I. **Introduction**

FIAN International welcomes the Committee on the Rights of the Child’s (“the Committee”) decision to devote its 2016 general discussion day to the issue of children’s rights and the environment and its call for civil society submissions to contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between the different actors and human rights at play. This contribution seeks to provide information about the topics of Working Group 1 – Children’s exposure to environmental toxicants and Working Group 2 – Children and the effects of environmental degradation by identifying the links between the environment, children’s human right to food and nutrition, and States Parties’ obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (“the Convention”).

The information contained in this submission is based, *inter alia*, on information obtained by FIAN over the last 30 years through exchanges with affected communities during the course of our work, especially during the process of documenting and analyzing cases of violations of the right to food and nutrition and related rights, elaborating case strategies, and conducting workshops and seminars at the national, regional, and international levels, in which affected communities, advocates, and academics from different regions of the world have participated.

II. **Our holistic understanding of the human right to food and nutrition**

We, at FIAN, understand the human right to food and nutrition as a comprehensive concept intrinsically linked to the full realization of children’s rights, and within the conceptual framework of food sovereignty. As a result, and in line with the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, adopted by the FAO in 2004, States should be held accountable to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food and nutrition in an integrated manner by ensuring that all structural causes of hunger and malnutrition are addressed all along the food chain and related governance and policy processes – from access, control, management and ownership of land, seeds, forests and water bodies, to food processing, marketing and promotion, protection in the workplace, and to decent income and consumption patterns, up until the very moment in which food is effectively consumed as a needed element for nutrition and health, individually or in community with others across their respective life spans. Ignoring the holistic reality of the human right to food and nutrition, as part and as result of social processes mediated by gender and power-biased social structures, leads to the fragmented understanding of food and nutrition and creates gaps in human rights promotion and protection.

III. **The right to food and nutrition under the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Under the Convention, States Parties’ obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food and nutrition are most explicitly described under articles 24 and 27. More specifically, under article 24, States Parties “recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health”, which is elaborated in the article (and its General Comment No. 15) and perceived to encompass the right to food and nutrition. Under this article, the Convention recognizes that the right to food and nutrition in relation with the right to health goes beyond the provision of nutritious food and calls for the nutrition information and education of, as well as support to, those responsible for the children’s care and well-being, in particular mothers and parents. In this context, the Convention states that in addition “to combat[ing] disease and malnutrition…through the provision of adequate nutritious foods”\(^1\), States Parties shall also take steps “to ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers”\(^2\) and “ensure that all segments of

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1 CRC Article 24.2(c)
2 CRC Article 24.2(d)
society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, [and] the advantages of breastfeeding…”.

In its article 27.3, the Convention further links the right to food and nutrition to social protection measures by stating that States shall take steps “to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition…”.

In addition to Articles 24 and 27, which more explicitly recognize the right to food and nutrition, there are several other articles in the Conventions that implicitly address this human right. For example, Article 2 on non-discrimination, Article 3 on the actions of public or private institutions responsible for the care or protection of children, Article 4 on how the Convention ought to engage with the substantive content of economic, social and cultural rights, Article 6 on the right to life, and Article 17 on the protection of the child from information and material injurious to their well-being, among others, touch upon rights that are indivisible from the holistic understanding of the right to food.

Furthermore, the Committee’s General Comment No. 15 on the right to health expands on the Convention’s understanding of children’s right to food by explicitly citing the General Comment No. 12 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its definition of “nutritionally adequate, culturally appropriate and safe food” and in this context, it also calls for “exclusive breastfeeding for infants up to 6 months of age [to] be protected and promoted”. General Comment No. 15 also recognizes the importance of school feeding programs, the harmful effects of children’s exposure to “fast foods” and the resulting obesity epidemic, the need to limit the exposure of children to advertisements of energy-dense and micronutrient-poor foods, and the environmental impact of business activities on children’s right to food. General Comment No. 16, which is on the impact of the business sector on children, expands on this last point and is a powerful tool to ensure that states protect children from the adverse impact of businesses activities affecting natural resources necessary to produce adequate food or regarding the activities of transnational companies in the area of industrial production and commercialization of food impairing the enjoyment of the human right to food and nutrition by children. Similarly, General Comment No. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child touches upon the risk of malnutrition as linked to the care of children with HIV/AIDS, General Comment No. 5 on the rights of adolescents discusses early marriage and pregnancy as significant factors in health, and General Comment No. 7 on the implementation of child rights in early childhood advocates for the promotion and protection of breastfeeding for children’s nutrition. General Comment No. 11 on the rights of indigenous children is also particularly significant for the right to food and nutrition as it recognizes the cultural significance of traditional land and the quality of the natural environment as intricately linked to the child’s right to life and survival.

IV. **Case 1: Holistic judicial decisions related to children’s endemic undernutrition in Camotán, Guatemala**

Case 1 outlines the links between environmental degradation – primarily in the form of deforestation – and children’s right to food and nutrition in the municipality of Camotán, department of Chiquimula, in Eastern Guatemala. The focus is on the judicial decisions of a departmental court on the violations of the right to food and other human rights of five children affected by malnutrition.

