

Summary

Unprecedented food crisis and sky rocketing food price leading to "food riots" has shaken over thirty nations in the LDCs where workers and peasants have become lesser able to afford food. Protests over grain prices in

Haiti, Cameroon, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritania and other parts of Africa and hunger children's march in Yemen are some examples of food crises in the LDCs around the world (Khor, 2008). According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), twenty-two countries are particularly vulnerable to the recent food price increase, because they are not only very poor but also dependent much on food imports. The FAO has warned that increasing prices have "triggered a food crisis" in 36 countries. Again, according to the United Nations World Food Programme (UN WFP), 12 out of the 16 "hunger hotspot countries" are in the LDCs. This looming food crisis clearly signifies that the flaws of existing agro-industrial and market-led approach of food security has grossly failed to feed hungry people living in the LDCs.

Although, many international conventions and agreements have affirmed food as a basic human right but responses to guarantee right to food and the efforts to avert the looming crisis is frustrating. Globally, more than 17 million people in 78 countries have to depend on food aid from the UN WFP who is now facing reduced rations this year unless additional US \$500 million is infused (Guzman, 2008). Against this backdrop, it is being argued that the increasing food crisis is due to supply side constraints, as global production has dropped drastically. However, available information shows that present global food

Food crisis in 2008: Haiti needs radical reorientation in policies

Since last 30 years, Haiti's economy has suffered a protracted stagnation and its agricultural sector has experienced a steady decline from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Haiti's per capita food production has been on a declining path since 1990. Haiti transformed from a net exporter to a net importer of food, between 1980 and 2005—generating a net food export surplus of 6% of imports in 1980/1981, and a net food export deficit of about 14% of imports by 2004/2005. The opening up of Haiti's agricultural sector to international trade, without accompanying investments in its capability to boost the sector's competitiveness, might be a key factor behind the agricultural sector's apparent contraction. (Conceição and Mendoza, 2006)

Following the recent food crisis, between March 2007 and March 2008, the price of rice, which is currently consumed in all the layers of society, has increased by almost 47%, the price of corn by 22%, the price of sorghum by 34% and the price of bean by 42%. The price of fertilizers has increased between 31 and 37%. This set of factors explains a chronic food insecurity concerning more than 40% of the population, with 93% of acute malnutrition and 24% of chronic malnutrition in the children of less than five years.

supplies are more than adequate to provide everyone with all the needed calories. If the food was justly distributed. Over 820 million people in the developing countries including LDCs have calorie-deficient diets. Of them, over 60% live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

A variety of factors, such as policies promoting corporate farming and dependence on external food supplies, lack of productive investments in the local agricultural systems, global warming, trade imbalances and trade liberalisation are some to blame for food insecurity in developing countries. These factors have instigated the present crisis, forcing a billion people to go hungry, drastically reducing biodiversity, and nearly ruining the ecosystem. Therefore, it is a typical challenge for the LDCs to denounce existing production, distribution, and consumption policies and practices and revamp country's sovereign right and policies to ensure enjoyment of right to food and food security.

In many of the international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Preamble of the FAO Constitution, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, different international forums including the World Food Summits have declared food as the basic Human Right. For nearly two decades, the international community at high-level meetings attended by heads of state and government has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to eradicating malnutrition and assuring food security for all. The World Food Summit (FAO, 1996) and its follow-up, the World Food Summit five years later (FAO, 2002), adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action, which pledged concerted efforts towards eradicating hunger as an essential first step, set a target of reducing the number of hungry people



People carry a wounded man during an anti-government demonstration in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, April 7, 2008. Protesters angered by high food prices flooded the streets, forcing businesses and schools to close.

The structural crisis of the agricultural economy was dramatically worsened by the application of the structural adjustment plans, imposed by the IMF and the World Bank since the middle of the 1980s, which have generated a strong dependence on food imports, mass unemployment and job losses. Presently, 85% of the total exports to buy foodstuffs, which account for 25% of all the imports

by half by 2015. The Millennium Summit (2000) and a series of follow-up meetings have repeated the commitments to achieve food security and good nutrition for all. Despite the repeated commitments by the world's leaders on the urgent need to reduce hunger and malnutrition, progress in achieving the International Agenda of Development Goals (MDGs) and targets have been extremely disappointing, notwithstanding great strides in a number of individual countries. Still the human right to food is continually denied. Food is considered more as an item for trade than as an essential good for survival.

