



REPORT SUMMARY: SDGS & THE RIGHT TO FOOD

A/74/164 (2019)

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INTRODUCTION Paras. 1-6

The realization of the right to food is essential for achieving the ambitious objectives set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 and signed by 193 countries, the 2030 Agenda is intended to guide global development efforts from 2016 to 2030 through the Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals are a compilation of 17 goals and 169 targets that represent a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The Goals do not explicitly recognize the human right to adequate food, as set forth in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further elaborated in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, the Goals do seek to realize the human rights of all and promise that no one will be left behind - an allusion to the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination that are integral to the realization of the right to food.

Four years after their adoption, the Goals are not on track to achieve their full potential and the most affected populations are those who experience the greatest inequality and marginalization, particularly women, children, indigenous peoples, peasants and migrant communities. This does not mean that the 2030 Agenda is entirely broken or designed to fail; only that the potential for the Sustainable Development Goals to significantly advance the right to food remains unfulfilled. If the 2030 Agenda is implemented holistically and from a human rights-based approach, it is capable of advancing all economic, social and cultural rights.

Realizing the right to food requires States to transform the promise to leave no one behind into concrete policies aligned with human rights law; to demonstrate the political will and financial commitment to address weaknesses in the process to implement the Goals; and to prioritize solutions to the global drivers of hunger and malnutrition above nationalist policies.

LEAVING TOO MANY BEHIND: USING THE SDGS TO ADDRESS INEQUALITIES THAT UNDERMINE THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Defining "Leave no one behind" Paras. 7-8

The cross-cutting principle of leaving no one behind is considered to be one of the most transformative elements of the 2030 Agenda, as it integrates the fundamental human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Securing equitable access to adequate food for all requires a development strategy that calls for change to economic, social and political systems. Policy reforms taken pursuant to the Goals should focus on barriers to the right to food, expanding opportunities for civil society to engage in food system governance and adopting legal protections that eliminate inequality and exclusion.

TACKLING INEQUALITY

Economic Inequality Paras. 9-11

In recent years, economic inequality has reached unprecedented levels. In 2017, global wealth increased by **3.1%**, but approximately **82%** of this growth benefited the wealthiest **1%** of the population, which now controls as much wealth as the other **99%** combined. The bottom **50%** saw no increase. More than **2 billion** people still live in poverty, with **736 million** living in extreme poverty. Over the past half century, climate change has exacerbated global inequality between countries by **25%**.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that zero hunger (**Goal 2**) and poverty reduction (**Goal 1**) must be tackled together. But the right to food also requires dispersing wealth to close the inequality gap within and among countries (**Goal 10**) and between individuals (**Goal 5**). The 2007–2008 global financial crisis revealed how concentrated wealth deteriorates the sustainability of food systems. Cuts to fuel and food subsidies, rising food prices, corruption and austerity measures that exacerbate wealth inequality have stirred recent unrest and humanitarian crises around the world, in both the global north and south.

Redistributing Wealth and Fiscal Policies Paras. 12-15

Goal 10 is one of the most striking elements of the 2030 Agenda, representing a formal commitment to address income inequality, social and political power imbalances, unfair fiscal and wage policies, financial regulation and governance of the global economy. Unfortunately, Goal 10 remains vulnerable to strategic neglect and is more likely to be overlooked by policymakers. Among its shortfalls is the absence of a target to reduce the unequal distribution of income and wealth and an indicator that would show whether a country's level of economic inequality has declined by 2030.

Implementing fiscal policies that redistribute wealth will help to reallocate power and promote greater access within food systems, especially for the world's poor, as redistribution via taxation or reallocation of existing spending may resolve over **75%** of global poverty. Progressive tax systems, including direct income and property taxes that support social protection transfers and public services, may have a significant redistributive impact. States should also address austerity policies that reduce the space for public interventions and significantly affect citizens' access to public goods.

Expanding Social Protection Systems Paras. 16-19

The right to food requires States to proactively strengthen people's access to resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including by adopting social protection mechanisms. An estimated **36%** of the "very poor" have escaped extreme poverty as a result of social safety nets, including cash, in-kind transfers, social pensions, public works and school feeding programmes. These programmes have reduced the poverty gap by nearly half in developing countries.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, many countries have significantly expanded and reinforced social protection coverage consistent with Sustainable Development Goal targets 1.3 and 10.4. Still, less than half of the world's population is effectively protected by legally enforceable social protections and coverage is often limited by inadequate implementation, enforcement or institutional capacity.

EMPOWERING AND ENGAGING GROUPS EXPERIENCING INEQUALITY

Paras. 20-47

Women

Achieving gender equality is the direct focus of Goal 5 but the concept is reflected in 36 targets and 45 indicators throughout the goals. Mainstreaming gender perspective will promote more equitable access to land and productive resources as a critical component of gender equality (target 5.a). States should also recognize women's relationship to desertification and land degradation (Goal 14), oceans and fisheries (Goal 15) and Goal 13 on climate change. Gender-responsive economic policies will address women's disproportionate burden of unpaid work, including informal employment in the agriculture sector (target 5.4), guarantee decent employment (Goal 8) and close the gender wage gap.

