income, and therefore have the opportunity of exercising their right to food.

The collaboration of human rights experts and development experts creates synergies.

The collaboration between FIAN and Welthungerhilfe in Germany, at an international level, as well as with the respective partner organisations in the participating pilot countries, constitutes a significant strength of the project. Each partner was able to bring to the collaborative work its specific strengths and comparative advantages. The lobbying by FIAN, and the work on specific cases in which the human right to food is being breached, are complementary to the often rather functionally and technically focused project work of Welthungerhilfe and its partners. The latter mostly work directly with the people affected in their villages, and support people who are suffering from poverty and hunger. For example, measures in the agricultural and water sectors are quite specifically concerned with improving their food security if government programmes are not (yet) having an impact. The concrete and practical supporting of people suffering food insecurity, and the political work of securing the right of these people to food in the medium- and long-term also, “cross-fertilize” each other.

Ideally, as shown by the partner organisation AIPE in Bolivia, partners already pursue the human rights and the development approaches simultaneously in practical terms within their organisation “on an integrated basis.”

The commitment of civil society is complementary to the work of governments and the UN, and puts the actions of governments to the test in terms of human rights.

In the first instance, the national states are under a duty to secure the right to food. Groups in civil society in the country, often supported by international partners in civil society or other partners, commit themselves on the one hand to assisting states with the actual fulfilling of these duties. This happens

for instance when, like Welthungerhilfe and its project partners, they carry out food security programmes.

On the other hand, however, they are also required to act as a sort of “watch dog”, and to observe and to monitor whether the state actually does fulfil its obligations regarding the right to food. With the reports from groups in civil society on food security, the project partners are carrying out precisely this task. In addition, however, civil society organisations also work directly alongside the population groups who are suffering from hunger and food insecurity, and are therefore able to inform the people affected about their rights, and also to support them in demanding these rights – a potential which has still not been adequately exploited in development cooperation.

Humanitarian aid and development cooperation agencies must also increasingly take to heart the fact that in their project work they are involved in implementing the right to food, and that target groups are not recipients of charity, but possessors of rights.

“Civil society organisations and other stakeholders are the main drivers of the right to food agenda, both at international and national levels. In many countries, they are an important and critical partner supporting efficient governmental action in this area. This partnership needs to be strengthened and furthered.”

General Conclusion B, Right to Food Forum, FAO, Rome, October 2008.

THERE IS STILL A LOT TO DO

Recommendations to the political and development cooperation sectors.

The pilot project has achieved a lot and has shown ways in which the right to food can be effectively used as a tool to achieve improved food security.

However, lobbying on the right to food still remains extremely relevant: development cooperation and political agencies face great challenges if the situation of the billion people whose right to food is currently being severely violated is actually to be changed.

Food as a rightful claim requires far-reaching political and structural changes – not only in the countries concerned, but also internationally.

The development cooperation sector is called upon to strengthen its commitment to the right to food:

Recommendation 1: *To continue, and to expand, lobbying work on the right to food in the partner countries.*

Unfortunately, it can (still) not be expected that the processes set in train, and in particular also the new national right-to-food networks, will continue operating by themselves, and that external assistance is already superfluous.

It is necessary to build on initial successes, to spread them, and in particular to intensify cooperation with the responsible government departments, in order for improvements in the food situation to occur. Two steps above all are important if this is to happen:

- Identifying countries in which the need, interest and potential for strengthening the right to food exist, and where cooperation between human rights and development cooperation organisations seems to show great promise.
- Assessing the need of local organisations for support with the right to food and with lobbying work, and to take account of these needs in development strategies.

Recommendation 2: *To design and manage processes in development cooperation projects from a “rights-based perspective.”*

Up to now the human rights approach has not been anchored firmly enough in project work.

“How will our project look if our work is human rights-based? What exactly will we then have to do differently?”

- Informing development cooperation workers about the right to food.
- Acquiring employees who want to seek out and use the potential of human rights-focused project work, and supporting them in initiating the processes required for this.
- Reappraising experience gained and disseminating it.

Recommendation 3: *To reinforce lobbying work in the North, and to underpin it with concrete experiences from partner countries.*

Building on the cooperation with their partners in the South, civil society as well as government development agencies in the North can contribute to informing the political sector and the public about responsible behaviour in connection with the human right to food, by

- holding specialist discussions, conferences and workshops,
- providing input to national and international bodies and forums in terms of concrete experience gained with the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines and of the right to food in the partner countries, and also
- mobilising financial resources so that partners and the people concerned can be helped to realize their right to food autonomously, and to receive the necessary support for this from their governments.



► There is still a long way to go before the right to adequate food becomes a reality for everyone: today, one in seven people in the world are suffering from hunger. But hunger can be effectively combated through good governance which faces up to its responsibilities regarding the right to food, and which focuses on the Voluntary Guidelines.

All those who have responsibility for shaping and implementing policies are called upon to fulfil their obligation to realize the right to food:

Recommendation 1: *To be politically consistent in working towards the fulfilment of international obligations to combat hunger.*

The German Federal Government has for several years committed itself to the right to food, and it supports the most recent initiatives by the UN, G8, G20 and the EU to improve global food security. Now it is a question of also converting this political will into the courageous shaping of policies which work towards the fulfilment of international obligations to fight hunger and poverty (MDG 1). This means making agriculture and agricultural development the main focus of development policies, and underpinning this with the appropriate allocation of funds.

Recommendation 2: *To include the right to food in people's thinking when framing policies – for greater inter-sectoral policy coherence.*

Governments in the North have the duty to investigate the direct and indirect effects that their shaping of policies has on the right to food of people in the South. So, for instance, the industrial nations' trade policies may violate the right to food if agricultural export subsidies undermine the sales opportunities for local products in the markets of the South. For in this way the basic livelihoods of local producers of, for example, tomatoes, onions or milk may be destroyed, without the people affected being provided with alternative means of earning a living.

In this context, the shaping of policies in one area (such as for instance energy, agriculture or trade) may be at odds with the shaping of policy in another area (such as development cooperation). The right to food should serve as a reference framework for the inter-sectoral coherence and consistency of policies.

Recommendation 3: *To support partner countries in implementing the Voluntary Guidelines.*

Where governments have incorporated the right to food into national legislation, there have been considerable successes in achieving food security. However, in all too many states there is, as before, still a yawning gap between the intentions expressed on the one hand and actual political will on the other hand. The means of claiming rights are lacking, as are concrete measures for securing the right to food. The Voluntary Guidelines are subscribed to by 187 states, and therefore possess a high degree of legitimacy. They contain many examples which are recommended to governments for implementation. The German federal government should enter into a constructive dialogue with its partner countries in order to support the efforts they themselves are making to realize the human right to food.

"The global food crisis is not over. Our obligations go beyond fixing the financial system. Heads of State will have to do more if they want to help the billion human beings now suffering from hunger. A global action plan on food security, firmly based on human rights, is urgently needed."

Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, May 2009.

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