

REPORT ON
food sovereignty, nutritional and agrarian crisis: voices of communities from
BRICS

Organised by

FIAN India, Land and Livelihood Knowledge Activists Hub and People's Forum on
BRICS

The workshop on food sovereignty, nutritional and agrarian crisis was organized in St Xavier Institute of Historical Research, Goa on 13 October. Nearly 70 CSOs, activists, academics and international participants engaged in the workshop deliberations.

The Background

A right to food is a basic human right, as has been advocated by International human rights law, Indian Constitution and Supreme Court of India. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. However, among multiple crisis BRICS countries are facing due to varied systemic and structural causes-corporatizing agriculture, industrialized monoculture, monopoly by big Industrial houses, adverse climate changes, deprioritising strengthening local markets, deteriorating biodiversity that eroding food sovereignty. These are perpetuating silent nutritional and agrarian crisis which is looming large. For generations, rural peasants in general and Indian farmers have enjoyed the sovereignty but now they are facing a lot of challenges to realise food sovereignty.

At this critical juncture, people are demanding how BRICS can do progressive and rational allocation of resources among BRICS nations, evolving common framework that stick to their extraterritorial obligations to ensure nutrition and food sovereignty, building solidarities among communities to organise nutrition in a self-reliant way by strengthening local markets and while signing treaties, placing people's priorities first rather than trade priorities which focuses economic interests alone, negating social concerns not by default but by design.

In this backdrop, eventually, the expectations of the communities across BRICS nations, is that what and how BRICS do constructively engage with closer regional cooperation and concurrent actions to ensure right to food & nutrition of people by respecting and promoting international conventions and extraterritorial obligations and national laws / constitutional provisions. BRICS can also proactively engage in regulating the product-based technical interventions on malnutrition vs. enabling people-centered approaches based on local food systems- like SUN programme in South Africa. What alternatives are there to companies providing food to people targeting food and nutrition insecurity? In this context, this Workshop was organized to discuss the legal obligations of the State in protecting the food sovereignty and agriculture in the backdrop of BRICS -specifically India's obligations, placing priorities as well in the negotiation and signing agreements. What would be the cooperative measures can other BRICS nations would show case towards India to protect the food security and agriculture-landless and peasants as Brazil has good examples and also Focus on measures to protect farmers, localised Indigenous markets in BRICS nations and also sharing of local best practices. Most importantly, to discuss how can BRICS New Development Bank/AIIB/CRA can support agriculture and food security in terms of lending policies, credits to farming and farmers and also importantly land reforms and development and What will be the measures of policies to provide more subsidies and minimum support prices for the agriculture and organic farming practices.

Speakers include those from movements on right to food, farmer's unions and activists working on agriculture and climate change. Dr. Ana Maria Suarez-Franco, Permanent Representative at FIAN International, Geneva, Mr Vijay Jawandhiya from Shetekhari Sanghatana, Dr. Vaishali Patil, Activist, Vikas Sahyog Pratisthan and Gerardo C Vega (Federal Rural University, Rio de Janeiro) and other eminent speakers are engaging.

On 23rd September 2016, a joint declaration was adopted by the Agricultural Ministers from BRICS countries having agreed to promote cooperation include creating basic agricultural information exchange system, strategy for ensuring access to food for the most vulnerable population, reducing negative impact of climate change on food security and adaptation of agriculture to climatic changes. In the 8th BRICS Summit, all five BRICS nations are going to deliberate on these issues further during 14-15th October, 2016.

Against this backdrop, the FIAN India along with Joshi Adhikari Institute of Social Studies and Land and Livelihood & Activists Hub, organized a workshop on "Food Sovereignty, Nutritional and Agrarian Crisis: Voices of communities from BRICS countries", on 13rd October 2016 in St Xavier Institute of Historical Research, Goa.

Thematic discussants were organized as follows in which the following were raised pertinent questions relating to food sovereignty, and agrarian crisis and also opened up a political discourse on possible solutions.

Dr. Ana Maria Suarez-Franco, Permanent Representative at FIAN International Geneva: Empowering local systems to strengthen RtFN & Agriculture binding international/extraterritorial obligations: Role of BRICS

Vaishali Patil, Social Activist: Politics of Nutrition – role of state and non-state actors

Vijay Jawandhiya, Farmer Activist and Policy Analyst: Key Reasons for current agrarian Crisis and Way forward

Atul Anjaan Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha: Responses & collective solutions of peasants' movements to Nutritional and agrarian crisis

Jorge Romano, Writer and Researcher (Brazil): Issues of food and agriculture and initiatives of state and civil society in Brazil

Simone, MST, Brazil: Land and agrarian reforms in Brazil

Ashalatha, Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch (MAKAM): Alternatives in agriculture and role of women

Vineet Tiwari, JAISS: Peoples lead collectives and cooperatives as solution.

In the introduction session, apart from raising important issues, Dr. P. Krishnamoorthy, FIAN India urged the BRICS nations should allocate resources to safeguard the biodiversity, seed and food sovereignty; protect the traditional food producing communities- Agrarian Dalits, fisher folk, forests venturing Adivasis, Pastoralists and Tree tapers, forgotten land reform, land distribution and reclaim and restoration of common lands and waterbodies should be done on urgent basis which are under the threat of appropriation by companies and distribute equitably to communities. As women are custodian of traditional seeds, appropriate measures to protect seeds and prevent and ban GMO specifically mustard seeds with a strong political will from BRICS are the demands of the workshop.