Children

The 2030 Agenda directly references children in 35 targets, including those under Goal 2 concerning the double burden of malnutrition. Investments in education (Goal 4) can promote better nutrition, health (Goal 3) and responsible investment and consumption (Goal 12) for children. Some States are taking steps under Goal 2 and WHO recommendations to regulate the food industry, as easy access to processed foods high in sugar, salt and fat have contributed to all forms of malnutrition. Engaging educated youth in the formal agricultural sector, consistent with human rights law and ILO standards, will also support agricultural development and poverty reduction

Peasants & Rural Communities

Urban migration has shifted the demographic landscape, warranting actions to make cities safer, more resilient and sustainable (Goal 11). Nevertheless, realizing the right to food requires special attention to rural communities, where roughly 50% of the world's population lives, a proportion that is expected to increase to 60% by 2030. The recently adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas reinforces the obligation for States to provide inclusive, unobstructed access to productive resources. Target 2.4 calls for States to invest in more inclusive, resilient and sustainable food systems and agricultural practices, consistent with greater action on climate change (Goal 13).

Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous peoples have been overlooked in the SDG framework and implementation process. Strengthening the capacity for food-system and agricultural adaptation to climate change, extreme weather and other disasters (target 2.4), will require States to value indigenous peoples' knowledge and practices that have successfully promoted biodiversity and ecosystem health. Closing the education gap and expanding opportunities for decent work, which ILO has stated should align with the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), will help strengthen indigenous peoples' resilience to these shocks

Migrants, Refugees & IDPs

Populations migrating voluntarily or in response to economic shocks, conflict, poverty, natural disasters or climate change experience heightened inequality and unparalleled hurdles to the right to food. These populations are unable to fully enjoy their right to food, as systemic inequality and discrimination contributes to severe economic exploitation, social exclusion and political invisibility. This discrimination is apparent in the modern debate on immigration, which is characterized by misconceptions and proxy fears about unemployment, the viability of welfare systems and other aspects of globalization. The Sustainable Development Goals reflect the duty of States to protect migrants at all stages of the migratory process (target 10.7) and to administer access to justice following discriminatory treatment or rights violations (Goal 16).

ENHANCING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGS

Creating an enabling environment & reforming the institutional framework

A. Adopting a human rights-based framework Paras. 49-52

The 2030 Agenda's aspirational promise to realize the human rights of all is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments that establish State obligations to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. A human rights-based approach (HRBA) to the Goals recognizes that they must be addressed holistically as, like human rights, they are interrelated, indivisible and interlinked. A HRBA also reflects the understanding that the right to food and the SDGs are mutually reinforcing: economic, social and cultural rights can offer a legal basis and guidance in the implementation of the SDGs, and the SDGs can increase support for the realization of these rights. Human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, the special procedures, the treaty bodies and the universal periodic review should be more systematically integrated into national planning on the SDGs.

B. Strengthening oversight and accountability Paras. 53-56

The 2030 Agenda provides only for follow-up and review consisting of voluntary national reviews and peer-reviewed soft guidance, rather than accountability. The bottom-up reporting process should be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind. States should report on the SDGs more holistically, ensure greater stakeholder consultations during the process and expand discussions to focus on tangible progress under the Goals, taking into account the most vulnerable populations. States should support the right to food and establish mechanisms to assess planning, budgeting and the results of food and nutrition-related interventions. Goal 17 envisions the engagement of international partners like the Rome-based agencies to help implement the Goals.

C. Allocating additional financial resources Paras. 57-61

Progress under the 2030 Agenda has largely stalled as a result of insufficient funding. The IMF determined that delivering on the Goals will require additional spending in 2030 of \$0.5 trillion for low-income developing countries and \$2.1 trillion for emerging market economies. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development confirms that mobilizing sufficient financing remains a major challenge to implementation, and notes that investments that are critical to achieving the Goals remain underfunded. Not all methods of financing and investment are equally compatible with a holistic and human rights-based approach to implementation. Effective financing for the Goals will take into consideration their interconnected nature and the need for bottom-up empowerment and involvement States should recommit to the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,

D. Reconciling fragmented and competing targets Paras. 61-64

Fragmentation, duplication and contradictions among the goals have stalled their implementation, but States should develop policies that highlight the synergies, or positive linkages, between Goals, rather than the perceived trade-offs. Goals relating to poverty and health, which are inextricably linked to the right to food and nutrition, are among those most commonly associated with progress under other goals. The most common trade-offs among the Sustainable Development Goals involve Goals 3, 12 and 15, suggesting that countries will either invest in better health care or environmental protections and responsible consumption and production, but not all three. A functioning natural environment, however, is a necessary prerequisite to the right to food.