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3 CRC Article 24.2(e)  
4 The engagement of the Committee with the substantive components of the right to food and nutrition is also in line with Article 4 of the Convention, which calls for States Parties to undertake all appropriate measures for the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights.  
5 CRC General Comment 15(43)  
6 CRC General Comment 15(44)  
7 CRC General Comment 15(46)  
8 CRC General Comment 15(47)  
9 CRC General Comment 15(81)  
10 CRC General Comment 15(49)
a. Description of the case: Links between environmental degradation and children’s right to food and nutrition

Guatemala has the highest chronic undernutrition rate for children under five in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fourth highest in the world. The most vulnerable groups are indigenous women, girls and boys who live in the highlands and the so-called “Dry Corridor”. Eight in ten indigenous children suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Children’s malnutrition in the municipality of Camotán, Guatemala, is intimately linked to the extreme levels of poverty in the region. In Camotán, 59.5% of people live in poverty and 27.7% in extreme poverty. The situation of under nutrition of children has become an endemic problem, with 55.7% of children under 5 years of age classified as undernourished. Peoples of the ethnicity Ch’ortí’ (CRC Article 2 and General Comment No. 11) inhabit this geographical area, which has experienced various environmental changes caused by the destruction of natural resources – in particular the loss of forests – for decades. The deforestation is caused in part by companies involved in the harvesting and sale of wood on the one hand and on the other to clear the ground for farming. The environmental destruction is further exacerbated by the climatic conditions of the area – which are very arid resulting in extreme water scarcity due to gaps in the hydrologic cycle.

The scarcity of adequate food and nutrition – which has a particular impact on children – derives largely from these environmental conditions. The resulting collapse in agricultural production and insufficient food availability in the region has an extreme impact on the families in this area who typically engage in agricultural work for their survival. These conditions, in combination with the lack of adequate policies and programs in place to support vulnerable communities, result in violations of the right to food and nutrition of children.

Women from the community referred to the situation of extreme poverty to which their families are condemned, their incapacity to obtain an income, and the impossibility to cultivate as the main reasons preventing them from having at least three meals during the day. For these families, a typical meal is composed of 1 or 2 tortillas and a cup of coffee. At the same time, shortages of basic services in the form of difficulties in the access to safe drinking water, lack of sanitation, poor access to health care and education have made the indigenous communities living in these territories highly vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition.

In Camotán, violations of the human rights to food and nutrition, health, housing, land, and social security – all recognized in the International Covenants ratified by Guatemala and also part of the Guatemalan Constitution and pertinent national laws – were verified and documented by national groups with the support of FIAN International.

i. The links between environmental degradation and access to resources

The families have very little – if any at all – land to cultivate. The soil is rocky and clayey, with steep slopes, which combined with a general lack of rain in the region, results in very low yields of corn and beans – insufficient to supply the food and nutritional needs of a family for the year. Moreover, the majority of families do not have the ability to rent more land or to make investments in agricultural inputs to increase their minimal production for family consumption. While in some municipalities of Camotán, peasants are able to rent some small plots of lands, the production of food continues to be insufficient due to the extreme climatic events, including droughts and floods, which destroy the yields. Furthermore, there is no – or in some cases delayed – provision of fertilizers for the families. (CRC Articles 4, 27)

ii. The links between environmental degradation and the right to work

The poor quality of the soils have a severe impact on the families’ ability to earn a living in agricultural work in the area, resulting in increased vulnerability for hunger and malnutrition for the children. Most of the families

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suffered from a similar reality: with the hope to increase their family’s income, older children or fathers often work as temporary daily workers in agriculture either in Guatemala or Honduras for an income well below the minimum wage – Q25.00 (USD 3.00) or Q30.00 (USD 4.00) per day – without ever earning more than Q750.00 (USD 96.00) per month. This income is primarily used for the purchase of the most basic food items, such as corn, beans, coffee, sugar and salt. Even though heads of families actively seek out work, there are no available sources of employment in agriculture or otherwise in the area and thus, many families end up depending on the monetary assistance of other family members who are better off financially. The mother is typically the one who stays home and is responsible for the care of the children and who assumes complete responsibility for the home. Due to the fathers’ frequent absences as a result of the outmigration in search of work, the mother is usually the sole adult in the home responsible for addressing the needs of the family without adequate resources. (CRC Article 18, 27)

iii. The links between environmental degradation and the right to social protection

In spite of the seasonal hunger resulting from the extreme climatic and poor soil conditions, there are no state institution in charge of generating alternative forms of employment, supporting small farmers, or giving food assistance or cash transfers to prevent seasonal hunger among the families in Camotán. (CRC Articles 26 and 27)

iv. The links between environmental degradation and the right to housing

Exacerbating the impact of the environmental conditions on the children’s right to food and nutrition was the families’ inadequate living conditions. Families for the most part lacked access to potable water, draining systems, sanitation and electricity – all with an impact on children’s higher vulnerability for diseases which is also further exacerbated by the poor nutrition they receive. (CRC Article 27)

v. The links between environmental degradation and the right to health

The consequences of the chronic malnutrition in the children included severe growth retardation, diarrhea, dehydration, parasitism, whooping cough, dental deficiencies and fever caused by pneumonia and bronchopneumonia. The available health care is inadequate and mothers are not able to afford medicines. Due to the inaccessibility of health care, families often use house-made remedies to help treat the symptoms without successfully treating the acute undernutrition. Members of the community have become sensitized to early death, mainly due to malnutrition or illnesses associated with malnutrition. (CRC Articles 6 and 24)

b. State obligations: Fulfilling children’s right to food and nutrition through the implementation of holistic judicial decisions

In 2012, a coalition of 14 civil society organizations linked to the campaign Guatemala sin Hambre and supported by FIAN engaged in strategic litigation to claim the right to food and nutrition of children suffering from chronic malnutrition and living in conditions of extreme poverty. Complaints were presented by four mothers of five children – three girls and two boys – and were claimed under the Law for the Integral Protection of Children and Adolescents, requesting urgent measures to address acute malnutrition in the mentioned communities. The claimants argued that the state had not taken any decisive action to combat the problem and that existing policies to tackle malnutrition were insufficient and ineffective.

The Child and Adolescence Court of the Zacapa Department delivered the judgments in April 2013. The judicial decision found the state of Guatemala responsible for violations of the human right to food and nutrition, the right to life, the right to health, the right to education, the right to housing, and the right to work. The judges relied on different legal bases contained in the constitution, ordinary legislation and international treaties ratified by Guatemala. The court found the state responsible for these violations because it did not

contemplate effective programs, policies, actions or measures capable of avoiding health problems caused by chronic malnutrition and a lack of adequate food of children, to who the state had a heightened obligation.

