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Thematic Briefing Paper on Food Security

Challenges for **ENSURING FOOD SECURITY** in the Least Developed Countries



LDC Watch

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Foreword

Right to food is fundamental human right. But this right is being challenged continuously all over, particularly in the 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of the world. The notions of food security and food sovereignty are yet not realised in the LDCs. More than half of the 9 million people of the LDCs are forced to go bed hungry. This situation has challenged seriously the current variety of development model that some of our leaders and the institutions may feel proud of! The deepening of the structural problems and emergence of the new problems are further exacerbating the already pathetic situation of food security in the LDCs. The global economic and financial crisis, energy crisis, climate crisis, debt crisis and the crisis of political clarity are adding to the situation of uncertain food and nutritional security. Despite a plethora of international and national instruments crafted to address poverty and hunger, the results in the ground are all the same.

Non-compliance with the internationally agreed development targets and nationally agreed development agenda is a serious attitudinal problem that our leaders, the state apparatus and the governance system are to blame. The earth produces more than double the current food requirements; but, at least half of its inhabitants are living a life of chronicle food and nutritional insecurity. The people are cornered such that they are unable to contribute for developing the country and themselves. Since they are denied to food, they are also denied to education, health, drinking water, information, and so many other basic necessities that are mandatory for one's growth and development.

Unless there is a strong political will to reverse the current crises generating development paradigm, the urgent need to ensure food security and food sovereignty for the people in the LDCs will remain a distant dream. Therefore, to create the world system responsive to people's rights and concerns, the people of the world – south, north, east, west and everywhere need to forge an alliance and struggle tuff.

My special thanks go to Ruth Segal for her conscious efforts drafting this report. The friends at the secretariat – Sarba Raj Khadka and Som Rai deserve special thank for editing and designing the publication. This small contribution in the context of UN LDC IV Conference is expected to energise the discourse on LDC issues and problems. I believe, the readers will tell us their suggestions that could be incorporated into our future publications.

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Challenges for Ensuring Food Security in the Least Developed Countries

INTRODUCTION

The progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) targets for reducing hunger and malnutrition globally remains painfully slow. Global figures show that hunger increased between 2006 and 2009, decreasing slightly in 2010, but still remaining higher than before the global food crisis of the decade, both in absolute terms (numbers of food insecure people) and in percentage population terms (FAO, 2010a).

Over 40% of the world's undernourished people live in China and India alone, so the region with most undernourished people continues to be Asia and the Pacific. However, the proportion of undernourished people remains highest in sub-Saharan Africa, at 30% in 2010 (FAO, 2010b). Sixteen per cent of the population of developing countries is undernourished, way above the target for MDG1 of 10% by 2015. But for LDCs, the figures are much worse. About 34% of the LDC population is reported to have been undernourished in 2005–2007 (UNCTAD, 2010). In 2007, 53% of the population of LDCs was living in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.25 a day, and 78% was living on less than \$2 a day. The incidence of extreme poverty was significantly higher in African LDCs, at 59%, than in Asian LDCs, at 41% (UNCTAD, 2010).

The BPoA set goals for reducing hunger and poverty in LDCs, based on MDG targets. But these targets give an incomplete picture of the levels of hunger in LDCs. For instance, of LDCs for which information is available, 12 are considered to be on track to meet MDG1 by 2015; 11 have not made enough progress to meet MDG1; and the position in eight countries has deteriorated. Only two have already met it. However, of those countries considered to be on track, the Global Hunger Index (GHI) indicates that levels of hunger and under-nutrition are 'alarming' in eight, and 'extremely alarming' in one (IFPRI, 2010). Even though Ethiopia is considered to be on track to meet MDG1, 41% of the population is undernourished (FAOSTAT, 2010).

The GHI measures and tracks levels of hunger, using three equally weighted indicators. Hunger levels in individual countries are identified as 'low', 'moderate', 'serious', 'alarming' or 'extremely alarming'. Of the LDCs for which information is available, four have a ranking of 'extremely alarming', 23 are ranked 'alarming' and 11 are ranked 'serious'. No LDC falls into a better ranking. Of the 30 countries with the worst rating, 27 are LDCs.

The GHI makes clear that countries with higher gross national income have a lower GHI and vice versa. But conflict, inequality, poor governance and gender discrimination can alter the correlation. For instance, in South Asia, the low nutritional, education and social status of women contributes to levels of poor nutrition in under-five years. In Sub-Saharan Africa, low government effectiveness, conflict, political instability and HIV/AIDS are major factors for higher levels of hunger. Conversely, countries with greater gender equity and

pro-poor economic growth have lower levels of hunger than expected for the rate of economic growth (IFPRI, 2009, 2010).

