

Right to Food Forum  
DISCUSSION PAPER

**Panel 4: Durable Impact - Benchmarks and Monitoring**

*At the end of this discussion participants will identify:*

a) **LESSONS LEARNED: What worked and what not? Why?**

b) **NEXT STEPS: What can Governments and stakeholders do?**

### 1) Background

The Right to Food Guidelines invite States to monitor progress towards the realisation of the right to food (Guideline 17), and to report periodically on such progress to the FAO Committee on World Food Security. Governments which are signatories to international covenants and agreements, have the obligation to report periodically on progress being made towards the realization of the right to food. This is important as findings and conclusions reported to international reporting bodies can result in concrete recommendations for follow-up actions to maintain progress towards the realization of the right to food.

Monitoring the right to food should focus particularly on how the right to food is respected, protected and fulfilled among the food insecure, malnourished, and those vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, as such groups are especially prone to discrimination. The Right to Food Guidelines outline a rights based development approach that is conducive to the realization of the right to food. The impacts of State actions, as well as actions by non State actors (private sector, civil society) in implementing this development agenda need to be monitored. At the same time, the Right to Food Guidelines stress that the process of monitoring the right to food should fully respect and protect the human rights of everyone. Findings and conclusions from monitoring should be widely shared and be linked to follow-up actions by government, civil society organizations and grass roots groups.

Monitoring the right to food involves tracking the impacts, implementation processes, and structural factors that condition both the implementation processes and the impacts of State and non State actions. The structural factors that are subject to change over time lie in the legal, policy and institutional dimensions of the right to food. Structural, process and impact indicators need to be developed and tested for such factors. Several groups are addressing this issue and their efforts need to be harmonized. The information provided by these indicators should clarify what needs to be done by way of follow-up by the different groups.

### 2) Why is it important to monitor the realisation of the right to food?

The human rights of all are not necessarily fully respected, protected and fulfilled, even when overall economic growth and socio-economic development goals are achieved. This also applies to the right to food. It is important to monitor the outcomes of State actions

and of the processes by which impacts are achieved. These processes should adhere to human rights principles and approaches, i.e. they should be transparent, non-discriminatory, participatory, empowering and fully respect the rule of law and human dignity.

Monitoring the progressive realization of the right to food (rights-focused monitoring) means establishing verifiable and time-bound targets and benchmarks against which to monitor progress in realizing this right. Such targets and benchmarks should orientate policy and help in improving governance, as they allow right holders and their representatives to hold Governments accountable for any lack of adequate progress. National targets are increasingly being included in policy and strategy documents, and their attainment is being monitored. This provides an opportunity to introduce rights-focused monitoring of the right to food.

Right to food violations need to be monitored so that measures can be taken to remedy such violations and to prevent them from re-occurring. An increase in the number of violations indicates a regression in the realization of the right to food.

### **3) What are the issues/challenges?**

Food security and nutrition goals, targets and benchmarks are usually defined on technical grounds, and from a basic needs perspective. They usually lack human rights dimensions. Monitoring indicators with respect to food security and nutrition do not capture the human rights dimensions of realizing the right to food. This means that existing indicators need to be analysed differently, and that additional, rights based indicators need to be developed. The information/data to construct impact indicators needs to be disaggregated to analyse the distributional effects of policy measures. Repeated measurements over time of the Gini coefficient, for example, of distribution of land access or household incomes can indicate whether specific policy measures do in fact improve equitable access to resources by the poor.

Rights-focused monitoring tracks the impact of public policies, programmes and actions as well as the ways in which such impacts are achieved. Indicators in conventional monitoring usually focus on impacts and outcomes. Alone, these impact indicators such as child stunting and underweight indicators provide little indication as to what policy responses are needed, and therefore need to be incorporated in an integrated analysis that links causes to outcomes. Although causal and vulnerability analysis is increasingly undertaken at country level, analysis of implementation processes to explain outcomes is usually not included. Hence the need to develop appropriate process indicators that capture specific elements during implementation and that provide clear guidance for remedial actions to improve these processes and make them human rights compliant.

Right to food concepts are often misunderstood by decision makers and/or are perceived as threatening to their decision making power. This constrains rights-focused monitoring of the right to food. Strategies designed to provide decision makers and stakeholders with a thorough understanding of right to food concepts, their practical meanings, and how to apply these in different professional and technical areas, need to be put in place

Monitoring information should help empower right holders by making it possible for them to hold State duty bearers accountable for poor performance, unlawful conduct or wasteful use of public resources. It should help people understand what their rights are, what these mean in practice, and how to fulfil their right to self-determination. However, most monitoring information does not reach right holders as only restricted technical groups and decision makers have access to such information.