Furthermore, in 2015, in response to appeals filed by various institutions and ministries of the Guatemalan State,\textsuperscript{14} the Constitutional Court of Guatemala affirmed the sentences issued by the Child and Adolescence Court of Zacapa, giving the sentences a higher legal status under domestic jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{15}

The sentences issued by the Guatemalan courts provide an example of how courts of law of States Parties to the Convention can order particular coordinated and holistic actions to be taken by a variety of government entities taking the best interests of the child as primary consideration (CRC Article 3) and integrating the more substantive and comprehensive interpretations of economic, social and cultural rights under other Conventions, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Article 4) for the fulfillment of children’s right to food and nutrition.

Unfortunately the implementation of these sentences has not been adequate and challenges remain.\textsuperscript{16} In this context, the Committee, in its role as the United Nations body that monitors the implementation of the Convention among states parties, should – through its periodic reviews of Guatemala – closely monitor the implementation of these judicial sentences and make specific recommendations directed at the various government ministries and entities involved to ensure that the right to food and nutrition is realized for all children in Guatemala in a holistic and integrated manner.

i. Coordinated intervention by state ministries for the realization of children’s right to food and nutrition

The Zacapa departmental court sentences mandated coordinated interventions amongst various ministries and government entities in order to repair the damage caused to the malnourished children by the inaction of the state. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court reinforced this standard by determining that government entities or public employees can be ordered to implement protection measures benefiting children and adolescent irrespective of whether these entities are parties to the suit.. The Zacapa court ordered actions by different political institutions, many of which had never previously been involved in coordinated action to address children’s rights or the right to food and nutrition: the State of Guatemala; the Secretary of Food and Nutritional Security; the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Social Development; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Labor; the Ministry of Communications; the Municipal Mayor; the Land Fund; the Secretary of Agrarian Affairs; the Chiquimula Human Rights Office; and the court of Zacapa.

ii. Holistic understanding of children’s right to food and nutrition\textsuperscript{17}

With regard to the right to food, the Zacapa court grounded its reasoning on Article 51 of the Guatemalan Constitution, which protects the right to food of children, as well as on Article 11 of the ICESCR and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and went beyond ordering short-term measures of a medical nature. In this context, while the court ordered the federal government to implement national-level programs\textsuperscript{18} to combat chronic and acute malnutrition, it also ordered a range of measures to provide relief to the claimants, which encompassed a holistic understanding of the human right to food and nutrition of children

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\textsuperscript{14} The Ministry of Communications, Infrastructure and Housing; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food; and the Secretary of Food and Nutritional Security.


\textsuperscript{17} The holistic understanding of the Zacapa court mirrored the more holistic understanding of the right to food and nutrition under ICESCR General Comment No. 12 and followed the ICESCR General Comment No. 9 on how national courts should apply international economic, social, and cultural rights norms under ICESCR.

\textsuperscript{18} The court ordered the implementation of programs such Hambre Cero or la Ventana de los Mil Dias.
and recognized the obligation of the state to fulfill this right in a comprehensive manner. More specifically, the court sought to ensure the realization of children’s right to food and nutrition by addressing the following related rights:

**Right to housing:** The Ministry of Communications, Infrastructure and Housing was ordered to take immediate and urgent actions necessary for the effective realization of the human right to housing of the nuclear families of the children within three months of the sentences. (CRC Article 27)

**Right to land:** The court ordered the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food that it guarantee the availability of specific foodstuffs of sufficient quantity and quality to the children and their families, until the situation of malnutrition is resolved. Similarly, access to land, technology, and education that would enable the children and their families to produce foodstuff were also ordered. As part of the realization of the right to housing and land and linked to families’ ability to produce food, the court also ordered the Ministry to provide the families with sufficient water for consumption as well as access to seeds from the moment that security of tenure is procured. Similarly, the Land Fund and the Secretary of Agricultural Affairs, in conjunction with the Ministry, were also ordered to guarantee the human right to food and nutrition of the children and their families through the free access to land to produce foodstuff of sufficient quality and quantity. (CRC Articles 27)

**Right to work:** The Ministry of Labor was ordered – as a complement to all other measures by other Ministries – to include the mothers of the children in the suits in a labor program that enables them to find employment, care for their children, and obtain adequate income to satisfy the basic necessities of their families. (CRC Articles 18 and 27)

**Right to social security:** The court ordered the Ministry of Social Development to take measures of a short-, medium-, and long-term nature, including ensuring the provision of monitoring and recourse mechanisms. More specifically, the Ministry was ordered to provide cash transfers every two months to the families made conditional on school attendance and health visits and the immediate and monthly distribution of basic and complementary foodstuff. In addition, it was ordered to promote and guarantee the access to its programs by families from vulnerable populations, that it establish the necessary mechanisms to promote the sustainable development of the child, and that it dictate the general principles, policies and actions that other government entities must implement in order to ensure that children and their families do not go back in a condition of vulnerability in respect to the right to food and nutrition. (CRC Articles 26 and 27)

**Right to health:** The court ordered the Ministry of Health to provide holistic medical attention to the children, including periodic nutritional examinations, mental health therapy, and the provision of medicines and vitamins, until they achieve full recuperation. The Ministry was also tasked with the implementation of measures to ensure a clean and healthy environment for the children that enables them to maximize the nutritional absorption of the foods they consume. In this context, the Ministry of Health was charged with the provision of filters to purify the water for consumption and “ONIL” stoves, which would enable families to cook without consuming smoke and are good for the environment. Similarly, the Ministry was ordered to provide guidance and tools to the families to enable them to contribute to the improvement of their environment and trash management. (CRC Articles 5, 6 and 24)

