

BRIEFING NOTE

May 2013

POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION

This note is based on the sixth of the UN Development Group Global Thematic Consultations on Food Security and Nutrition. A High-Level Consultation on Food Security and Nutrition was co-led by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). This note has been prepared by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and (Antonella Cordone (IFAD) and Emma Jessie Mcghe. Ma in Human Development and Food Security and is intended as a discussion paper for stakeholders. It focuses on food security and nutrition issues, how these are affecting indigenous peoples and how they are addressed in the post-2015 development agenda.



The importance of Food Security and Nutrition for indigenous peoples

Food security has many definitions, and has evolved throughout the years; the formal definition, as approved by the World Food Summit,

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and

nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”¹ with 4 fundamental pillars:

- Availability (local production, imports, stocks, food aid)
- Access (market facilities, purchasing power, transport, etc)
- Utilisation (food quality and safety, cooking, conservation, care), and
- Stability of the three other dimensions (linked to political and economic factors, price fluctuations, weather variability).²

Food security refers to the availability of food, regardless the type, method or location of production. Indigenous Peoples, in particular, are facing many obstacles in the access dimension, since they are often deprived of their lands- their main source of food - and do not have enough resources to purchase adequate food. As a result, often end up with food, which not only contains a low level of nutrients, but is often cause of diseases.

Food sovereignty is a broader concept embedded in larger questions of social justice and the rights of farmers and indigenous communities to control their own futures and make their own decisions.



1 Definition as approved at the World Food Summit (WFS) at FAO, Rome, in 1996 by Head of States and Governments and slightly modified in 2002
2 George-André Simon The Four Dimensions of Food Security: A Conceptual Framework, 2013 teaching material, Master “Human Development and Food Security”, University of Roma Tre.

Food sovereignty is in other words a prerequisite for the food security of indigenous peoples, and is defined as follows in the Declaration of Atitlán:

“Food Sovereignty is the right of Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for the sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect for their own cultures and their own systems of managing natural resources and rural areas, and is considered to be a precondition for Food Security.”

The concepts of food security or the right to food and food sovereignty are related. The clarification of their content is particularly necessary in the context of indigenous peoples because these terms are often mentioned together and interchangeably in different statements and documents. The right to food is a legal concept a human right and in the case of its violation, remedies can be claimed where available. Food sovereignty is a political concept; there is no existing international human right corresponding to the right to food sovereignty. However, the two concepts are interrelated. The right to food mechanisms can be used for the promotion of food sovereignty claims when this contributes to regular, permanent and unrestricted access to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food and food sovereignty includes calls for the realization of the right to food.

Indigenous peoples' food security and food sovereignty is inextricably linked with the collective recognition of rights to land, territories and resources, culture, values and social or-

ganization. Subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, traditional herding, shifting cultivation and gathering are essential not only to the right to food but to nurturing their cultures, languages, social life and identity. The right to food depends on access to and control over their lands and other natural resources in their territories. The UNPFII notes that displacement, resource development such as mining, monoculture, natural disasters and other activities have an impact on food security; Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) “Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return” is relevant to food security because, without indigenous peoples' access to forests, oceans, rivers, lakes and lands for cultivation and food source sustainability, food sovereignty is impossible to achieve. Levels of hunger and malnutrition among indigenous peoples are often disproportionately higher than among the non-indigenous population yet they often do not benefit from programmes designed to fight hunger and malnutrition or to promote development.

The right to food may be violated if access to land, fishing or hunting grounds, or to adequate and culturally acceptable food is deprived, or if food sources contaminated. A number of court cases involving indigenous peoples have already demonstrated that the right to food provides indigenous peoples with an additional legal argument when claiming their rights or challenging decisions or omissions before administrative





authorities or courts. Indeed, States have particular obligations concerning indigenous peoples' right to food. These include respecting indigenous peoples' traditional ways of living, strengthening traditional food systems and protecting subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering.³

The respect, protection and fulfilment of the right to food as a collective right has an additional value in comparison to individual rights. This additional value is related to the fact that some property rights to lands, territories and resources are held collectively, and subsistence-based activities carried out collectively are not only part of indigenous peoples' cultural identity but are often essential for their very existence. The right to food, in its collective dimension, is clearly supplementary to the individual one.⁴

The current situation

Indigenous peoples around the world are facing challenges to their lives due not only to the effects of the loss of their lands, to land tenure systems, to poor governance that has permitted the grabbing of land for monocrop production but also to the expansion of the extractive industries and to large-scale farming and from climate change. This is resulting in the displacement of many indigenous peoples and a loss of the biodiversity on which they depend. As governments promote large-scale farming, measures should be taken to address and prevent

the negative impacts. As agriculture remains the main pillar of poverty reduction, diversification can function as a strategy by which indigenous communities can manage the risks associated with climate change; alternative livelihoods are critical to many indigenous and local communities all over the world. On the other hand, indigenous knowledge systems can be used to improve agricultural productivity and food security, to the benefit of everyone, not only indigenous peoples themselves.