Three quarters of the world's poor live in rural areas and the majority of hungry people are food producers. These include small-scale farmers, fishers, herders and agricultural workers. In all cases, lack of food security is linked to social exclusion, and worsened by inequity and lack of access to and control over productive resources.

The aggregate figures above mask huge disparities between different countries and within countries. Country level data hide differences between regions, social or ethnic groups and intra-household differences though it is well documented that marginalised ethnic groups, women and children are more likely to be food insecure.

The FAO State of Food Insecurity report 2010 identifies 22 countries as in 'protracted crisis' – either natural or human-induced. Of these, 16 are LDCs. Levels of food insecurity are significantly higher in these countries than in LDCs as a whole (FAO, 2010a). The severity of food insecurity is particularly high in countries under conflict, and those emerging from conflict. For instance, 69% of the population in the Democratic Republic of Congo is reported to be undernourished.

Countries that are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events, net food-importing countries, and those reliant on a small number of primary export commodities are all more food insecure at the national level. These factors are explored in more detail below.

This report tries to explore the underlying causes of food insecurity in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and consider future policy directions to address hunger and under-nutrition.

CHALLENGES OF FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY

The food and nutrition security in the LDCs is mired by several challenging situations, some of which are briefly discussed below.

LDCs in the global market

Between 2002 and 2007, many LDCs experienced economic growth, and increased GDPs, as part of the global economic boom. But there was a weak link between increased GDP and poverty reduction. This was in part because trade liberalisation in the 1990s led to greater commodity dependence – for example, fuels and minerals accounted for 67% of LDC exports in 2007 (UNCTAD, 2010). But many of the countries which export minerals, import food – in fact, all LDCs are net food importing (Ng and Aksoy, 2008) countries. This meant that, as LDC economies grew, so did the food import bill, from over \$9 billion in 2002 to \$24 billion in 2008 (UNCTAD, 2010).

Possible way for food sovereignty by harnessing the potential of rice production

Burundi is a small impoverished and overpopulated central African Country. With 8 million people living on an area of 27,834 km², it has an average density of 340 inhabitants per km². The agricultural sector in Burundi generates over 90% of the foreign exchange earnings, contributing to over 75% of the GDP and employing more than 90% of the total workforce. It reveals the importance of agriculture for the economy of the country.

In October 2010, Appui au Développement Intégral et à la Solidarité sur les Collines (ADISCO), in collaboration with other agricultural advocacy groups in Burundi, conducted a study on rice imports in Burundi and published a White Paper in order to launch an advocacy campaign against uncontrolled rice imports (in goods or gifts) in Burundi. The study concluded the fact that Burundi is largely self-sufficient in rice production which, in the meantime, has experienced spectacular growth of over 80% in twenty years.

It has been proved that the potential for production and consumption of rice in Burundi are enormous. The country can easily cultivate 50,000 hectares and produce over 400,000 tonnes each year. The consumer survey revealed the following facts:

1. In rural areas, rice is not the staple diet. Rice is eaten on holidays, but this practice is changing over time.
2. The current need of the country amounts to a maximum of 72,000 tonnes per year.
3. The market potential is huge to the extent where rural consumption of rice will gradually match the consumption level of the urban populations. This is a market of nearly 300,000 tonnes per year. This is sure to attract the attention of exporting countries and those that will try to conquer market shares.

At present the country is able to meet the demand of 72,000 tonnes of rice per year as its current production level is nearly 80,000 tonnes. Burundi, therefore, is largely self-sufficient in rice production today and will continue to be so in the future without having to resort to imports and could quickly become a net exporter.

To do this, it is urgent that Burundi, a country that still spends about US\$35 million a year to import food, to take steps to protect its agriculture and its economy. During the presentation of the White Paper on Rice in Burundi, the members of civil society organizations for agricultural advocacy had suggested following measures. This was attended by the representatives of other civil society organisations, policy makers; as well as the representatives from the East African Community (EAC).