**Right to education:** The Ministry of Education was given a timeline of two weeks during which the children of school age should be included in the scholarship program to guarantee their human right to education. The Ministry was also ordered to include the children in an extracurricular program that enables them to learn technical agricultural skills so that they may engage in this type of work so that they may avoid the need to immigrate elsewhere. (CRC Articles 28 and 29)

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20 For a description of ONIL stoves, see: [https://helpsintl.org/programs/貌似products/](https://helpsintl.org/programs/貌似products/).
Access to justice: Finally, intimately linked to the states’ obligation for the full realization of the children’s and their families’ right to food and nutrition, is the monitoring of the effective realization of all the human rights mentioned in the sentences and access to recourse mechanisms. In this context, the court ordered the Secretary of Agrarian Affairs, the Chiquimula Human Rights Office, and the Court of Zacapa to periodically monitor the implementation of the actions ordered, to establish the needed mechanisms to do so, and to take the necessary legal actions in case these are not effectively implemented. (CRC Article 3)

iii. Protection of all family members, especially mothers, for children’s right to food to be realized

Not only did the sentences recognize the Guatemalan state – and not the parents – as having the obligation to prevent acute and chronic malnutrition in children, but the sentences went further by also recognizing the obligation of the Guatemalan state to protect the parents, especially the mothers’ rights, as a vital element for the realization of the children’s right to food and nutrition. The rights of the mothers were particularly highlighted in regards to their right to work in dignity, the right of the nuclear family to have access to food and the adequate training of the family with the aim of enabling them to produce food, the right of the mother to seeds, and the right of the nuclear family to housing, water and stoves. The protection of the family in regards to food production also protects the food sovereignty of the nuclear family as the main providers of food and nutrition for the children. Furthermore, some of the sentences go even further and have a communal nature as the actions ordered provide benefits beyond those enjoyed by the nuclear families parties to the suits. (CRC Articles 3, 4 and 5)

iv. Heightened obligations related to the protection of children’s right to food and nutrition

While the actions ordered by the sentences encompass long-, medium- and short-term measures, many of the actions were of an urgent nature with specific time limits because of the superior interest of the child and their particular vulnerability. The urgent measures and heightened obligations of the state can be seen in particular with regards to access to housing which had a time limit for its implementation of three months, in relation to the obligation to provide mental health services to address the impact of malnutrition in children’s psychological well-being, the active and proactive nature of many of the health-related orders, and the involvement of various government entities that had never been asked to act in a coordinated manner for the realization of children’s rights. Furthermore, the sentences of the Constitutional Court mention another level of heightened protection for the rights of the children as it specifically counters the state’s appeals by declaring that due to the heightened interest of the child, judicial authorities can order any government entity or employee to enact specific measures to redress human rights violations without these entities themselves being a party to the case. The Constitutional Court also orders that the access to recourse mechanisms should give priority to cases where children are involved due to the superior interest of the children. (CRC Article 3 and 4)

V. Case 2: Effects of industrial gold mining and displacement on children’s right to food and nutrition in Essakane, Burkina Faso

Case 2 outlines the links between environmental degradation – primarily in the form of depletion of natural resources – and children’s right to food and nutrition in Essakane, which is located in the Sahel region in Northern Burkina Faso. The focus is on the impact of industrial gold mining activities, and the resulting displacement, on children’s right to food and other human rights.

a. Description of case: Links between environmental degradation and children’s rights

The Essakane gold site is located in north-eastern Burkina Faso. Since 2009, the Canadian investor IAMGOLD has held mining rights for an area of about 10,000 hectares in Essakane. In November 2009, as a result of their expanding mining activities, 13 local communities composed of approximately 2500 households, or 11500 people, were displaced and resettled into six newly-formed communities in areas outside the perimeters of the mining grounds. Following the displacement and resettlement of the communities, the State of Burkina Faso failed in its obligations to respect and protect children’s rights, in particular their right to food and nutrition. While some improvements have been documented in the living conditions of these communities since mining activities began in 2009, the lifespan of the mine is 15 years and mining activities are expected to continue until 2025 compromising children’s and future generations’ human rights beyond the end of IAMGOLD’s business activities.

i. The links between environmental degradation and access to land
Community members’ right to land was directly affected by the mining activities. Not only were the lands they had previously used to farm and feed themselves lost to them as a result of the displacement and resettlement of the communities, but the lands and natural resources they had relied on for agricultural activities are also being destroyed in the course of the 15-year lifespan of the mine and therefore, communities are not able to use them now or in the future. (CRC Articles 4, 27)

ii. The links between environmental degradation and access to water
Certain communities reported a lack of water at the resettlement sites. The members of one of the communities, for example, claimed that they did not have sufficient and sustainable access to water due (1) to the fact that the water table is contaminated and (2) to the high need for water by the mining company at the expense of communities’ water needs. Community members claimed that the groundwater contained high levels of arsenic, which make the water non-potable. While the company had agreed to supply the village with a tank, the water supplied by IAMGOLD is usually insufficient, according to the victims, to meet the needs of the community in regards to potable water as well as to supply their needs for irrigation. This shortage of water not only affects people’s water needs for consumption and irrigation, but some members of the affected communities also reported access to water for their livestock being reduced every year with severe implications for their ability to continue engaging in livestock raising and thus feed themselves. According to the statements of community representatives, this lack of water is attributable to the great consumption of water by the mine which also pumps water at points traditionally used by the members of the community to fetch water for their livestock. Furthermore, while the situation of some of the displaced communities has improved over the years since first resettled, a main concern related to whether there will be enough water in the water table after the lifespan of the mine remains. (CRC Articles 4, 27)

iii. The links between environmental degradation and the right to work
Most of members of these communities had traditionally engaged in artisanal mining to make a living and feed themselves. The use of lands for industrial mining activities has resulted in community members no longer being able to engage in artisanal mining in the areas where they live – as the lands where they had previously mined are now being occupied by IAMGOLD and the new lands are not as rich in gold – with severe implications for the families’ income and their ability to purchase the food they need to survive. As a result, male members of the families are forced to migrate to neighboring cities or countries in search of work leaving women and children alone without an adequate income to provide for themselves. Furthermore, the continuing mining of gold in the area by IAMGOLD will result in the complete depletion of gold for future generations in Essakane who will no longer be able to rely on artisanal mining to make a living. (CRC Article 18, 27)

iv. The links between environmental degradation and the right to an adequate living conditions
Many community members complained about the high amounts of dust that is generated by the mining activities themselves and the vehicles that continuously drive by the community settlements at high speeds to and from the mine. This dust entered the houses and covered everything from their clothes to their food...