Most indigenous peoples in Asia inhabit forested uplands where a large number of them practice shifting cultivation, which is also called as swidden cultivation or rotational farming. For them, shifting cultivation is not merely a technique of farming; it is their way of life. Government policies and laws have attempted to limit or outright ban shifting cultivation since it is considered a primitive and destructive form of land use.

According to the FAO, UNDP and UNEP, the main causes of deforestation and thus carbon **emission** in Asia have been intensification of agriculture and large-scale direct conversion of forest for small-scale and large industrial plantations, and not shifting cultivation. In fact shifting cultivation contributes to biodiversity enhancement and food security because shifting cultivation is a complex land use system that typically relies on a large number of crops planted both simultaneously and successively during the cropping cycle.

Food security in the Arctic is closely related to industrialization and to climate change. Inuit communities' rich cultures centre on harvesting plants and animals for subsistence, and for hundreds of years Inuit have developed and adapted in response to the dynamic environments in which they live. But rapid climate change is threatening Inuit ability to pursue these traditional subsistence food sources. For example, traditional

3 FAO: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i0728e/i0728e.pdf> (May 13, 2013)

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food sources may be compromised when climate change alters animal migration routes, and some such impacts are already seen in eastern Arctic communities. Other environmental changes such as thinner ice, late ice freeze-up, early ice break-up, more variable snowfall, unpredictable weather, warmer temperatures, as well as more frequent and intense storms make hunting harder. Shifting socioeconomic conditions also threaten food security. International pressure for conservation in the Arctic is often at odds with traditional hunting livelihoods. This adds pressure to shift to a more industrialised society that means fewer active hunters are harvesting traditional food. Meanwhile, the cost of bought food is rising.

The realization of indigenous peoples' rights to food and food sovereignty depends crucially on their access to and control over the natural resources in the land and territories they occupy or use. The procurement, preparation and consumption of food are an important part of their culture, as well as their social, economic and political organization. Subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering are essential not only to the collective right to food but also to the nurturing of indigenous cultures, languages, social life and identity. Only then can indigenous peoples maintain the traditional economic and subsistence activities that meet their nutritional and sustenance needs, as well as protect and preserve their culture and distinct identity. Additionally, many indigenous foods have very high nutritional quality, thus it is important that these kinds of foods are consumed for their nutritional status and can contribute positively to both indigenous and non-indigenous nutrition.

The UNPFII notes that, in international law, the right to adequate food and the fundamental right to freedom from hun-

ger apply to everyone without discrimination. The Permanent Forum is concerned about the implementation gap between what is legally recognized and the reality. The right to food is frequently denied or violated, often as a result of systematic discrimination or the widespread lack of applicability of indigenous peoples' rights.

Key Priorities and potential indicators

Indigenous peoples must assert their human rights, including the right to food, and exert pressure on States and their officials to meet human rights obligations and commitments to food security. States, on the other hand, are required to respect and protect indigenous peoples' unique cultural identities and special concerns when realizing their right to food. Increased awareness and capacity of both rights holders and duty bearers is necessary for rights to be realized.

- According to Articles 25 to 36 of the UNDRIP, States shall uphold indigenous peoples' right to free, prior and informed consent and avoid, minimize and adjudicate disputes concerning land, territory or resources arising from extractive industries, large-scale water, energy and infrastructure projects, and agricultural investments.
- A human rights-based approach to the right to food not only addresses the ultimate goal of eliminating hunger and ensuring food security but provides a holistic tool and approach by which indigenous peoples can improve their food security situation. The rights-based approach,



normatively based on international human rights standards, determines - in the food security context - the relationship between indigenous groups and individuals as rights holders and the State with correlative obligations as a duty bearer. A rights-based approach requires particular attention to be paid to indigenous peoples' specific circumstances and concerns. Applied to the right to food in practice, this means that indigenous peoples must be engaged and particularly supported in processes that determine food security and related policies, legislation and decisions. States should provide space for participating in the setting of verifiable targets and benchmarks for subsequent monitoring and accountability of food security. With regard to non-discrimination, governments should also ensure that data is disaggregated by age, sex and ethnicity. This information should be used for the development, design, implementation and monitoring of more appropriate food and nutrition policies which address the needs of all groups, including indigenous peoples.

- The UNPFII welcomes the legal reforms and policies carried out in some States aimed at recognizing the right of indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty. It would also like to encourage the remaining States to take steps towards its recognition. The UNPFII encourages States to take positive actions to facilitate indigenous peoples' capacity to strengthen traditional food systems, such as formally recognizing and demarcating indigenous territories so that they are able to carry out productive food activities, in accordance with Article 8 (2) (b) of the UNDRIP, which prohibits States from any action that

has the aim or effect of dispossessing indigenous peoples of their lands, territories or resources.