1. Prohibit all imports and donations of rice and other products that are produced by Burundi except in cases of urgency or extreme necessity.
2. Provide subsidy for agricultural mechanization urgently.
3. Propose to the EAC, of which Burundi is a member, to set up a common agricultural policy.
4. Subsidize agricultural inputs, and make certain commodities, like irrigation facility, free, similar to the case of Vietnam.
5. Implement a true national agriculture development policy.
6. Campaigns of civic education for economic patriotism.
7. With increased liberalization and globalization of trade, we need a strong political commitment to stop the intrusion of open markets.

Growth was therefore based on external factors, rather than increasing domestic productive capacities. This meant that high growth in some countries, greater financial flows and greater engagement in international trade did not translate into local jobs, infrastructure development, or poverty reduction. Instead of pro-poor development, building strong rural-urban linkages, and stimulating demand for local food and agricultural raw materials, export-led growth has focused on capital-intensive industries such as mineral extraction. This has decreased economic diversification, and left countries vulnerable to external market shocks with little economic autonomy.

When global commodity prices slumped as a result of the global financial crisis, oil and mineral exporting countries were particularly badly hit, as were those dependent on tourism. Those reliant on agricultural exports suffered less badly, and, significantly, those trading mainly with other developing countries were least affected.

But even if, at the national level, agricultural products are traded, can this help small scale farmers? Olivier de Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has noted that most trade takes place between (and within) transnational corporations, rather than nation states (CSD-17, 2009).

The impacts of the financial crisis

Food prices are rising again, affected by unrest in the Middle East and oil price rises (Inman, 2011). But high food prices do not benefit small-scale and subsistence farmers, as around 50% of them are net food buyers. Generally, the

poorest, landless and women headed households are most affected by price rises (FAO, 2008). This is because changes in global prices do not “offset smallholders’ entrenched political and economic marginalisation.” Instead, “asymmetries in information and bargaining power mean that volatility has a regressive effect, increasing inequalities. . . in the food sector” (FEC, 2010).

There is evidence that speculation on commodity markets played some part in the 2007/08 food price rises, though it is difficult to quantify the effect. While initially the 2007 price rises were caused by increased oil prices and harvest failure in Australia and Russia, this was exacerbated by the actions of speculative traders. Financial practices increased the volatility that exists in the agriculture sector, magnifying risks so that an “. . . unstable global monetary system intensified commodity price volatility to the detriment of food security” (Oram, 2010).

Financial systems underwrite trade in commodities and the lack of transparency in financial markets makes it difficult to see how the WTO Doha round promise of free markets and fair trade can ever be realised.

There is a strong link between food security and financial regulation – on the one hand, use of tax havens by multi-national food companies has removed around US\$160 billion from poorer countries’ tax revenues; while at the other end of the spectrum, poor farmers cannot get access to credit, which is a vital first step in protecting livelihoods.

Land grabs

Another impact of the global financial crisis has been an increase in interest by global investors in buying land, which is considered to be safer than other investments, and likely to give more reliable returns. Interest in acquiring land for agricultural investment also comes from food-importing countries, keen to 'out-source' their food production. The FAO estimates that, in the last three years, 20 million hectares have been acquired by foreign interests in Africa (Graham et al., 2011). While private sector deals account for 90% of land investments so far, governments play a role in supporting these deals, either directly or through supportive policy environments.

Major current investors are the Gulf States, China and South Korea, but there is European involvement, too (Alpert, 2011). For instance, the EU is the second largest investor in Ethiopia, focusing on meat, biofuels and horticulture. More broadly, European policies such as those increasing demand for biofuels makes large scale land acquisitions more financially attractive.

There is a growing concern that these international land-based investments will have negative impacts in terms of political stability, social cohesion, human rights, local food security/food sovereignty and tenure rights for the local people.

Although there is broad consensus that pro-poor growth is best achieved through supporting smallholder productivity, many countries continue to base their agricultural growth policies on improving production through large-scale plantation-style developments, converting subsistence farming to commercial farming. Foreign investment in land is therefore part of this strategy in many countries, such as Rwanda and Ethiopia. But such investment produces fewer jobs and lower wages than small scale farming (Alpert, 2011). Commercial agriculture also often affects biodiversity, and reduces access to water for local communities.

Land acquisition is primarily profit oriented and agricultural products from thus acquired lands are usually for export. Investment treaties often give investors guarantees of low labour and operating costs, and the right to repatriate production and profits (Malik, 2011), thus also avoiding paying tax in the host country. This limits the development benefits of such deals. But even if regulations were introduced to enable host countries to manage the investment to contribute to rural development, large-scale land acquisitions undermine equitable access to productive resources for the local population. It is vital that there is a balance of rights and obligations between local communities and foreign investors, but there is scant evidence that this is happening. Instead, there is evidence of evictions, loss of livelihoods and loss of assets (Graham et al., 2011).