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23 Burkina Faso has 10% of shares in IAMGOLD activities in Essakane.
24 Burkina Faso has failed in its ‘protect’ obligation by failing to protect communities from private actors’ (IAMGOLD) interference with the enjoyment of human rights in Essakane.
items, and in the most dire of cases, the dust that was generated resulted in death because of pedestrians’ inability to see vehicles approaching.25 (CRC Article 27)

v. The impact of environmental degradation on women and children
Most of the violations endured by members of the displaced community due to environmental degradation are exacerbated for children and women. Due to patriarchal customs and practices – women eat last and less in spite of their higher nutritional needs during pregnancy and lactation (and of children under five years of age) and the prevalence of child marriage and the accompanying health complications of a teenage pregnancy and imposed care obligations – in combination with men’s outmigration in search of work, which leaves women and older children alone to care for the family against a background of diminishing resources that can no longer be used to cope with hunger and a highly patriarchal environment where women’s and children’s representation within communities’ leadership is completely lacking, children are left extremely vulnerable to violations of their right to food and nutrition, health, and education, among many others. (CRC Articles 3, 4 and 5)

b. State obligations: Protecting children’s right to food and nutrition in the context of the impact of the business sector
In violation of its obligations under the Convention’s Articles 2, 3, 4, 6 and 12 – as detailed in the Committee’s General Comment No. 16 on State obligation regarding the impact of business sector on children’s rights – Burkina Faso failed to protect the affected communities in Essakane as it allowed IAMGOLD through a leasehold agreement to take up the lands of the affected communities without proper compensation and interfere with the communities’ existing access to food and nutrition. According to communities, there were a number of open issues between IAMGOLD and community representatives that were never agreed upon, but rather decided unilaterally by IAMGOLD, oral promises were not respected, and communities had no knowledge of the final text of Protocol of understanding as this was not translated into the local languages and communities claim that the list of signatures on the Protocol is nothing more than an attendance list. In this context, Burkina Faso failed in its obligation to guarantee consultations with communities and in upholding the principle of free, prior and informed consent. In addition, some of the public policies in place at the time of the displacement – such as the Mining Code of 2003 – were clearly regressive in character, making it easier for businesses to engage in activities that would threaten the human rights of communities.26

The state of Burkina Faso also failed in its obligation to refrain from actions that directly interfere with human rights and is directly responsible for human rights violations as shareholder of 10% of IAMGOLD activities in Essakane. Furthermore, Burkina Faso did not proactively engage in activities intended to strengthen the affected communities’ access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their subsistence and thus also failed in its obligation to fulfill communities’ human rights.

Finally, Canada, among other states involved27, has extraterritorial obligations to regulate the actions of companies having headquarters in their jurisdiction in order to prevent human rights violations abroad.

VI. Cases 3, 4, and 5: Violations of children’s right to food and nutrition in India as a result of environmental degradation

Cases 3, 4, and 5 outline the links between environmental degradation and children’s right to food and nutrition in India. The focus is on the variety of forms such impact can have on children, particularly on children from indigenous communities, in spite of the enactment of a number of policies, laws and programs at the national level meant to precisely prevent this harm.

25 Since this was documented, this no longer seems to be a problem for the communities since small stones have been placed on the street to reduce the dust that is generated. Similarly, the presence of the police has been increased in order to ensure the right speed of IAMGOLD vehicles.

26 It should be noted that a new Mining Code was adopted in 2015, which shows some improvements for affected communities.

27 It has also been uncovered that Switzerland, for example, houses the headquarters of gold refineries that source their gold from the Essakane mine, and thus, Switzerland could also be perceived as having extraterritorial obligations vis-a-vis human rights violations in Burkina Faso. See: https://business-humanrights.org/en/%E2%80%9Cprofit-over-human-rights-gold-mining-in-burkina-faso-and-switzerland%E2%80%99s-responsibility%E2%80%9D.
a. **Description of case 3: River erosion and malnutrition in children in Kheri District, Uttar Pradesh**

The Kheri District is located on the border between India and Nepal and is the biggest district of Uttar Pradesh covering about 7680 kilometers squared. This district is a “minority-dominated” district and as such, it is severely underprivileged in terms of access to basic services and in terms of socio-economic indicators. This district has two rivers – Sharda and Ghanghara – that flow through the district and flood as a result of siltation inside the river catchment area as well as heavy rains in combination with governments’ lack of programs for cleaning sand and mud. This flooding results in the erosion of the soil on a yearly basis. Manpur Kardahia is a village located in the Kheri District in Uttar Pradesh, India and has a total population of 1,098 peoples. There are about 176 houses in Manpur Kardahia village and 125 families reside on the roadside due to having been displaced as a result of flooding and river erosion and the accompanying loss of their houses and land. The community as a whole suffers from extreme vulnerability manifested through the lack of land, jobs, access to social services, and gradual loss of community assets. These environmental conditions in combination with the inadequate financial assistance programs in place in the region result in many cases of malnutrition among children.