The current model of 'food security' and the situation of food insecurity in the LDCs

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences to live an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996). It has four dimensions: food availability, access to food, stability of supply and access, and safe and healthy food utilisation.

Such concept of food security prompted unfair trading of food grains, food aid politics and food grains - dumping by the developed countries. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) suggests that importing cheap food from the agriculturally advantaged countries will be a better way for the poor countries to achieve food security than producing themselves. This has encouraged poor countries to mass import of cheap and subsidised food from the global market, which ultimately distorted domestic production systems and eroded preferences of local farmers, driving them off from their land and other productive resources. This aggravated poverty at the local level and placed subsistence economy in the hands of cash economy. The idea of "free trade," that is being offered as a panacea by the United States of America and the European Union, the main promoters of "free trade" themselves do not practice "free trade" in food. They provide heavy subsidies to their own agriculture (an estimated US\$300 billion combined per year), and impose food import barriers, and export food at artificially low prices. They have been using the World Bank (WB) and

About this issue

The years of 2007–2008 saw dramatic increase in the world food price, exacerbating the state of global crisis, leading to political and financial instability and social unrest globally. It has severely affected the people living in Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The food crisis, often associated with the rapid rise in the food price internationally, has produced profound negative effects on the poverty trends in the LDCs. To more than half out of the 16 global "hunger hotspots" identified by the WFP, 12 are LDCs. Such a situation is posing serious threats for achieving the internationally agreed targets including MDGs and BPoA in the LDCs.

The main objective of this issue is to provide a brief account of food sovereignty situation in the LDCs and the perspective of civil society groups on factors responsible for food crisis. It will be used as an advocacy,

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to enforce these rules for years, under harsh 'Structural Adjustment Programmes' and the conditions built into loan agreements. In the name of "free trade" and "free markets", the WB and the IMF have conditioned all countries to reduce or even eliminate government buffer stocks and market interventions – and to end aid, credits and advice to small farmers.

These policies resulted in the decline of domestic production in many countries. In the backdrop of recent food crisis, the food exporting countries including India, Pakistan, Argentina, Russia and China, have taken steps to block exports of food through increasing export prices even by 300% to 500%, to protect their own "food sovereignty". More than thirty countries have now moved in this direction (Paul and Wahlberg, 2008). Thus the distorting trade mechanism, which once used to dismantle subsistence economic base of the small farmers in the poor countries, is now using to increase starvation and hunger in those countries.

Neo-liberal policies: the driving force of food insecurity

The global food system now has a dualistic structure. In one hand, the vast majority of farms (about 85%) remain smallholder operations, which is of less than two hectares in size, are home to more than 2 billion people (Hazell et al., 2007). In many countries of the LDCs, small farmers accounts for a considerable share of output. In Sub-Saharan Africa, smallholders account for 90% of all agricultural production (IFPRI, 2005). But, ironically, fully half of all food-insecure people are small farmers. Even though they grow food, they lack the resources to meet all of their needs through either production or purchase. Another 30% of hungry people are the fishers, herdsmen or landless rural people and the remainder are poor urban dwellers (UN Millennium Project, 2005). On the other hand, the 0.5% of the world's farms that exceed 100 hectares in size claims a disproportionate share of global farm income, enjoys privileged access to policy makers, and particularly in developed countries, receives the lion's share of tens of billions of dollars in subsidies each year (OECD, 2007).

campaign, and lobby tool on the continuing food crisis in LDCs. The ever-growing waves of neo-liberal corporate globalisation and global financial crisis have further exacerbated the poverty and food crisis in LDCs. I believe, this LDC Watch position paper will have direct effects on LDC governments and their development partners so that they listen to people's voices and address the issue accordingly.

I would like to thank all our partners from different parts of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean who have put their innermost efforts to come up with this issues on food crisis.

