

ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY ISSUES USING A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, PhD

In the face of persistent hunger stalking the Philippines, Asia, and the entire world, it is important to situate food security issues in relation to other issues such as poverty, increasing urbanization, informalization of work, international trading regimes, and climate change. Existing pillars of food security echo and support the normative content of the right to food and put into question state compliance with its obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill this right. Food security is also very much a gender equality issue, which foregrounds the rights of women and girls throughout their life course and the core human rights principle of non-discrimination. Given the various dimensions and interrelationships of food security with overarching concepts related to human rights, a national policy anchored on a food sovereignty framework is imperative. Food security policy should likewise be integrated into a broader human rights-based social protection policy. While linking to global human rights-related directions such as the Millennium Development Goals and drawing inspiration from existing models such as that of Brazil, food security policies and programs should also be pursued at the local level and break new ground in adopting strategies like urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA).

Keywords: food security; human rights based approach; urban agriculture

“Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life” (The World Food Summit of 1996).

Introduction

The world produces enough food for all. Yet, according to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, 870 million people are chronically undernourished, 98 percent of them located in the developing world (FAO, WFP & IFAD, 2012). Twenty five thousand die of hunger every day, 16,000 of them children (Remppis, 2013).

The last couple of years also saw many countries suffered from severe flooding, torrential rains, hurricanes, and other extreme weather events traced to climate change. Amidst these challenges, the world needs to increase food production by 70 percent to feed the 9.1 billion people expected to populate the earth by 2050 (up from 6.7 billion in 2011) (International Conference on Asian Food Security Proceedings, 2011). More than half of the expected increase in population will be in Asia, and majority of them will be residing in urban areas.

According to the ADB Report (ADB, 2012), *Food Security and Poverty in Asia and the Pacific: Key Challenges and Policy Issues*, rapid economic development in Asia did not result in less hunger, as “food insecurity and inequality remain a reality for millions” (p.1). Sixty two percent of the undernourished people in the world live in Asia, with strong concentration in India (43 percent) and China (24 percent), which ironically experienced high economic growth in recent years (ICAFS, 2011).

Data from FAO (2010-2012) show that 65 million are undernourished in Southeast Asia. Of this, 16 million live in the Philippines, which is 17 percent of the population. Compared to the figures obtained in the period 2007-2009, all countries have decreased number of undernourished individuals except for Laos, which remained steady, and Philippines, which increased (FAO et al., 2012).

In the face of persistent hunger stalking the Philippines, Asia, and the entire world, the first part of this paper seeks to relate food security issues to other issues such as poverty, informalization of work, increasing urbanization,

international trading regimes, and climate change. The second part shows how existing pillars of food security echo and support the normative content of the right to food and put into question state compliance with its obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill this right. It also highlights how food security is also very much a gender equality issue, which foregrounds the rights of women and girls throughout their life course and the core human rights principle of non-discrimination. The final part of the paper explains why a national policy anchored on a food sovereignty framework is imperative. Food security policy should likewise be integrated into a broader human rights-based social protection policy. The paper maintains that food security policies should also be pursued at the local level and break new ground in adopting strategies like urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA). In substantiating its main arguments, the paper relied on official data gathered from UN agencies, alternative sources from civil society organizations advocating for the right to food, and case studies including field data, on UPA initiatives.

Food Insecurity and Other Related Issues

The Philippines: Persistent and Increasing Hunger

“Stubborn hunger” is how Mahar Mangahas of the Social Weather Stations research outfit describes his conclusion from available statistics since 1998. The degree of hunger in households continues to spike, reaching 22.7 percent in June 2013. Average hunger rate for the period June 1998 to 2013 is 14.7 percent. Hunger has increased to more than 20 percent since 2009, and may be correlated with many factors, including the impact of disasters, internal displacement due to conflict, and rise in unemployment and underemployment (Mangahas, 2013).

Food poverty is just one aspect of overall poverty, whose incidence has remained unchanged since 2006. According to the latest NSCB data for the first semester of 2012, poverty incidence stood at 27.9 percent of the population, just about the same as the figures obtained from the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) in 2006 and 2009 (NSCB, 2013).