i. **The links between environmental degradation and access to resources**

During the monsoon season, a large area of the district becomes flooded and this adversely affects the economic activities of its inhabitants as the soil remains moist for a long period of time, causing agriculture in the post-monsoon period to be adversely affected. In addition, flood waters can cause villages to be wiped away causing major damage not only to human and animal life but also to people’s property and livelihood sources. (CRC Articles 4, 27)

ii. **The links between environmental degradation and children’s right to health**

The most affected group within this population are the children – who are highly vulnerable to morbidity and malnutrition. The malnutrition in children is further exacerbated due to their increased risk of disease and infection as a result of water-borne diseases contracted through their direct contact with polluted waters. The diseases recorded in this case included wound infections, dermatitis, conjunctivitis, ear, nose and throat infections and gastrointestinal infections (such as rotavirus diarrhoea, salmonellosis, E. coli, typhoid/paratyphoid fevers, hepatitis A, shigellosis and cholera). (CRC Articles 6 and 24)

b. **Description of case 4: Effects of construction and iron ore mining on indigenous community’s right to food and nutrition in Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh**

Krishnapatnam Port is located in Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh and was established in 2008. It sits on 6,500 acres of land (previously idle land) and is a major port for exports of iron and other minerals. Today there are port facilities, warehousing facilities, six-lane roads and broad-gauge railways, helipads and truck parking, crude oil purification plant, and several palm oil processing factories situated either at the Port or nearby. The construction of the Port was supported by the local government, and the additional building of the surrounding infrastructure, including the above-mentioned plant and several palm oil processing factories, have had a severe impact on the Yanadi indigenous community’s right to food and nutrition (CRC Article 2 and General Comment No. 11) as they are highly dependent on fishing for their livelihood. Factory owners do not seem to take any preventive measures to restrict the pollution and even the government, including the Pollution Control Board, is lending a deaf ear to the woes of these villagers. While the Yanadis have not opposed the construction of the port, their plea is that reparation for the damages they have endured due to this construction of the port must not be ignored; however, their demands have been ignored.

i. **The links between environmental degradation and indigenous communities’ access to natural resources**

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28 See Annex 1, where FIAN Uttar Pradesh did a mapping exercise of the nutritional status of the displaced children who reside on the roadside (Lakhimpur-Nighasan Road) as a result of the Sharads river erosion.
The construction of the Port and industrial operations at the Port have led to a considerable generation of hazardous waste, causing environmental degradation in the form of air and water pollution. Due to the construction of roads across the stream, the former Yanadis' fishing areas ran dry thereby destroying the natural resources on which their livelihoods depended. The mud from the port is being dumped into the stream, making the remaining water muddy. Out of the 1000 acres of water canals, 600 acres are covered with mud that have been dumped from the port. This has resulted in the pollution of the water resources that had previously been available for the Yanadis and the death of the fish, severely affecting their food intake and income. Transportation of raw iron in huge quantities and crude oil purification plant cause additional pollution. Carcinogenic wastes are also emitted from the stacks or the chimneys from the purification plant and palm oil processing factories. While this is a direct form of air pollution that occurs from the stack, facing issues of widespread vehicular pollution by trucks that carry the raw and finished material, the spread of dust from loading and unloading of raw materials is yet another hazard. Solid waste generated by these plants in the form of char and fly ash, which is openly dumped in or outside the factory premises, is also carried by the wind, polluting the air further. The villagers cannot eat fish any longer and the fish died as a result of the water pollution. Often the solid waste is dug into the ground, polluting the ground water even further. (CRC Articles 2, 4, 27 and General Comment No. 11)

ii. The links between environmental degradation and indigenous communities’ right to health

The toxic effects of heavy metals are varied and may often manifest after a prolonged period, sometimes of several years, as in the case of cancer. The factories also emits oxides of sulphur, nitrogen, and hydrocarbons. These air pollutants are likely to increase the incidence of respiratory tract ailments, e.g., cough, phlegm, chronic bronchitis and also exacerbate asthmatic conditions. Other health impacts could include: damage to the nervous system especially among children due to exposure to lead and mercury, danger of kidney toxicity if mercury is ingested, skin irritation and various other skin diseases, and impact on women’s health and reproductive system. Cattle that graze nearby and drink this contaminated water often die and the villagers do not get proper sleep as this stink pollutes the air affecting their breathing. People living in these areas cannot survive without masks to protect them from breathing in the polluted stinky air. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of proper health facilities in the area.

According to data collected by FIAN Andhra Pradesh, the women and children have a meal once a day which consists of rice. This diet is severely affecting their health and not meeting their nutritional requirements. This is especially important as women and children have different nutritional requirements during pregnancy, lactation and when under five years old. As a result of the grave situation Yanadi communities face, divorces are frequent and children become dependent on their grandparents, or are forced to work to provide for their families, increasing the overall children's drop-out rates from schools and malnourishment. (CRC Articles 6 and 24)

iii. The links between environmental degradation and the right to work

Traditionally, Yanadi women used to catch small fish in canals (using no nets) and would then sell the fish, prawns or crab in the local markets and earn money for their families. As the waters are now polluted, they have no work and no income and mostly have to rely on men to provide for the whole family; however, the small salaries of unskilled or agricultural workers, which the men receive, are not enough to feed the whole family. (CRC Article 18, 27)

c. Description of case 5: Effects of open cast coal mining in Kusum Tola Village in Jharkhand, India

Kusum Tola Village is located in the North Karanpura coal fields, in the upper Damodar River Valley, which lies between the Ranchi plateau in the south, and the Hazaribagh plateau in the north. It is adjacent to the Piparwar Open Cast and the Ashoka Open Cast projects, and is a further extension of the coal mining which began on the northern side of the Damodar. Rapid development of open cast coal mining in the North Karanpura Valley in Hazaribagh and Chatra districts of Jharkhand is destroying the natural resources and environment on which the original inhabitants of these areas, mainly Adivasis indigenous people (CRC Article 2 and General Comment No. 11) of more than 200 villages, had relied for their livelihoods. Central Coalfields
Limited (CCL), an Indian Government company undertook coal mining in the neighbourhood of Kusum Tola in 1992 with severe impacts on children’s rights to health, water, land, education and food.