Access to and rights over land in Africa are usually based on traditional and customary rights, not legal documents. In other words, land is state owned without clearly defined access rights. This makes it difficult for local communities to claim rights to land which the state wants to lease to investors. This is particularly true for land used by pastoralists. For instance, the Ethiopian government estimates that there are 14-18 million hectares of land used for agriculture, while FAO evaluated it at 35 million hectares in 2007, the difference being meadow and pasture land which the government does not consider to be in use for agricultural production. However, this land is vital for pastoral farmers,

and removing their access to it would dramatically reduce their livelihood security.

It is clear that land grabbing undermines access to and control of resources by local populations now and into the future, and is likely to be a barrier to improving access to food and securing livelihoods for local populations. Small-scale and subsistence farmers need traditional land rights to be recognised, security of tenure to be granted and protection from eviction guaranteed.

Adaptation and mitigation for responding climate change

Farmers around the world are faced with increasing uncertainty over agricultural production because of rapid climate change. For subsistence farmers who are already struggling to ensure food and livelihood security, climate change is adding a further element of risk and volatility. It is apparent that climate change will lead to:

An increase in the number and intensity of extreme weather events. There has already been a four-fold increase in natural disasters between 1975 and 2005. Fragile areas are at a disproportionately higher risk (Mactaggart, 2010)

- Volatility and uncertainty in weather patterns
- Uncertain and changing precipitation distribution patterns
- Changing coastal ocean temperatures, affecting fishing
- Desertification and additional pressures on resources such as water and grazing land
- Increased urbanisation as people abandon marginal farm-lands
- Increased submergence of coastal areas and island territories

All this uncertainty will lead to harvest unpredictability, price volatility and increasing vulnerability for poor food buying families (IATP, 2011). Climate change is likely to be a risk accelerator, exacerbating existing risks and putting additional pressure on those with least capacity to cope with shocks.

Previous attempts to increase food security have focused on using 'Green Revolution' technology to boost production, but there is a growing awareness of the environmental consequences of this approach. This technology was based on an assumption of cheap and easily accessible energy and plentiful water. But now fossil fuels, water and land are all running out. Although food production has doubled over the last 40 years, inputs have more than doubled. But the recent trend of increasing oil prices will make high-external-input agriculture prohibitively expensive, and alternative approaches to improving productivity, such as organic and agro-ecological approaches, will have to be considered. This will also help the agriculture sector reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to food production.

There is now a growing understanding of the link between agricultural production and ecosystem protection, including biodiversity protection. Not only does the agriculture sector have to respond to the impacts of climate change, but agricultural practice must develop to limit its impact on the climate and on the environment. There is a clear need to link ecological sustainability to economic development, ensuring that agricultural systems take into account the importance of water security, soil protection and biodiversity.

Despite the clear link between food security, climate change mitigation and

environmental protection, no work programme on agriculture was agreed at Cancun, leaving a policy hole on issues such as the impact of climate change mitigation policies on future choices for agricultural development (Godfray et al., 2011).

However, there is agreement that explicit pro-poor climate change policies are needed at all levels. These must focus on environmental sustainability and community level resilience.

The rural poor need help in producing more – and more nutritious – food for their families, while using fewer resources and increasing their ability to cope with climate shocks. This points to increasing investment to boost local production, using local traditional knowledge and skills to identify natural pesticides and fertilisers. There is a need to stop extractive farming practices to halt soil erosion, soil degradation and water resource depletion, and to enhance risk resilience at community level (Godfray et al. 2011). Increasing yields sustainably requires building on existing knowledge and techniques, incentivising and spreading best practice through revitalised extension services.

Climate resilience is about tackling underlying vulnerabilities, using social protection mechanisms and disaster risk reduction strategies to reduce risk to livelihoods (IDS, 2009). There is evidence that the most effective way to help communities adapt to climate change is through local institutions that have established and sustainable mechanisms for responding to climate shocks. But currently, local institutions are poorly integrated into the process and traditional adaptation strategies are neglected (Virtanen et al., 2011).