ENHANCING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGS

Creating an enabling environment & reforming the institutional framework

CONTINUED

E. Building capacity of data collection and reporting mechanisms Paras. 65-67

The SDGs require the use of statistical performance indicators to detect global progress, and evidence-based decisionmaking to ensure policy coherence. The global indicator framework contains 232 unique indicators that serve as a yardstick for measuring progress and communicating the results to various stakeholders. The Statistical Commission has stipulated that indicators for all goals should be disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location. Collecting disaggregated data is essential to a human rights-based approach and for identifying and understanding inequality between population groups. States should rely on external data collection, including the universal periodic review and the recent “Data to end hunger: 50 x 2030” initiative from FAO, IFAD, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to collect improved data and fill information gaps about the most marginalized, isolated and overlooked populations.

F. Promoting balanced private-sector engagement

Paras. 68-71

The 2030 Agenda envisions broad engagement among stakeholders, but States must ensure that private sector, and particularly industry, involvement is balanced and adequately regulated. The lack of accountability imposed on corporate actors for human and labour rights violations in supply chains, especially transnational corporations operating outside the affiliated State’s jurisdiction, undermines the greater success of the Sustainable Development Goals and justiciability of human rights. Goal 17 promotes public-private partnerships, among other forms of multi-stakeholder engagement, which may reinforce existing power asymmetries, exacerbate conflicts between public and private interests and otherwise seek to leverage financial resources as a means to unduly influence public decision-making or policies. States cannot place civil society on the same footing as State and market actors, or ignore the concentrated power and conflicts of interest embedded in the private sector.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Paras. 72-74

The present report adopts the position that the 2030 Agenda, and specifically the Sustainable Development Goals, have the potential to transform global food systems and significantly advance the right to food, as well as other economic, social and cultural rights. Facing rising hunger and malnutrition, States must demonstrate the political will to implement the Goals holistically, and from a human rights-based approach, placing inequality and those who have been left behind at the centre of the policy process. Committing to a global agenda for change will further require States to prioritize the interests of the world over those of a single nation, to trade in market-driven policies for human-centric solutions and to allocate sufficient resources to support implementation of the Goals.

Good practices in this report are framed as system-wide solutions rather than ad hoc, incremental remedies. Successful reforms under the Goals are about breaking through silos, guaranteeing measurable commitments and promoting cooperation with all relevant stakeholders.

Owing to restrictions on the word count, the report does not discuss the external drivers of hunger and malnutrition that aggravate inequality and undermine the right to food. Conflict, climate change and an international economic regime that supports the commodification and industrialization of agriculture over human rights. Realizing the right to food and achieving the SDGs requires immediate action to address these drivers.

SELECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Paras. 75-76

The Special Rapporteur recommends that International Organizations

a) Including the Rome-based agencies, FAO, the WFP, IFAD and CFS partner with State and municipal governments to enhance implementation of the SDGs.

b) Geneva-based human rights mechanisms, for example, the Human Rights Council, the special procedures, the treaty bodies and the universal periodic review, should be more actively integrated in the SDG implementation process,

The Special Rapporteur recommends that States:

a) Recognize that the SDG and economic, social and cultural rights are mutually reinforcing, and adopt a human rights-based approach to implementation of the Goals, ratify all human rights instruments and align national laws and policies with human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation, universality, indivisibility, accountability and the rule of law; data pertaining to human trafficking and labour exploitation.

b) Adopt a comprehensive view of inequality that focuses on the root causes of exclusion, measure the full distributive effects of fiscal policies and redistribute wealth through progressive fiscal policies;

c) Expand social protections and avoid neo-liberal austerity measures and other economic policies that dismantle existing social safety nets

d) Adopt strategic policy interventions that empower and engage women who have been structurally left behind by mainstreaming gender equality into economic policies, remove barriers to access to food and productive resources and fairly compensate women for unpaid and informal work.

e) Regulate the involvement of children in the agricultural sector and protect children's right to education and prohibit ads for unhealthy goods targeted at children and young adults.

f) Invest in rural development and revitalization by strengthening rural-urban integration, increasing access to markets for smallholder farmers and funding rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services..

g) Protect the rights of peasants and rural communities to land and reproductive resources, including customary rights, consistent with the recently adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

h) Afford greater attention to indigenous peoples in the SDG process, engaging and consulting with indigenous peoples on sustainable development and climate change-mitigation strategies,

i) Re-evaluate and challenge the vested interests, incentives and power relations embedded in industrial agrochemical-dependent food systems, and promote smallholder production through investment in agroecology.

j) Reject xenophobic, divisive and false rhetoric towards migrants, including refugees and internally displaced persons, and extend all human rights protections to non-citizens.

k) Actively participate in the SDG follow-up and review process, cooperating with all stakeholders and presenting a voluntary national review to the high-level political forum annually that reports progress on every Goal;

l) Allocate greater financial resources to the SDGs

m) Address threats of climate change, conflict and economic policies to the right to food and global food systems, following the recommendations included in reports of the Special Rapporteur: A/HRC/37/61, A/72/188 and A/70/287.