The panelist **Mr. Vijay Jawandhiya** from Shetekhari Sanghatana has highlighted that agriculture has been neglected business for many years despite engagement of multiple sectors such as small farmers, landless agricultural labors. It is time to claim due share in the economy and nationalization is the only remedy. He has raised a point that there were 6 pay commissions implemented and now 7th pay commission has made the salary of C-grade (who provide assistance) government employees will be Rs 18,000 per month, B-grade (middle management) employees will take home minimum 25,000 salary monthly. But farmers are getting low wages and not getting the remunerative prices for their produces and committing suicides. Farmers are leaving the

agriculture every day and in Vidharba, 18000 farmers leave every year from agriculture. The nationalization of the agriculture was mooted but not implemented.

Dr. Vaishali Patil, Activist, Vikas Sahyog Pratisthan, said that due to farmers leaving agriculture, their children are facing the brunt with malnutrition, as 20 million children are severely malnourished and restoring land and agriculture with community based development, space to voice out issues are potential solutions.

Ms Simone, Landless Workers Movement-MST from Brazil has emphasized that hunger is not a natural phenomenon, it is being created not by default but by design. Capitalism is not able to create a lasting solution to deal with it. Right over land, good health and local culture is a social right, with popular sovereignty, farmer should know to whom they stand for either community or industrialized agriculture. The clarion call of farmers of Brazil is agrarian reforms to be implemented to halt the huge exploitation of land and farmers. Farmer's movement for land reform has been strengthened and due to continuous pressure, land reforms were implemented in Brazil.

Dr. Ana Maria Suarez-Franco, Permanent Representative at FIAN International, Geneva said that "We welcome the emphasis that BRICS have given to agriculture and nutrition, putting a focus on small farmers and social protection. Nonetheless more clear Human Rights approach is still missing. BRICS should ensure that their joint policies on agriculture and Nutrition are connected and should be based on the Right to Food and Nutrition, understood as a holistic human right, which goes along the whole food systems, imposing to states the obligations to respect, protect, fulfill, not discriminate and cooperate for the realization of the Right to Food and Nutrition, both territorially and extraterritorially. The BRICs should put special attention on the investments and credits of the BRICS development Bank, (for example ensuring that their investments do not cause land grabbing). The increasing influence of the BRICS in the international diplomacy poses a special responsibility on these countries. The BRICS should put all their efforts towards the adoption of two new international human rights instruments now under negotiation- On the one side the Binding Instrument on Transnational Companies on the other, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People working on Rural Areas. Food Sovereignty is a self-determination of farmers to decide on what and how to produce in their lands.

Mr. Atul Kumar Anjaan, Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha categorically said that 19 crores of people are going to bed without food in our country and 6 crores and 80 lacs farmers are owning less than 2 acres as ours is a land of small farmers. Corporate and contract farming should be down away to save farmers from suicide. Corporatization of agriculture should not be the agenda which seems the only agenda of BRICS now. Set up farmer's commission in BRICS, capital formation to support agriculture with 0.5 billion USD per nation per year with rotation.

Mr. Vineet Tiwari from JAISS, said that 47% land area is being left fallow and agriculture is not the only occupation as they forced to depend non-farm labour for 90% farmers. It is complex issue not simple as well as universal single solution is the remedy, need to address holistically and geo-political and culturally. **Mr Jorge Romona** Writer from Brazil argued that apart from state institutions, other social movements should also be engaged in quality food production and distribution of food such as National School Meal Programme. It led to 30% of children of family farm to schools and 300 million children benefited.

Ms Ashalatha from MAKAM said that the issues of fisher folk, plantation and other sectors including women who produce food need to be factored in the dialogue.

On the floor, the FIAN India leaders agreed that India's ranking on Global Hunger index has improved with many social protection schemes and measures but raised concerns as to why 194.6 million are still undernourished people, India has the highest number of malnourished and hungry children, 44% of children under 5 are underweight and malnourished and have a higher risk of death from common childhood illness such as diarrhoea and pneumonia and 59% of women are anemic. Nonetheless, FIAN India also highlighted that India is also amongst

the most undernourished in peer group nations. Hence stock taking of current status of nutrition with experts and bringing out a strategy plan to tackle this silent emergency is important, leader urged.

Apart from raising important issues, FIAN India urged the BRICS nations to direct more investments to agricultural sector as it continues to remain critical for sustaining long-term food security. The current models of industrial and intensive agriculture, dwindling public investment in agriculture, lack of support pricing mechanism for agriculture products, international trade priorities that convert local markets feckless, corporate business interests coupled with the increasing frequency/scale/intensity of climate variability (severe drought, excessive flooding in various parts of the country/ world) and disasters had led to the current crisis in agriculture.

Even though the picture appears extremely dismal, the session concluded on a positive note when FIAN India leaders, moderators and audience converged on necessary points such as urgent need for legal obligations and cooperative measures adopted by BRICS nations in protecting the food sovereignty and agriculture, more focus should be directed towards protect farmers, localized Indigenous markets in BRICS nations and also sharing of local best practices, credits to farming and farmers and also importantly land reforms and development and the kind of the measures of policies to provide more subsidies and minimum support prices for the agriculture and organic farming practices.