The country is only 81 percent self-sufficient in food and is the biggest rice importer in the globe, importing a record high of 2.45 million metric tons. The Philippines imports 37 percent of its cereal (principally rice and corn) needs, and over 99 percent of its dairy needs (Illo & Dalabajan, 2011).

All but two major fishing grounds are overfished. Thus, “Although the Philippines is a net exporter of fishery products in terms of value, it is importing more fish by weight than it is exporting” (Illo et al, 2011, p.8). The growth rate of aquaculture and commercial fishing is slowing down and municipal marine capture fishery also dipped twice in 1998 and 2011.¹ The country’s resource habitat is under stress—the “hottest of the hotspots”. According to the National Fisheries and Research Development Institute (NFRDI) coral, seaweeds, seagrasses, mangroves, demersal fishes, invertebrates, small pelagic fishes, tunas, sharks, marine turtles and marine mammals are threatened or declining (Royandoyan, 2012).

The percentage of malnourished children aged zero to five years ranged from 24.6 percent to 34.5 percent in the period 1990 to 2008 (Teves, 2013). Two-thirds to 85 percent of families in ARMM, Zamboanga peninsula, CARAGA, Bicol, SOCCSKSARGEN, and Eastern Visayas spend more than 50 percent of their income on food and therefore are more vulnerable to food insecurity. Only one third of all Filipino households have enough caloric intake. Underweight and stunting affect malnourished children in a number of regions (WFP, 2012).

Food Insecurity, Poverty and Informality of Work

Poverty and food insecurity are very much connected. ADB estimates that an additional 112 million people could have escaped poverty in Asia annually had there been no increase in food prices during the period (ADB, 2012). Poverty feeds hunger and hunger feeds poverty. The poor have no or little access to food, which weakens their health and productivity. This in turn prevents them from engaging in economic activity which can increase their income so that they can have more food. Their ability to learn is impaired, and the capacity to provide and

care for their families is diminished. Unhealthy and malnourished adults cannot work well and cannot produce healthy children who can ensure a bright and happy future for themselves. The cycle of poverty and hunger is reproduced in the next generations if not addressed sufficiently. This serves as a severe constraint to the attainment of sustainable human development.

Poverty, and therefore hunger, stalks even those who are employed, as ILO statistics on working poverty bear out. As of 2011, there were an estimated 456 million workers around the world living below the US\$1.25 a day poverty line (ILO, 2012). Furthermore, “Nearly 30 percent of all workers in the world – more than 910 million – are living with their families below the US\$2 a day poverty line” (ILO, 2012, p. 41). They belong to the ranks of the working poor, or those who are working but cannot work their way out of poverty because of very low earnings and very high risks. Working poverty has declined in many areas, especially in East Asia (China in particular), but continues to grow in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

In ASEAN in 2007, at least one out of ten workers lived in extreme poverty, subsisting at less than one dollar a day - in the Philippines, one out of five; and in Laos and Cambodia, one out of three. Of the more than 262 million workers in ASEAN, 148 million or 56.5 percent, at least five out of ten, were living in poverty, subsisting at less than the two dollars a day then defined as the poverty line. In terms of country breakdown, 80 percent of workers in Cambodia and Laos, 70 percent in Indonesia, and 60 percent in the Philippines did not have enough income to get themselves out of poverty (ILO, 2007). The proportion of working poor in South-East Asia and the Pacific remained alarming in 2010. More than half survived on less than US\$2 a day, and one-fourth, on less than USD 1.25 a day (ILO, 2010).

In the Philippines, 45 percent of the total employed belonged to the “informal economy” in 2010. By the assessment of most unions, the percentages are also on the high side because many of the jobs in the so-called “formal sector” are actually short-term, casual, insecure, unprotected, “informalized” ones. Per

computation by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, the number of informal workers in the Philippines comprised 25 million or 77 percent of the total employed population. In contrast, the ranks of formal workers, had been progressively decreasing.

Social safety nets such as the conditional cash transfer, which could mitigate hunger, cover only the absolute poor in the Philippine setting. They do not benefit the working poor, most of whom belong to the informal economy. The working poor has always been thought of as the “missing middle,” not earning enough continuously to be covered by formal social insurance systems, and yet not poor enough to qualify for conditional cash transfers and other forms of assistance for the very poor. The working poor also experience hunger and food insecurity, but social protection for food security seldom covers them, as will be discussed later.