i. **The links between environmental degradation and the loss of ancestral lands used for agriculture**

The inhabitants of Kusum Tola have been living and engaging in agricultural work for generations. The ancestral land is a foundation of the Adivasi community livelihood source and foundation for food crops. Land used to be fertile and farmers were able to grow rice, wheat, wild seeds (tisi), mustard, lentils, and other crops. They grew food primarily for their own consumption and they used the income that was supplemented by the sale of minor forest products and seasonal labour work in the off season for their basic necessities during the remainder of the year. The open coal mining activities have had a harmful impact on agricultural yields due to heavy dust piled up that affects soil fertility, which have made these lands not suitable for agricultural practices and food production. This has affected the community’s food security overall, with dramatic implications for children’s nutrition. Since losing their land and forests, their accessibility to a large number of traditional food like wild seeds, various fruits, nutritional leaves, and flowers, which were important components of their daily food intake, were lost as many of these food items are not available in the market. In turn, they are left having to consume food items available in the market, many of which are highly inaccessible to them due to their high prices and their low income. (CRC Articles 2, 4, 27 and General Comment No. 11)

ii. **The links between the depletion and pollution of water sources and children’s rights**

Due to the mining activity, the nature of underground water table has also changed. As mining has led to the overflow of underground water in the quarries, the level of underground water in the wells of the villages has gone down. Water level has gone down particularly at one well located in the premise of the local government school. This has meant a greater reliance on another well located in the southern part of the village, for consumption and irrigation. Furthermore, mining activities have also resulted in the polluting of ground, surface and other water bodies in and around this area; in particular, severe pollution of the Damodar River (which flows through their village) has been documented. These changes in quality and quantity of water exacerbates the already-vulnerable state of children’s nutrition and health. The shortage of drinking water forces indigenous people to drink polluted water which they are fetching from areas in close proximity to the mining activities. The women of Kusum Tola said that water is a very serious problem as mining activities have depleted water resources and reduced the existing water bodies to highly contaminated sources that are unfit for human or animal consumption. As a result, people are suffering from water borne diseases such as skin infections, digestion problems, and allergies. In turn, the children in the community are vulnerable to water and air borne diseases as pollution from mining activities forces them to either consume contaminated water or live without access to water. (CRC Articles 2, 4, 27 and General Comment No. 11)

iii. **The links between environmental degradation and lack of access to health care and social protection**

In Kusum Tola, nearly 70% of children in the age group of 3-6 years old are affected by malnutrition and 80% of children in the age group of 6-14 years old are affected by stunting and poor growth.\(^\text{29}\) Because of this poor state of malnutrition of the vast majority of children in Kusum Tola, they are easily susceptible to diseases in the form of asthma, skin problems, digestion problems, and allergies, among others. Children’s poor health condition, which is due in great part to the loss of fertile agricultural lands and access to sufficient quantity and quality of water, is further exacerbated by the lack of social programs and health care facilities meant to address the precarious situation of children in vulnerable conditions. While the State Women and Child

\(^{29}\) This information is based on field testimonies given by Mr. Oraon and Mr. Baleshwar in Kusum Tola on July 11, 2016 and has not been corroborated by a medical team. Testimonies also mentioned that root causes for malnutrition and stunting are also due to multiple factors, such as loss of agricultural food producing land, lack of access to food from forestry sources, depletion of ground water, pollution of surface and ground water, and the destabilization of the local economy and sources of employment.
Welfare Department is responsible for providing fundamental nutritional care and supplementary child nutrition, and addressing issues of child mortality that arise out of child malnutrition, this unfortunately has not been the case nor was it consulted at the time of granting mining leases to protect the food security of Adivasi children from being affected by mining. Families who have been displaced as a result of the mining activities are further affected by their inability to prove residence or a stable identity in relation to their access to ration cards. Without these, they do not have the purchasing capacity to buy sufficient food from the market. (CRC Articles 6, 24 and 27)

iv. The links between blasting and children’s rights to education

Due to the blasting in the mines nearby, school buildings have become damaged with severe cracks. As a result, many parents do not send their children to the schools for fear of walls collapsing. Other parents are sending their children to study in private schools, which can be costly and further increases the financial vulnerability of these families. Many children in Kusum Tola were found not to be attending school due to the abject poverty created by mining. The CCL mining company is never held responsible for the school dropout rates or for the situation of child labor in spite of the fact that children said that poverty, indebtedness, and the impact on school infrastructure – all caused by mining are some of the main reason for leaving school. (CRC Articles 26, 28, and 29)

v. The links between environmental degradation and access to jobs

Adivasi families’ inability to continue surviving off the land has resulted in their need to search for paid employment. However, there are reports that CCL discriminates against women in the community and hires primarily men. FIAN India has been able to document that CCL has only provided jobs to 20 women. As a result, women become completely dependent on the earnings of their men and if they are able to find work, they are only able to obtain the job of a daily wage labourer as most of them lack the training and education required for higher paying jobs. This reality exacerbates children’s nutrition as women are the ones who are primarily responsible for feeding the children and families. (CRC Article 18 and 27)

d. State obligations: India’s obligation to protect the right to food and nutrition of children as a State Party to the Convention

By the virtue of the constitutional and international law provisions to which it is bound, the state of India has an obligation towards its citizens to ensure that everyone enjoys a minimum standard of living, and that the basic amenities of life are available to one and all. The rate of starvation deaths in India is distressing and until now the state has not taken a satisfying step in response to the grim situation of the country in this respect. Vulnerability of children's right to food and nutrition is intense because of their inability to assert their rights.