Thanks,
Arjun Karki, PhD
International Coordinator

Execution of Neo-liberal Policies and Food Crisis in Senegal

Like many LDCs, Senegal is dominantly agriculture-based country. Soon after independence in the early 1960s, the government put in place a new agricultural policy based on heavy assistance to farmers with the view to boosting both food and cash crop production. Accordingly, many State-owned enterprises were established with the mission to provide seeds, technical assistance, training and other basic services. This policy stimulated food production and made Senegal self-sufficient in most of its needs in food.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, the SAPs destroyed all State-owned enterprises that used to assist small farmers. The Senegalese government was forced to eliminate subsidies for its agricultural sector and remove protection of the local market. In addition, the World Bank and the IMF forced the government to give priority to cash crops that provide foreign exchange used to repay the external debt. These policies led to a sharp drop in food production and a dramatic fall in the income of small farmers. Unemployment soared in rural areas, which increased rural migration that exacerbated unemployment and social problems in urban areas. The contribution of the agricultural sector to the gross domestic production fell from 20% in the 1970s to 8% now.

The decline in food production has made Senegal food dependent. This external dependence has deepened with the ongoing world food crisis. Over the last twelve months,

Again in the food system, the huge companies, like Cargill, Nestlé, Monsanto, ConAgra, and Archer Daniels Midland, dominate the world's food market. They control very large shares of the international markets for grains, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds, and they are involved in the food system from the farm to the supermarket. Cargill's profits were up 86% in the quarter ending February 2008 and the profits of Bunge, another big trading concern, soared 2,000% in the quarter ending March 2008 (Paul and Wahlberg, 2008) Such corporatisation in the agriculture sector is the result of the imposition of neo-liberal economic policies in agriculture that prioritize international trade, and not food for the people. The international financial institutions, the promoters of neo-liberal economic theories, have implemented those policies, dictated by the interests of large transnational companies and superpowers; they have systematically removed quantitative and qualitative trade barriers, agriculture subsidies under structural adjustment programme (SAP). SAP of the World Bank made the LDCs bound for import market liberalisation and restructuring of market mechanisms through which state companies in seeds and other inputs are dismantled and privatised. Various agreements under WTO, such as Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard (SPS), Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), etc. strengthen corporate control over agriculture trading there by snatching the indigenous skills and resources through patenting, bio-piracy and genetic engineering.



Protesters attend an unauthorised demonstration called by consumer associations against the high cost of living in Dakar, Senegal

some food prices have doubled, which has worsened the living conditions of the majority of the population. The liberalisation of the agricultural sector and the removal of state support mechanism are a recipe for disaster. The bitter experience has prompted the Senegalese government to initiate new policies in the agricultural sector. It has adopted a strategy to achieve food self-sufficiency by 2015. Some of the policies destroyed by SAPs are being restored by the government. The government has restored protection -even if temporary in some cases- for the local market against unfair foreign competition.

Rights-based approach: the framework for food security and food sovereignty

The rights-based approach to food security, often called food sovereignty, can provide the basis for ensuring food for the vast population living in LDCs. A rights framework also offers the opportunity to the vulnerable group of the population – the hungry and malnourished, the landless, marginalised, smallholders, fisher-folk and urban poor – to protect them from falling further into poverty and food insecurity trap. The perspective of rights-based approach considers the States as the primary duty bearers with regard to human rights and it empowers citizens – as the holders of rights – to hold States accountable for their actions. This approach signifies importance to protect smallholder's sovereign rights on agricultural practices.

Attaining food sovereignty in the LDCs: new policy options

The recent food crisis has produced negative effects on the poverty trends in the LDCs. Out of the 16 global "hunger hotspots" identified by the WFP, 12 are in the LDCs. Liberia, Nepal, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Guinea, Haiti, Liberia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, Uganda and Yemen. Such a pathetic situation is posing a serious constraint for achieving the Internationally Agreed

Development Goals (ADGs) including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA). This crisis is frequently posing restrictions on the ability of the households, which could barely afford to meet their daily basic needs, even before the rise in prices. In the backdrop of the failure of ensuring food security to the hungry people, it can be strongly argued for attaining food sovereignty—a framework based on the principle of justice and human rights rather than global integration and international trade. The suggested policy options of attaining food sovereignty would be;

- Take immediate actions to defuse the current world food emergency and to seize the opportunities offered by higher food prices for reinvesting in agriculture, thereby preventing similar dramatic situations occurring in the future. More food needs to be produced where it is urgently needed to contain the impact of soaring prices on poorer consumers, simultaneously boosting productivity, and expanding the production to create more income and employment opportunities for poor people living in LDCs.
- Support smallholders to ensure their dignified access to land, water resources, credit and essential inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, and services, such as research, extension and training. Provide special subsidies to the poor farmers to ensure cost effective access to inputs and services.