Food Insecurity in Rural and Urban Settings

It is common knowledge that most of the time, hunger has a rural face. According to the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Hunger (2005), 50 percent of all the hungry in the world belong to food-producing households, especially those living in high-risk environments and remote areas. Twenty two percent are in non-farm rural households, 20 percent in poor urban households and eight percent in fishing, herding, and hunting households (Remppis, 2013).

Philippine data also supports this worldwide trend. A World Bank report in 2010 reported that poverty incidence by basic sector in 2009 showed that fisherfolk (41.4%), farmers (36.7 percent), and children (35.1%) comprised the poorest (Reyes, 2013). Among Filipinos in poverty, 71 percent live in rural areas, and 59 percent belong to families whose head works in agriculture.

Urban areas are expanding to accommodate rising population. Land previously planted to food crops is increasingly being converted to commercial use. The huge influx of rural migrants to cities, in itself a symptom of rural poverty

and unemployment, has resulted in the creation of many informal settlements or slum areas where the poor congregate and spend a huge portion of their meagre income on cheap food. The UN Millennium Task Force on Hunger reported that among the hungry in the world, 20 percent are in poor urban households (Remppis, 2013). Due to economic hardships, they make do with less nutritious, less filling, and unsafe food. Often, it is hunger which drives the rural poor to try their luck in the cities, where they suffer from food insecurity because of their inability to find jobs that fit their qualifications. Inadequate income means that they cannot access adequate food, and often they cannot find decent housing; neither can they afford regular medical care and educational attainment high enough to enter gainful employment. Social protection measures in the form of contribution-based social security and health insurance usually do not cover the working poor, and if they do, the coverage is irregular, intermittent, and unreliable.

Consumption patterns in urban areas are also changing as supermarkets command the scene. Processed food and junk food have become prevalent; there is less consumption of high-fiber and healthier foods such as whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables, in favor of meat, dairy, canned, and packaged food. Urban dwellers, because they generally do not grow their own food, and live in communities that do not produce food, are vulnerable to food price hikes and spirals, such as those which occurred at the height of the global financial crisis and in 2010-2011 as well.

Food Insecurity and International Trading Regimes

Food price hikes have been mentioned several times as a major issue in addressing food security. In this light, it is important to mention the drivers of food price surges:² food speculation; the dominance of transnational corporations (TNCs) in the global food chain (already a problem on its own because of its push for unsustainable traditional modes of agriculture); the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its rules, particularly the Agreement on Agriculture;³ first-generation biofuels that are derived from starches and sugars; and, 5) extreme weather conditions that affect food production

It is within this context that the concept of special and differential treatment (SDT) is repeatedly cited in the WTO documents but is hardly elaborated upon in specific rules and agreements. SDT calls for recognition that different countries are not created equal and have differing capacities to meet their own food requirements. Ideally, SDT should apply to all developing countries (or all countries), not just to the least developed countries. The Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) has “tariffed” agriculture and provides for progressive liberalization of agricultural markets. The proposed deep and wide liberalization under a new AOA has rightfully met resistance in the WTO and yet is being pushed by developed countries through the bilateral and regional free trade agreements.

Europe has not given up its support for its farming population through its common agricultural policy, while the United States keeps renewing its five-year food security bill providing similar support to its wealthy farming population. Because developing countries have limited fiscal capacity, its only space for substantial policy intervention in good and bad times is through tariff adjustments, which developed countries want to be lowered at near zero. Hence, it is important to give tariff and trade flexibility to these countries via special safeguard measures and non-coverage by AOA of staple crops such as rice and corn.

Food Insecurity and Climate Change

For every centigrade that temperature rises, rice yields are projected to decline by 10 percent (Oxfam, 2011, p.19). The future of various regions in Asia is endangered in a variety of ways. Climate change “may cause large portions of the Himalayan glaciers to melt, disturb monsoon patterns, and result in increased floods and seasonal drought in Asia, which accounts for 25 percent of the world cereal production (UNEP, 2009, p. 7). South Asia in particular will consequently suffer from large declines in crop yield. Coastal areas such as Metro Manila as well as deltas (of the Mekong River, for example) will have more severe floods and sea water contamination due to more intense typhoons and sea level rise. Dry zones will have more droughts. Islands will experience storm surges and rising sea level.

The Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. “A series of severe weather-related events occurred in 2009 with the total damage to the economy exceeding 100 bn pesos – more than twice the amount allocated to agriculture that year” (Illo et al, 2011, p. 2). Number of typhoons has been increasing, averaging 27 in 2000-2003 and 39 in 2004-2007 (WFP, 2012, p. 46). Excess rainfall and high temperatures have resulted in crop failures, serious damage to standing crops, and infrastructures. Climate change has brought deep and prolonged floods and landslides on one hand; and on the other, increasing temperature and extreme dryness during dry months resulting in higher decline in dam water (Royandoyan, 2012).

Pillars of Food Security in Support of the Right to Food

Since food insecurity is a widespread, persistent, complex, and life-threatening phenomenon, the response to this phenomenon must be both immediate and comprehensive. Advocacy for food security begins with a concrete understanding of its three pillars: food availability; food access; and, food utilization. Food availability refers to the consistent supply of adequate or sufficient quantities of food which may be produced, imported, purchased, and otherwise easily availed of by a given population in a given territory. Food access is about a household’s physical, social and economic capacity to produce, procure, or acquire enough food to meet its requirements on a sustainable basis. How households and individuals use food are what count in food utilization. “Food preparation, feeding practices, intra-household distribution of food, [and] nutritional and health status of individuals within the household are assessed in combination” (World Food Program, 2012, p. 9). Thus, a parallel concern is “nutrition security, a situation in which all individuals and households are food-secure, have good access to preventive and curative health care, and undertake healthy and sustainable care practices” (World Food Program, 2009 as cited in World Food Program, 2012, p. 9).

FAO adds another dimension to the three pillars - food stability, which refers to both food availability and access. Accordingly, to be food secure, a population, household, or individual must have access to adequate food at all times. They should

not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks (e.g. an economic or climatic crisis) or cyclical events (e.g. seasonal food insecurity) (FAO, 2006).

The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate food. The normative content of the right to food echoes the pillars of food security earlier mentioned. Based on General Comment No. 12, the right to food includes the adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access; the availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture; and economic and physical accessibility. These are the core standards or minimum levels to which the State as duty bearer must conform in order to satisfy the requirements of this particular right from the perspective of the claim holders. These standards amplify many important dimensions that need to be taken up elsewhere, such as the gender and the life cycle approach to food security.

State Obligations on the Right to Food

According to General Comment No. 12 on the Right to Food,

15. The right to adequate food, like any other human right, imposes three types or levels of obligations on States parties: the obligations to respect, to protect and to fulfill. In turn, the obligation to fulfill incorporates both an obligation to facilitate and an obligation to provide. The obligation to respect existing access to adequate food requires States parties not to take any measures that result in preventing such access. The obligation to protect requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food. The obligation to fulfill (facilitate) means the State must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people's access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security. Finally, whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to fulfill (provide) that right directly. This obligation also applies for persons who are victims of natural or other disasters.

In relation to the right to food, it is also important to explain the concept of progressive realization of economic, social, and cultural rights (principal obligation of result), as pointed out in General Comment No. 3:

9... The concept of progressive realization constitutes a recognition of the fact that full realization of all economic, social and cultural rights will generally not be able to be achieved in a short period of time. .. It thus imposes an obligation to move as expeditiously and effectively as possible towards that goal. Moreover, any deliberately retrogressive measures in that regard would require the most careful consideration and would need to be fully justified by reference to the totality of the rights provided for in the Covenant and in the context of the full use of the maximum available resources.

It seems that the Philippine state is not at all consciously and comprehensively engaged in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the right to food. In the first place, the Philippine Constitution does not have a provision explicitly recognizing the right to food. There is no national food policy and no provision in the national budget dedicated to the eradication of hunger (Teves, 2013).