Strategies for enhancing food and nutrition security

There are numbers of strategies that need to take into account for creating an enabling environment of food and nutrition security in the LDCs. Some of these strategies are discussed hereunder.

a) Investment

In the last few years there has been a plethora of initiatives to develop a global approach to food security. These include the UN's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis (established in 2008); the Committee on World Food Security (reformed in 2009); the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative (2009); and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (2010). There are also several regional initiatives such as Farming First, 2010. These initiatives all highlight the need to reverse the decline in investment in agriculture over the last 20 years.

Across all LDCs, agriculture accounts for 26% of GDP (2006 – 2008), and employs 2/3 of the population. Yet it receives only around 3% of international development aid (FAO, 2010a). Aid for African agriculture declined by 43% between 1992 and 2002, and investment in agriculture lagged far behind investment in export commodities (UNCTAD, 2010).

Given that there is broad agreement that growth in agriculture generates the greatest benefits for the poorest people, this lack of investment in the agriculture sector can be correlated with the lack of progress in reducing poverty. Any strategy for enhancing food security must focus on improving promising small-scale and subsistence agricultural production. This implies improved extension services and agricultural research directed at improving yields without increasing inputs (Foresight, 2011). Extension work must include

training women as extension workers. Women are key to improving farm-level productivity, and it has been demonstrated that women extension workers reach twice the number of women farmers than male extension workers (UNIFEM, 2010). It is estimated that investment in extension services and reaching women farmers could at least double yields (Foresight, 2011).

b) Managing risks

Pro-poor investment in the agriculture sector must focus on helping poor people reduce and manage household risks, to both climate and financial shocks. There is a wide range of policy options to do this, including:

- social protection programmes
- land registration programmes to secure land tenure
- access to better market information
- investment in infrastructure and utilities, rural services, communications
- good governance
- strengthening individual and collective capabilities
- support for agricultural practices that reduce climate risk, such as agro-ecological approaches
- support for agricultural practices that enable diversification and conserve local knowledge, skills and resources
- support for rural livelihoods through minimum price mechanisms for staple crops
- global policy flexibility to enable countries to increase domestic production and dampen the impact of price volatility on their populations (IAASTD, 2009).

c) Combining ecological concerns with food security

There is a growing evidence that agro-ecological approaches are more successful at boosting food production in developing countries (De Schutter, 2011a).

This knowledge-intensive approach requires support for small-scale farmers' organisations, which are best able to disseminate good practice among their members. It enables ecological concerns and climate change adaptation approaches to be combined with food security priorities. It enables the diversity of ecosystems to be recognised and supported, as an agro-ecological approach can enable farmers to develop techniques suited to the range of soil types and crop varieties typical to most developing countries. This contrasts with a high-external-input approach which provides a set package of inputs for all farmers.

An agro-ecological approach also recognises the value of natural habitats to mitigate climate change and helps farmers find viable ways to protect them. But research on climate change adaptation is still at an early stage, and so far, most scientific research has focused on the needs of agriculture in developed countries. Funding for solutions appropriate to developing countries must be prioritised and research must be targeted at reaching the poorest (Mactaggart, 2010b).

d) Food sovereignty and the right to food

In order to reach the poorest, there must be strong political will to ensure that the social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects of the food system are

considered. There must be a fundamental reshaping of the global food system to prioritise the right to food for all (CSD-17, 2009). Reducing hunger is about distributional justice, and creating a fair and environmentally sustainable agricultural system (IAASTD, 2009).

A focus on food sovereignty means promoting autonomy for small-scale farmers over food production, consumption, seeds and markets (IIED, 2011). It means recognising that the inequitable distribution of natural resources such as land and water re-inforce cycles of poverty. It means addressing unequal gender relations which deny women access to property rights and finance, health and education. And it focuses agricultural development on environmental and social justice outcomes and food consumption outcomes.

This approach demands actions to reduce the political and economic marginalisation of small-scale and subsistence farmers, including ensuring value for producers, building localised food systems, building local control, and respecting local skills and knowledge.

e) Land tenure and women ownership

Land tenure is also vitally important for women. Where women have access to and ownership of land, they have greater livelihood security, higher social status, greater control over domestic decision making and access to other resources such as credit (UNIFEM, 2010). Productivity also increases when women have security of tenure, as they are often responsible for household level agricultural production. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women's access to land is the lowest of all continents and in many LDCs, women's land holdings are a fraction of those of men.

f) Policy frameworks

Public policy can play a crucial role in protecting national food security and creating an enabling environment for agricultural development. This can include policies:

- to strengthen the small-holder sector, such as better access to credit and better extension services
- which reduce household risk such as better health facilities and education services
- which support rural development such as investment in rural infrastructure, communication and access to markets
- which support co-ordination between sectoral development plans, linking agriculture, energy, water and infrastructure policy
- which strengthen rural organisations and enhance individual and organisational capacity

(IFAD, 2010)

At the global level, policies should focus on:

- reducing the impact of volatile financial markets on the economies of LDCs, for instance by establishing global and local food reserves
- limiting financial speculation on agricultural commodities
- stopping dumping of agricultural products
- strengthening the benefits to small farmers of participating in global supply chains

- protecting the rights and livelihoods of farmers and agricultural workers employed in the global food system
- protecting access to land and other natural resources by local communities
- ensuring agricultural research is targeted to the needs of the poorest
- strengthening social protection strategies
- investing in climate change adaptation and mitigation

(De Schutter, 2011, IFPRI, undated)

g) Trade regime and market reforms

In order to have a positive impact on food security, agri-food supply chains need to be more inclusive and transparent, to allow smallholders to benefit. Small-scale farmers need support to engage in markets. For instance, supporting farmers' organisations enables them to negotiate fairer prices. Small scale farmers need access to information on prices, premiums and quality, and need improved access to credit (IIED, 2011). But markets and global food chains do not reach the poorest, and farmers outside the markets will not be affected by food industry policy (Vorley, 2010). More important than helping small-scale farmers to benefit from global markets is the creation of local markets linking rural and urban areas to support local 'value chains' and boost domestic economic growth.

It is vital for food security that global trade regimes recognise that food is not just another commodity, and enable governments to insulate domestic food markets from international price volatility.

One of the strategies could be establishing a financial transaction tax on commodity transactions which dampens incentives for speculative behaviour. Other responses could include re-establishing global food reserves, which were at historically low levels in 2007 (Sutton and MacMillan, undated). At a community level, small local grain reserves can protect farmers from price volatility.

The challenges facing the global food system are immense, but the biggest challenge remains that of eradicating hunger. The food system must become more rights-based and less market-based; more people-centred and designed to take into account the perspectives of the poorest people themselves.

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About LDCs

There are 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world, which are home to around 850 million people. By 2015, the year by which the international community has targeted to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this population is projected to reach 942 million. LDCs account for 32 of the 35 countries in the lowest category of the Human Development Index (HDI) measured in terms of life expectancy, literacy, standard of living and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.

In 1971, the United Nations (UN) identified 24 countries as LDCs, recognising them as the world's most vulnerable countries, and therefore called for LDC-targeted special measures in global development strategies. Yet, after three decades of special development attention, including three UN LDC conferences and three specific Programmes of Action for the LDCs, the number of countries falling under this category has more than doubled. This clearly proves the failure of past and current development paradigms to effectively address the challenges and constraints to development in these vulnerable and marginalised countries. The increasing tide of neoliberal globalisation has further threatened LDC economies characterised by increasing debt burden, economic shocks, hunger, war, conflict, weak governance, human rights violations including gender injustice, and inherent environmental vulnerabilities.

The LDC Criteria is reviewed every three years by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In its fourth review of the list of LDCs in March 2009, the Committee for Development Policy used the following criteria for the identification of LDCs:

- A "low-income" criterion, based on the gross national income (GNI) per capita (a 3-year average), with thresholds of US\$ 905 for cases of addition to the list and a threshold of \$1,086 for graduation;
- A human capital status criterion, involving a composite Human Assets Index (HAI) based on indicators of: (a) nutrition: percentage of population undernourished; (b) health: mortality rate for children aged five years or under; (c) education: the gross secondary school enrolment ratio; and (d) adult literacy rate; and
- An economic vulnerability criterion, involving a composite Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) based on indicators of: (a) population size; (b) remoteness; (c) merchandise export concentration; (d) share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in gross domestic product; (e) homelessness owing to natural disasters; (f) instability of agricultural production; and (g) instability of exports of goods and services.

LDC Watch

LDC Watch is a global alliance of national, regional and international civil society organisations (CSOs), networks and movements based in the LDCs and supported by civil society from development partner countries. LDC Watch acts as a coordinating body for LDC civil society to advocate, lobby, campaign and network for the realisation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) as well as other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs). For the past decade, LDC Watch has been raising its voice and articulating LDC civil society perspectives in a multi-stakeholder framework, engaging with the UN, LDC governments and their development partners, both as partner and pressure group.