Bangladesh food crisis: politics of global integration and thereby exploitation

Bangladesh is a country of fertile land and rich in biodiversity. Historically it was self sufficient in food production, which was scrapped in the British colonial period while people were forced to cultivate the *Indigo* to satisfy the industrial demand in the UK. The British exploitation continued until 1947, and again the country was under Pakistani regime for 25 years until its independence in the year 1971. During Pakistani regime, Bangladesh was made as the dumping ground of wheat from United States under the PL 480 Agreement. But in the following years of independence, food assistance to the country reduced drastically, especially from the USA, and country faced another famine in 1974. This situation led killing of popular political leaders through a military coup in 1975 and the military regime continued until 1991. It was the period when all the neo-liberal policies rooted, major state-owned institutions were privatised, most of the debt was taken during that period (until 2006 total debt is around 18 billion, around 12 billions were taken during the military regime).

Just after the independence, the agriculture sector contributed 30 % of country's (GDP) which continued up to 1975. Many state-owned research and service providing institutions, including Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), were established to ensure support services to the farmers. After 1975 military coup, neo-liberal regimes rooted to the country's economic base and dismantled BADC, abolished public distribution system and subsidy was reduced drastically. Although, during 1996 to 2001, Bangladesh gained self sufficiency, but



Photo: <http://www.ips.org>

before and later country suffered food deficit annually of 2 to 3 million tons. In 2008, at the time of global food crisis, country needed to import the same amount of food spending around 25 % of its budget, which made the country bound to downsize its development budget, as more money was channelled to food distribution for market stabilization and to support safety net programs.

Following the recent food crisis, country's policy makers are contemplating for serious effort to gain food self sufficiency but neo-liberal regimes especially the World Bank openly came up with proposal not to provide subsidy in agriculture rather suggested Bangladesh to invest for *Jatropha* cultivation for Bio Fuel production. If we further follow the '1st guideline, then we could foresee two major dangers i) commercialization in agriculture which will drive away small and marginal farmers who compose around 40 % of the country's population and ii) destruction of country's rich bio diversity.

- In many of the LDCs, access to land and other productive resources is disparate. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken to ensure smallholders' access to resources, services and infrastructures through scientific agrarian reform policies.
- Guarantee employment of unemployed people in the LDCs. The policies and programmes need to create employment and micro-enterprise opportunities for all.
- There should be policies to provide incentives for technologies that creates jobs for landless people rather than reducing employment. Likewise, policies aimed at stimulating investments – both foreign and domestic – should provide incentives for investment in labour-intensive ventures rather than capital-intensive projects.
- It is needed to increase public investment in agricultural research aimed at enhancing smallholder productivity. Such research can support smallholders ready adapt to address their current constraints. Policy advocacy should be launched with LDC governments and their development partners to increase investment in public agricultural research beyond current stagnant levels. It also needs to enhance its focus on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.
- It is also needed to introduce "safety nets" programmes to transfer resources to poor and food insecure people or people who are vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity

- and shocks. In addition to providing immediate resources that boost purchasing power, the 'safety nets' programmes should aim at transferring assets to boost their livelihoods through integrating income generating activities so that poor people could manage risk, cope with dislocations resulting from policy reforms such as SAPs or trade liberalisation.
- It is also important to strengthen capacities of public service sectors and further invest in the next generation's human capital, thereby breaking the inter-generational transfer of poverty.
- Denounce the current model of food security and uphold the right of individual country to determine its production and consumption practices and the exemption of agriculture from global trade regimes. Call upon the UN Human Rights Council and the International Court of Justice to investigate the contribution of agribusiness in the violations of the right to food, the establishment of the UN Commission on Food Production, Consumption and Trade, and the overall restructuring of multilateral organisations including the World Bank.

It is believed that the long-term challenge for ensuring food security is not only a simple matter of lowering prices and increasing supplies, it is fundamentally linked to the challenge of increasing purchasing power and reducing poverty.