Current laws related to the right to food

Laws relating to food availability (such as those on agrarian reform, agricultural and trade policies which determine people's access to land, agricultural productivity, and food supply) have not been adequate or have been proven detrimental. One example is the Agricultural Tariffication Act which eliminated restrictions to the importation of cheap food items such as dumped onions, garlic, and coffee, thus exposing local producers of these crops to unfair competition in the domestic market. The Biofuels Act could have the effect of displacing food producers from land that will be converted to raise non-food products. Agrarian reform remains an unfinished project and its land transfer targets even with the extension of the program is not expected to be achieved. Given the slow pace of land redistribution, around half a million hectares of land will remain undistributed by the end of 2014, affecting 1.1 million farmers (Teves, 2013, p.19). Food accessibility is not assured by existing laws because food prices remain unchecked except during periods of disasters.

Laws governing wages and income do not ensure that working people have enough resources to buy adequate food. Social protection measures such as feeding programs for children and food discounts for seniors are positive developments but people with HIV and with disabilities still do not have similar attention. Food safety laws exist and their implementation depends on the performance of the Food and Drug Administration, National Meat Inspection Service, and local government units. The 4Ps CCT program “improves children’s economic access to food” but is “not part of a coherent food policy” (RTFNW, 2012, pp. 80-81).

Is the Philippine government putting money where its mouth is when it comes to the right to food? Only Php70.8 billion was allocated to the Departments of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in 2012, in contrast to Php106.9 billion for the Department of Defense (RTFNW, 2012, p. 82).

Food Security as a Gender Equality Issue

Women and men experience the world differently, and when it comes to hunger incidence, women and girls are worse off. This reality is unacceptable, given the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality in human rights discourse.

Estimates show that 70 percent of the world’s poor are women, and 60 percent of the world’s chronically hungry are women and girls, found overwhelming in developing countries. Food price surges affect them more, since these add more pressure for them to eat less, to eat last, and to eat the least nutritious food based on traditional, patriarchal custom (Thaxton, 2004).

Women are over-represented in the most disadvantaged sections of the working poor, of the informal economy, of farmers and fisherfolk, and their meager incomes cannot absorb huge food price hikes.⁴ Women farmers comprise close to half of the agricultural work force in Asia, yet they have very limited access to land and other productive resources, and their work as part of a farming household often goes unrecognized and unpaid. Women-headed households are particularly at risk because of lower opportunities to earn enough. Women who gather edible

species from their surroundings are threatened by the rise of biofuel or energy crop plantations which will deny them access to even what is considered marginal land (Rossi and Lambrou, 2008).

The life course approach to food security is highly gendered, and should be connected to *Article 12* of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):

- 1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.*
- 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.*

United Nations agencies cite the following gender dimensions of food (and nutrition) security which need to be considered in development programs: “gender inequalities along the entire food production chain (from farm to plate)”; as well as in “access to productive resources such as land, labour, fertilizer, credit, technology, extension, and markets”; discrimination in allocating food and other household resources; and gender relations as well as other differences based on wealth, age, ethnicity, etc., which determine vulnerability (FAO, 2010).

Towards a Human-Rights Based National Policy Anchored on Food Sovereignty

Human rights advocates have been campaigning for the crafting of human rights based national food policies through thorough consultative processes done at the local, national, and regional levels simultaneous with a far-reaching

information and education drive. General Comment No. 12 on the Right to Food and FAO's voluntary guidelines can provide the basis for this effort.

A national food policy in the Philippine context should recognize every Filipino's right to adequate food. "Its targets or goals should clearly be time bound or with concrete time-frames on issues of eradication of hunger, improvements in nutrition, elimination of gender disparity in access to food/resources for food, and sustainable use and management of natural and other resources for food" (Diokno, 2013, p.47). Such an elaboration is consistent with the human rights principles of progressive realization of rights, gender equality, and non-discrimination.

The next step is "to rationalize the legal framework governing food" based on the national food policy. This means "synchronizing laws, addressing contradictions in policy objectives, correcting flaws and ambiguities, repealing laws that obstruct the realization of the Right to Adequate Food, aligning the national budget to the national food policy, enhancing the mandates of the national human rights institutions, and improving the process of law-making" (RFNW, 2012, p.82). Last but not least, civil society and other stakeholders need to be capacitated in order to ensure the implementation of national laws and policies on food, as well as to hold the state accountable.