Right to Food Guideline 17.1 suggest that "*States may wish to establish mechanisms to monitor...by building on existing information systems and addressing information gaps*".

Existing in-country information systems are often weak, not so much in information availability, but in analytical capacity. This restricts right to food monitoring which requires technical monitoring capacity, full understanding of what human rights principles mean in practice, and capacity to analyse monitoring information from a human rights perspective. As it is often difficult to find all these skills in one organization, capacity strengthening is invariably required.

Right to Food Guideline 17.6 indicates that: "...States should ensure a participatory approach to information gathering, management, analysis, interpretation and dissemination". Monitoring reports are usually quite technical, and accessible to restricted groups of professionals only. Yet, rights based monitoring should aim at making monitoring information accessible and useable by all rights. This may require monitoring the right to food at community levels and by grass roots groups. It also means that governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations tasked with monitoring the right to food have a duty to make monitoring information accessible to everyone, i.e. the monitoring process should be transparent.

#### **4) What are preliminary findings?**

Monitoring the right to adequate food is still in its infancy. Empirical evidence about how to monitor the right to food, what to monitor and for whom, is not yet freely available. Some preliminary conclusions point to the following. Methods that are available and are being used for vulnerability assessments, policy analysis, programme and institutional assessments, and public budget analysis, can be adapted and applied in relation to food monitoring. This often involves asking additional analytical questions in relation to both implementation processes and the impacts of policy measures and State actions.

In some countries, the value of having one body with a clear mandate to lead human rights realization and monitoring, including for the right to food, is emerging. To be effective, such a mandate needs to be recognised by all institutions and be in accordance with the Paris Principles. This implies that the organization has adequate capacity to undertake right to food monitoring (excluding right to food violations, which are undertaken by non-governmental organisations or, in some cases, by a human rights institution).

Ongoing efforts in assessing and monitoring national food and nutrition programmes in several Latin American countries show that a rights-focus can be included in such assessments, dealing specifically with the processes of programme design and implementation, and the degree to which these are rights based. First findings point to the need for substantial capacity strengthening in national teams with regard to: (a) human rights and right to food concepts, (b) their relevance to programme assessment and (c) implications for assessment methods. In some countries, partnership with a human rights institution or organization is being used to bolster the human rights expertise for assessments.

Community based monitoring is not a new concept. Truly participatory methods have been developed and implemented for many years. There is a body of literature that synthesises these methods and experiences. Such methods, which often generate qualitative information, now need to be incorporated in the monitoring of the right to food, complementing quantitative data.

#### **5) Questions to the panel**

a. What practical guidance can be given to countries for the selection of rights based monitoring indicators? How can we ensure that the information generated through rights

based indicators will lead to the formulation of policies and programmes that effectively contribute to the realization of the right to food?

b. Can specific right to food targets and benchmarks be established? If so, what would they typically be? Is there evidence that some countries are establishing right to food targets and benchmarks, specifically for the most vulnerable groups? By what process can we ensure that right to food targets and benchmarks are effectively incorporated in overarching national policy frameworks and in sector policies? Are there any country level experiences from which we can learn?

c. What opportunities may there be for initiating right to food monitoring at country level? What should national stakeholders do to take advantage of these opportunities? What should external agencies, such as FAO, do to assist governments and national stakeholders in taking advantage of these opportunities?

d. What are the likely constraints to monitoring the right to food at country level? What can and should national stakeholders do to overcome these constraints? What can external agencies do to assist governments and national stakeholders in addressing these constraints?

e. How can monitoring the right to food be firmly integrated in on going monitoring of food security, poverty, livelihood vulnerability, and of progress in achieving MDG's? What constraints may have to be overcome at country level? What is the best way to promote the sharing of monitoring information among all stakeholders ?

f. What practical guidance can be given to countries to establish a true partnership between government and civil society organizations in monitoring the right to food? Is such a partnership possible, and would it be desirable? Would it compromise the role of non-governmental organizations of monitoring right to food violations?

g. What is the experience with community level monitoring of human rights? How can community based monitoring information feed into more top-down monitoring systems, and influence decisions at central levels?

h. Are there country level experiences to demonstrate how quantitative approaches to monitoring can be adequately complemented by qualitative information (from interviews and testimonials) to monitor the realization of human rights?

i. What are in-country priorities in strengthening the capacity to monitor the right to food? Towards which institutions and organizations should capacity strengthening efforts typically be targeted? What is the role of external agencies, such as FAO, in strengthening right to food monitoring capacity at both national and sub-national levels?

j. To what extent has monitoring in general, and monitoring of the right to food in particular, had an impact on defining policy responses to the current crisis of soaring food prices? How can right to food monitoring contribute to assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of those policy responses?