Contributors:

Mr. Md Shamsuddoha and Rezaul Karim Chowdhury (Equity and Justice Working Group, Bangladesh)
 Ms. Chaitrini Chakrabarti (Advocacy Platform for an Alternative Development, Haiti)
 Mr. Demba Moussa Dembelle (Africanité de Recherche et de Coopération Pour l'Appui au Développement Endogène-ARCADE)
 Dr. Ajun Kumar Karik and Ms. Prajwara Karmacharya (LDC Watch)
 Dr. Sarba Raj Khadka (SAAPE)
 Mr. Prem Dargal (All Nepal Peasants' Federation-ANPPFA, Nepal)

About LDC Watch

LDC Watch was established in the aftermath of the third UN Conference on LDCs that took place in Brussels in 2001. LDC Watch is a global alliance of regional, national and international civil society organisations, their networks and movements mainly based in LDCs. 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) including other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (ADGs). It goes beyond the BPoA in addressing poverty, hunger, social injustice and human rights in the LDCs. LDC Watch, therefore, has been raising its voice and articulating its popular perspectives in a multi-stakeholder framework, engaging with the UN, EU, LDC governments and their development partners, both as development partner and as pressure group.

The third LDC Conference produced a seven-point Programme of Action in the form of commitments to foster a people-centred policy framework in the LDCs; build good governance; build productive capacities to make globalisation work for LDCs; enhance the role of trade in development; reduce vulnerability; protect the environment and mobilise resources; and the programme includes 30 time-bound and measurable international development goals. It also urged governments to include civil society in their plans.

Vision

LDC Watch envisions a world free of LDC and fully enjoying justice and human dignity.

References:

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations). 1992. International Conference on Nutrition. Rome: FAO.
www.fao.org/es/strat/infocn/infocn.htm
 FAO. 1996. World Food Summit/Plan of Action.
http://www.fao.org/wfs/index_en.htm
 FAO. 2002. World Food Summit: five years later.
<http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsummit/english/index.html>
 Hazel, P.B.R., C. Poulton, S. Wiggins and A. Doward. 2007. The Future of Small Farms for Poverty
 IFPRI. 2005. The Future of Small Farms: Proceedings of a Research Workshop. Washington, DC: IFPRI.
<http://www.ifpri.org/events/seminars/2005/smallfarms/procbook.pdf>
 Khor, Martin. Global Trends, The Star Online. April 14, 2008
 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2007. Agricultural Policies in OECD Countries: Monitoring and Evaluation 2007. Paris: OECD.
 Paul James A. Wahlberg Katarina. July 2008. A New Era of World Hunger? FES Briefing Paper July 2008
 P. Conoziglio and Ronald U. Mendoza: Anatomy of the Global Food Crisis; United Nations Development Programme June 2008
 Reduction and Growth." 2020 Vision Discussion Paper No. 42. Washington, DC: IFPRI. <http://www.wfp.org/2020vision/dp/vp42.pdf>
 Rosario Bela Guzman. The Global Food Crisis: Hype and Reality, July 2008
 Sen, Amartya (1981). Poverty and Famines. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 Sen, Amartya (1982). "The Food Problem: Theory and Policy Issues. p.d



LDC Watch Position Paper

Food Crisis Defending Food Sovereignty in LDCs: CSO Issues and Concerns

Mission

LDC Watch is committed to facilitating and supporting people's initiatives and struggles against poverty, hunger, social, economic, political and ecological injustices through advocacy, campaigns and strategic partnerships with the social movements, UN agencies, LDC governments and other members of the international community, for pro-poor policies together with their implementation in the LDCs.

Objectives

- To raise awareness on the BPoA including all other ADGs, amongst the general public in the LDCs; CSOs; LDC governments; development partner governments and agencies and relevant multi-lateral institutions;
- To enhance the capacity of CSOs in the LDCs to effectively advocate, lobby, campaign and network for the implementation of the BPoA and MDGs including all other ADGs;
- To build network, both as development partner and pressure group, to seek the political will of all stakeholders for the implementation of the global development commitments;
- To promote increased attention and delivery of the specific requirements of the LDCs in the global development processes, including the implementation of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development;
- To realise and prepare for an effective civil society engagement in the process towards the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs after the Decade 2001-2010.



LDC Watch

International Secretariat
 P. O. Box 8130, Kathmandu, Nepal
 Tel: +977 1 4422153, 4427823, 4434165, 4425575
 Fax: +977 1 4004508, 4443494
 E-mail: info@ldcwatch.org, akaraki@ldcwatch.org,
 Website: www.ldcwatch.org