The Philippine Food Justice Report recommends the following broad directions:

- 1. Policies and programs that promote sustainable livelihoods and climate resilient communities should be prioritized and pursued.*
- 2. Public spending for agriculture – on a scale that will meet the demands of climate change adaptation and food self-sufficiency – should increase.*
- 3. Private sector investment that can build the resilience of rural livelihoods and contribute to social development must be encouraged.*

- 4. A more coherent national agenda that increases the competitiveness of the Philippine agriculture sector and which mitigates the vagaries and volatilities of the international commodities market and the adverse impacts of international trading regimes needs to be agreed.*

Food justice and food sovereignty are related concepts used by human rights advocates in their policy campaigns. Food justice is based on the notion that no one should go hungry or be threatened by starvation in a situation where there is enough food for everyone but it is not being distributed fairly due to economic constraints and social inequities. What is needed is the political will to ensure food for all, especially to those who are unable to pay or have no access.

There is also a need to discuss food security in relation to food or agricultural sovereignty, as propounded by many civil society organizations concerned about Article 1 of the ICESCR which foregrounds self-determination. Food sovereignty, although also concerned with food justice, focuses on challenging North-South relations that allow industrialized countries and their corporations to have control over food production, agricultural resources, and technologies of developing countries for their own gain. At the same time, they marginalize and impoverish small farmers while harming the environment through chemical agriculture. Social movements pushing for food sovereignty call for the right to determine and pursue self-reliant, self-directed, and sustainable food production initiatives free from foreign control and import dumping of cheap and subsidized food from the North. They also advocate for use of available land in both rural and urban areas to produce safe and healthy food for communities.

Policy interventions being foregrounded in response to rising food prices include agrarian reform, and focus on the small farming population and landless farm workers, especially women. They are often the poorest of the poor who should be the center of all efforts for sustainable agricultural development which is the most reliable guarantee of food security in any country.

Food security has been defined as access at affordable rates of needed food, whether produced at home or imported. A progressive interpretation of food security is building up capacity of developing countries to meet the food requirements of their own populace by making farmers' income secure and the workers and non-farming population food-secure. This can be achieved through a combination of programs addressing problems at the farm level (e.g. credit, agrarian reform, technology, research and development, market assistance, input subsidies, etc.), and at the national level (e.g., campaigns vs. input and market cartels, smuggling, grains reserves, etc.). The concept of food sovereignty earlier referred to, which is consistent with the right to self-determination, includes food security and the capacity of a country to determine its food and agricultural priorities.

Certainly a top priority for the Philippines is addressing the threats to agriculture arising from climate change. Experts suggest picking "the low-hanging fruits", i.e., starting with the easiest and least expensive ways. One example is shifting to rice varieties that grow faster and vegetables that need less water. Another is employing organic rice varieties that are resistant to drought, restore the richness of the soil, and save costs on farm inputs. Other examples include shifting to soybean which matures faster and commands a higher price, and establishing rice-shrimp farms with flexible mechanisms that can control for freshwater and brackish water. A key area for improvement is agricultural water management, which includes "modernization of irrigation schemes, water saving irrigation, community-level water control, water harvesting, and on-farm water management" (Chen, 2012, pp. 192-193)

Developing biogas and other renewable energy sources is also a valuable undertaking because it provides organic fertilizer and saves time and other resources. In searching for alternative sources of energy, biofuels are being promoted but such should never result in further environmental degradation (e.g., through exhaustion of water supply) or compete with food production. The human rights of farmers, rural women, and the rural poor should be respected; they should not be pushed out of land they are currently cultivating to produce food to give way to biofuel production.

Integration of Food Security in Social Protection Policy

One encompassing definition of social protection is that it describes “all initiatives that: 1) provide income (cash) or consumption (food) transfers to the poor; 2) protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks; and 3) enhance the social status and rights of the excluded and marginalized” (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p.9).

The following social protection instruments enhance food security: input subsidies; weather and health insurance; public works programs; targeted food subsidies; and conditional cash transfers (HLPE, 2012). As regards input subsidies, there is a need to shift to sustainable agriculture as advocated by the FAO. Such type of agriculture respects the soil and does not deplete it. It is also ecological because not too much water is required, as is the case when pesticides are used. Weather-index based insurance can work provided farmers are sufficiently oriented through accompanying financial literacy programs. Local government support is also important, as in one case when farmers could not afford the premiums and city hall paid for these. Employment in public works programs in exchange for food or cash is important not only after disasters occur, but also as a guaranteed entitlement for a set period, as in the 100-day rural employment program in India (HLPE, 2012).