- Adopt a comprehensive land-use approach involving carefully planned crop rotation that minimizes erosion and uses less water-dependent crops in drier months/years, conservation agriculture, rainwater harvesting, water recycling and appropriate water restrictions.
- States should formally recognize shifting cultivation as a traditional occupation, and a means of subsistence for indigenous peoples that is closely related to their identity and integrity. This age-old, time-tested and well-integrated farming system should not be banned or discouraged, as this may have a negative impact on the development and food security needs, and the environmental and conservation activities, of indigenous communities.
- The Permanent Forum recommends that the FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) give special attention and support to indigenous peoples' food sovereignty and security concerns through thematic studies, the adoption of participatory methodologies, and technical and financial assistance.
- Indigenous peoples and local communities recognize the role played by women in food production, and there is thus a need to allow women access to, and jurisdiction over, land and natural resources and guarantee their representation in decision-making.

Further reading

FAO

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i0728e/i0728e.pdf>

FAO, UNDP and UNEP, UN

Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD). Framework Document. 20 June 2008.

AIPP, IWGIA and NDF

Climate change, trees and livelihood: A case study on the carbon footprint of a Karen community in Northern Thailand. 2011.

Tebtebba

Sustaining and enhancing Indigenous Peoples' Self-determined Development – 20 years after Rio. 2012.

Tebtebba

Indicators Relevant for Indigenous Peoples: A Resource book. 2008.

UNPFII

Indigenous Peoples' statement for the major group intervention session Agriculture Monday 24th February 2009, Half-day discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples to food and food sovereignty (12th session UNPFII).

Atitlán Declaration

http://www.treatycouncil.org/new_page_5241224.htm

Mary Robinson Foundation

Hunger, Nutrition, Climate Justice – Case studies:
<http://www.mrfcj.org/pdf/2013-04-16-Arctic.pdf> (May 2013).

Feeding my family

<http://www.feedingmyfamily.org/>

Indigenous Nutrition

<http://www.indigenousnutrition.org/>

Case The Itelmen of Kamchatka in the Russia Far East



The main occupation of the Itelmen people of Kamchatka, on the large peninsula in the Russian Far East has, since ancient times, been fishing, mostly salmon and smelt fishing. Fish used to represent year-round nutrition for the Itelmen, and the Kamchatka peninsula is one of the richest fisheries on the planet.

In the 1960s, during Soviet times, hundreds of indigenous settlements in the Russian North and Siberia, including many Itelmen communities, were forcibly abandoned. Itelmen from many villages around were forcibly resettled in Kovran village located in North West Kamchaka, four kilometres from the Okhotsk Sea. The local Kovran River is not so rich in salmon but has the greatest population of smelt in West Kamchatka.

In 1998, the Regional Governor signed an Act establishing the first special Territory of Traditional Nature Use in Russia, "Thsanom", which included governance of the traditional Itelmen land around Kovran protection and monitoring of the environment, and development of the traditional Itelmen economy – fishing, hunting, sea hunting, forest harvesting, etc.

A rise in the price of smelt fish in the Kovran River resulted in the increase of interest of big business to the river. In 2003, the authorities decided to open up the most lucrative part of the river, near Kovran, to the company "Ivning Star", based in the capital Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, for commercial fishing. This coincides with the traditional fishing place of the Itelmen, as it is the only place in the river where fishing is profitable, which was managed by Kavral, the traditional user of the river. The local people were forced to find work with the new owners of the river. In 2008, the Kamchatka authorities organized commercial tenders to rent out rivers for up to 25 years and the tender for the Kovran River was won by another large company. The local Kavral enterprise also participated in the tender but lost. Once the commercial exploitation of the Kovran River had begun, the stocks of smelt fish decreased dramatically.

Ill often comes on the back of worse. The new Governor, appointed in 2001, who was a geologist and the head of the largest regional gold mining company, Koryakgeoldobycha, exploited a loophole in the federal Law on Territories of Traditional Nature Use from 2001 to rescind the regional Act on the "Thsanom" Territory of Traditional Nature Use, thereby undermining the self-governance of the Itelmen over their native territory. In addition, since 2008, oil companies have begun drilling on the sea shelf near the village and have begun to search for oil and gas along the shores all around the small Itelmen community.

Nevertheless, throughout all these years, the indigenous leaders of the Itelmen have continued to write letters, organise village gatherings, pursue their work in court, make complaints etc. In 2012, official experts from the Fish Science Institute banned commercial smelt fishing on the river because of the catastrophic decline in the smelt population on the Kovran River. This is a small victory for the indigenous community. Nevertheless, this prohibition is temporary, for one year only. The next step has to be taken by the new Governor who was appointed in 2011. He has no background in geology or in commercial fishing and he could ban large-scale fishing on the river. The Itelmen people's hopes now lie with him.

Source: Sustaining and Enhancing Indigenous Peoples' Self-determined Development 20 Years after Rio. 2012

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