Voices from the ground 2: transformative solutions to the global systemic food crises

POPULAR CONSULTATION ON GRASSROOTS IMPACTS OF COVID-19, CONFLICTS, AND CRISSES ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, 2022

When COVID-19 erupted over two years ago, the Civil society and Indigenous People's Mechanism for Relations with the Committee on World Food Security (CSIPM) conducted popular consultations and reached out to different constituencies in all regions. Based on peoples’ evidence, published in 2020 in the report *Voices from the Ground: From Covid-19 to Radical Transformation of Food Systems*, the CSIPM advocated for the strengthening of human rights-based solutions to the global food crises, by placing the United Nations (UN) Committee on World Food Security (CFS) at the centre. The CFS did not adopt this role, and in 2022 the war in Ukraine added another layer to the systemic food crises, as food and fuel prices spiralled, exacerbating hunger. In response, in 2022 the CSIPM reached out to its grassroots members once again with another round of popular consultations on grassroots impacts of COVID-19, conflicts, and crises on the right to food and food sovereignty.

The new global report *Voices from the ground 2: transformative solutions to the global systemic food crises* sheds light on global action taken since 2020. It underlines the inadequacy of government and multilateral responses that have resulted in increased inequalities, and heightened the fragility of the global food system. It synthesises the rich analysis and recommendations that emerged from the consultations. It gives voice to the reality lived by people and communities around the world, and provides evidence that contrasts strongly with the dominant narratives regarding the nature of the current food price crisis. The report outlines clear demands to governments and the UN system, identifies actions which need to be undertaken to transform a dangerously unfair and unsustainable system that is perpetuating hunger and poverty.
Short-term measures are needed to immediately address the crises, but they must be coherent with the much-needed longer-term measures to transform our food systems. Short-term measures include the provision of humanitarian aid while strengthening sustainable local food systems; supporting existing community and solidarity initiatives, while regulating the corporate distribution of ultra-processed foods; ensuring access of small-scale food producers to inputs for production, privileging domestically available inputs over imported ones; halting food speculation; restructuring and cancelling private and public debts; introducing a moratorium on the use and processing of agricultural commodities for non-food purposes; and taxing excess profits and extreme wealth.

As long-term measures, it is necessary to:

- **Break food import dependence and support domestic food provisioning.** Policies need to ensure and promote the strengthening of peasant economies and family farming, with a particular focus on youth and women, instead of deepening dependence on the global market. Public procurement must be used to ensure access to markets at remunerative prices for small-scale food producers. The local government level is key to promoting articulation between rural and urban areas.

- **Transform food systems through agroecology.** Comprehensive and popular agrarian reform must be prioritised. Peoples’ rights to access and control over land and productive resources must be ensured, and traditional and ancestral models of production guaranteed, such as the protection of peasant seeds and knowledge, particularly women’s knowledge, and secure fishing sites for fisherfolks. Participation of youth in these processes should be promoted. Policies must progressively ban highly hazardous pesticides and synthetic fertilisers.

- **Implement food sovereignty, limit corporate power, transform trade rules.** Trade and investment must be reoriented to serve people and societies, not corporations, halting Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and dismantling existing World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements. Food sovereignty policies must be promoted to reverse the control of corporations in food systems. Likewise, measures based on a social and solidarity economy must be adopted. Governments must regulate prices and the market power of firms, thereby limiting opportunities for corporations to dominate global food markets. Governments should also introduce and enforce legal instruments to ban financial speculation in commodities. Foreign debt must be reduced and progressively eliminated, and taxes on corporate profits need to be higher. The concentration of private grain reserves must be over-turned, and, instead, public food reserves must be supported to protect people from shocks. Economic sanctions that turn food into a political weapon must be withdrawn.

- **Ensure human rights and democratic multilateralism.** Peace, justice and equality, as the basis for all social life, are central to the vision for a transformed system, which must protect and promote human and community rights. Special attention needs to be paid to the rights of marginalised peoples; such as peasants, Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolks, women, non-cis heteronormative persons, youth, urban food insecure, pastoralists, the landless, agricultural and food workers, and consumers. Human rights defenders’
The results of the popular consultations show that countries face a range of obstacles that need to be addressed at the global level. Global policy coordination is urgently needed to address the structural failures of our economic and food systems to tackle the current crisis and prevent future crises. This must be based on a deep understanding of how the global economic model is impacting food systems, and what changes are needed in global rules and institutional arrangements shaping trade, tax, debt, financial markets, investments, and public finances to bring about the transformations urgently needed to address deepening poverty, inequalities and hunger.

Global policy coordination needs to be implemented within an inclusive multilateral governance mechanism that prioritises the voices of the most affected countries and constituencies. The reformed CFS is the only existing inclusive multilateral forum in which the different aspects of the multi-dimensional food crisis can be understood and addressed through a human rights perspective. The CFS can provide guidance to national governments on international/bilateral funding, and on international policy formulation. The CSIPM’s concrete demands towards the CFS that were presented at the CFS and UNGA High-Level Intersessional Event on 18 July 2022 are in line with the results of the popular consultations and remain valid. To foresee and help prevent future crises, the CFS should establish a multi-dimensional monitoring mechanism in line with the implementation and enforceability of the human right to adequate food and nutrition. This mechanism should include voices from the ground and be guided by the High Level Panel of Experts.

For people on the ground, one thing is clear: a meaningful, food systems transformation that focuses on the wellbeing of people and the planet is more urgent than ever.