

6. GETTING STARTED

SOME IDEAS ARE PRESENTED IN THIS CHAPTER:

- About how to go about introducing at country level rights based monitoring as part of conventional monitoring of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty.

Effective implementation of the Right to Food Guidelines at country level requires the development of an implementation strategy that covers awareness raising, advocacy, public education and communication, capacity strengthening, the role of civil society, and rights based monitoring. Awareness raising, public education and promotion of human rights, including the right to adequate food, and the development and implementation of rights-focused monitoring must go hand in hand. Rights-focused monitoring of the right to adequate food only makes sense when there are real political and social commitments to human rights. This way we can also expect the monitoring process itself to be rights compliant, and the monitoring information to be useful to further the fulfilment of human rights. The creation of an enabling human rights environment, by means of a process that is owned by the country and by the principal stakeholders at different levels, is the first necessary step. Creation of an enabling human rights environment is not the primary responsibility of monitoring practitioners.

However, rights-focused monitoring information can in turn contribute to creating an enabling human rights environment if the information outputs are well targeted in reaching important decision makers, and are relevant and timely.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

There is no set way as conditions to implement human rights measures, and to develop and strengthen food security information systems will differ from country to country. Nor is there a lot of in-country evidence to learn from at present. Country-specific opportunities and challenges need to be clearly understood up-front. For

example, a programme of capacity strengthening for rights-focused monitoring and rights-based monitoring ideally should begin with an institutional assessment to determine existing needs for capacity strengthening. The assessment should not only consider human resource factors, but also institutional and financial factors, and should concentrate on those institutions and organisations that have clear duties to generate, synthesise, manage, analyse and disseminate information for monitoring. Assessment results can then provide the basis for the formulation of a strategic ‘capacity strengthening’ work plan. This plan may include:

- Skills-building.
- Knowledge acquisition.
- Technological or methodological development.
- Improved communications.
- Internal reorganisation to establish clear job responsibilities and lines of authority.
- More effective ways of information sharing among institutions and organisations.

One approach that may be considered is to convene a small inter-institutional working group to develop a rights-based monitoring system. This was done in Uganda within the context of monitoring implementation of the Uganda Food and Nutrition Strategy.

BOX 6.1 - Developing a rights-focused monitoring module in Uganda

To develop and operationalise the monitoring module of the 2005 Uganda Food and Nutrition Strategy, an inter-institutional working group was convened by the Secretariat of the Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture. The group consisted of a representative of the following institutions: Uganda Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Ministry of Health, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, and the Food Rights Alliance Network (a Non Governmental Organisation network).

The working group was mandated by high level management in each institution to ensure continuous participation in the group’s work. The group was assisted by a national consultant hired by FAO. The final output to be produced was a practical toolkit to monitor Ugandan Food And Nutrition Strategy implementation, applying rights based approaches. The first task that the group completed was a work plan that outlined specific tasks to complete and outputs to produce within a given timeline, and assigned specific responsibilities to members of the group. The group periodically reported to the Plan For The Modernisation Of Agriculture Sub-committee on Food and Nutrition Security and consulted its members individually when needed.

For such an inter-institutional working group to function well requires:

- A clear description of the tasks to be undertaken by the group, and of the results to be produced within a given time line.
- Technical guidance as needed in the form of on-the-job training.
- Creation of awareness and understanding at high management levels of the right to adequate food concepts and principles, of the importance and relevance of rights-based monitoring and of the monitoring outputs that the system will or can produce.
- Participation in the inter-institutional working group by individual staff members from different institutions to be mandated by high-level management in participating institutions.

As the Uganda case demonstrates, it is also helpful when there is a specific context within which the rights-focused monitoring module is to be developed, in this case the need to monitor the implementation of the Uganda Food and Nutrition Strategy. It is a good starting point, making the monitoring outputs “demand-driven” and thus providing guidance as to what to monitor. A more comprehensive rights-focused monitoring system can over time build on such a specific module.

In the case of Brazil, current efforts in developing a rights-based monitoring system are guided by the needs to monitor the implementation and outcomes in sixteen policy priority areas related to food and nutrition security. These policy areas in total encompass 59 programmes. Participation of monitoring practitioners in the working group is fundamental, in order to see what needs to be introduced in routine or ongoing monitoring activities to make the monitoring process rights-based and the information outputs relevant to monitoring the right to adequate food.

Institutional leadership is another important ingredient. An institution should convene the working group with strong ties to key institutions and organisations, and should continuously consult stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, and provide feedback on progress in its work to those institutions and organisations. This will facilitate the eventual implementation of the rights-based monitoring system, as those same institutions and organisations will participate as providers of monitoring information and/or as users. It means that some of the institutional issues outlined in chapter 5 also need to be attended to with some priority.