The Indian Constitution has several provisions meant to protect children in India, such as Article 15, which affirms the right of the state to make special provisions for women and children, Article 24, which provides that no child below the age of 14 shall be employed to work in any hazardous employment, Article 39 (e) of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which provides that children should not be abused and that they should not be forced by economic necessity to enter vocations unsuited to their age or strength, Article 39 (f), which requires children to be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, and that childhood and youth be protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment, and Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which provides for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14.

Furthermore, India’s National Policy for Children (1974) strives to provide adequate resources to children, both before and after birth, and through the period of growth, to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. In particular, the policy vows to take the following measures:

- Comprehensive health programs for all children;
- Programs to be implemented to provide nutrition services to remove deficiencies in the diet of children;
- Programs to be undertaken for the general improvement of health and for the care, nutrition and nutrition education of expectant and nursing mothers.

Drawing upon the guarantee of the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and the obligations assumed by India under the Convention, the Bombay High Court issued a series of directions. These directions included:

- Identification of undernourished and severely malnourished children;
- Medical interventions to ensure medical treatment for all children in Grade III or earlier;
- Visits to villages by qualified doctors;
- Formation of rural committees at the district level;
- Directions to the state to ensure an adequate supply of food grain, supplemental nutrition to beneficiaries, and upgrade of the infrastructure of rural hospitals.

In spite of the many constitutional rights provided in the Indian Constitution, national laws and policies, and judicial decision for the safeguard of children and their right to food and nutrition, implementation of these across various levels of government entities in a holistic manner is not adequate. The two cases discussed above demonstrate the violation of children’s rights at different levels in India. In particular, India has failed in its obligation to protect communities in Adhra Pradesh from non-state actors’ interventions with their environment, by failing to properly implement legislation or other measures to ensure that corporations do not pollute air, water and soil and thereby negatively impact on the underlying determinants of health resulting in severe effects on children’s right to health.

VII. Conclusions

The five cases exemplified in this submission demonstrate that the impact of environmental harm – whether it is caused by private or public actors with a business interest or by climatic phenomena – is exacerbated by the lack of government programs and policies in place to protect affected children thus rendering them more vulnerable to changes. Environmental harm – in the form of loss and degradation of agricultural land, depletion and pollution of natural and productive resources on which communities’ livelihoods depend, and loss of income opportunities – combined with poor access to health care, a complete lack of social protection programs aimed at protecting children from hunger, poor living and sanitation conditions, and inadequate access to an education, form a perfect storm to deprive children of their right to food and nutrition by rendering them vulnerable to diseases and endemic malnutrition. Children’s right to food and nutrition encompasses more than children’s right to health and states party to the Convention should ensure the realization of economic, social and cultural rights in general – and the right to food and nutrition in particular – in line with the more holistic substantive interpretations given to these rights under the ICESCR and CEDAW. Only through comprehensive and coordinated government actions can the best interests of the child be rightly served. Furthermore, actions aimed at respecting, protecting and fulfilling children’s right to food and nutrition need to ensure the realization of parents’, especially mothers’, right to food and nutrition as an important pre-condition. Similarly, the unique relationship that certain groups of children – such as indigenous children and those of peasant families – have with the environment and thus, the particular threats they face in regards to the impact of environmental degradation on their livelihoods, need to be taken into consideration by government policies and programs in order not to aggravate existing inequalities and guarantee that the right to food and nutrition is realized for all children. It is also important to note that beyond current violations of children’s right to food and nutrition, environmental harm – particularly as a result of large scale projects with long life spans – effectively destroys the environment for future generations, with an impact on the sustainability dimension of the right to food and nutrition and related human rights. Finally, although good examples exist of adequate government responses meant to redress human rights violations on paper, these are often not implemented adequately; in this context, the Committee could have an important role in the monitoring of these policies, laws and judicial decisions at the national level.
VIII. Recommendations

1. The right to food and nutrition should not be subsumed under the Convention’s Article 24 on the right to health and should instead be understood in a holistic manner as exemplified by the cases: in this context, the Committee should work towards the adoption of a General Comment on Children’s Right to Food and Nutrition in order to foster the systematic monitoring of this right in relation to children at the national level.

2. The Committee, in its role as the United Nations body that monitors the implementation of the Convention among states parties, should – through its periodic reviews – closely monitor the implementation of judicial sentences at the national level, including the sentences on the Camotán case, and make specific recommendations directed at the various government ministries and entities involved to ensure that the right to food and nutrition is realized for all children in a holistic and integrated manner.

3. In its recommendations to states parties, the Committee should emphasize the importance of the realization of women’s rights throughout their life spans for the realization of children’s right to food and nutrition, and in this context, ensure coherence with standards and recommendations set forth by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in relation to the women’s right to food and nutrition, in particular its General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women.

4. The Committee should monitor states parties’ fulfillment of their obligations in regards to the sustainability of the right to food and nutrition for children and future generations beyond the lifespans of large scale projects whenever environmental harm is a factor in order to ensure that adequate government programs are in place to guarantee the right to food and nutrition of affected children after natural resources have been completely destroyed or depleted.

5. The Committee should recommend that states parties provide special protection to the unique relationship that certain groups of children – such as indigenous children and those of peasant families – have with the environment in order to avert the particular threats these children face in regards to the impact of environmental degradation on their livelihoods and right to food and nutrition.
## Measurement of the Nutritional status of the Children

**Village** – Manpur Kardahia  **Block** - Phoolbehad  **District** - Lakhimpur Kheri

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<th>SL NO</th>
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<th>Weight in KG</th>
<th>Std Weight</th>
<th>Height in CM</th>
<th>Standard Height in CM</th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>24 hour food recall</th>
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<td>120</td>
<td>132.5</td>
<td>Noon- Chapatti &amp; Vegetable, Mango</td>
<td>Morning - Rice and Vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reshama D/o Mumtaj</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Evening- no meal</td>
<td>Morning- Rice and Vegetable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>