Targeted food subsidies and conditional cash transfers are more problematic to implement, given the tendency for inclusion and exclusion errors, substantial “leakages” due to corruption, as well as their stopgap nature. CCTs also have social costs for women, who are relied upon to do all the work at implementation level while the men escape responsibility.

Social protection policies and programs should be coherent with and complementary to a host of other policies and programs which cover not only the social and productive sectors but also the financial sector. Macro-economic policies on trade, investments, taxes, and budgets should also be anchored on human rights and put people’s interests first. In this manner, the transformative aspect of a

human rights-based social protection framework is maximized, and social protection instruments will avoid the stigma of being considered mere doleouts or band-aid solutions to the essentially systemic problems of poverty and vulnerability. Article 1 of both the ICESCR and the ICCPR on the right to self determination and the use of natural resources is primordial here.

Social protection should bring in the whole question of the “working poor”, the majority of employed people in the world belonging to the informal economy, many of whom are women.

Considering that the working poor, given the global data provided by the ILO, are here to stay, and are bound to increase given the continuing impact of globalization on the labor market as well as various financial, environmental, and social crises besetting many countries, social protection interventions in their interest would likely not be temporary, but more long-term in the context of progressive realization of economic, social, and cultural rights. Graduating to sustainable livelihood is in this context important as a transition from emergency employment as a stopgap measure. Furthermore, various categories of the poor are also permeable given the fluidity of climatic and other conditions. The working poor today can easily fall into the category of absolute or chronic poor tomorrow.

Focus on Urban Food Security in the Context of City Governance

Increasing urbanization has brought forth the increasing probability of food insecurity among the urban poor. In an urban context, advocacy for the right to food is linked to other rights such as the right to decent work, to social protection, to housing (free from the threat of eviction), and most basic of all, the right to organize (freedom of association and representation) which makes the pursuit of other rights possible.

Urban food security is a relatively new and challenging terrain for advocacy and praxis, given the increasing ranks of the working poor, many of them women, in Asian cities which are in themselves vulnerable to the risks

income and independence. Under Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability), UPA associated with climate change. It is worthwhile to note that this points some initiatives and related can help (Hilve, Quidley, Kavanah, & Kutz, 2007) on food safety in an urban environment.

Farming has always been associated with rural areas, a reality which is evident in Ideally, urban initiatives should be integrated and comprehensive, such as what found in the pioneering food security system of Belo Horizonte, the third largest city in Brazil. The system, consisting of more than 20 interrelated programs, succeeded in substantially reducing child mortality by 60 percent. The following are the key elements: focused management by a city department; community gardens, farms which incorporate training, special outlets and market stalls for the produce of the urban poor; information campaign with free cooking lessons, free school meals with highly nutritious components; and public restaurants serving healthy in subsidized meals to all. The Belo Horizonte model is the fruit of a dynamic food crisis and National Food and Nutritional Security Policy advocated by civil society organizations (CSOs) and implemented by CSOs together with national government agencies. Joint CSO and government initiatives are propelled by a "Zero-hunger" strategy (Valente, 2013). It has aesthetic value as well since it can enhance the beauty of communities and homes. Last but not least, it is a paradigm shift whereby the "participatory" is more commonly being promoted and implemented in urban areas of countries, what is known as suburban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA). Although together, able to provide enough (UPA is considered a) major strategy to help ensure food security in cities. This covers growing of plants and animals within and around urban centers through agro-parks, vertical farming, rooftop farming, aquaponics, aeroponics, and the like. Because food supply is nearby, transport and storage costs are minimized (ICAFS, 2011). Several UPA interventions have been tried in certain cities with some success. The self-sustaining allotment gardens in Cagayan de Oro City provided urban poor families (including garbage pickers) access to land for food cultivation with assistance from German donors through a European Union funded project. The United Nations has identified UPA as a key strategy in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. For example, UPA facilitates the attainment of Goal 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) by increasing nutrition levels, reducing the need to buy food, creating income through the sale of agricultural products, and employing vulnerable groups. Under Goal 3 (Promote gender equality and empower women), UPA strengthens livelihood groups and networks among women, allows for more flexible use of their time for production, increases their

program set up 33 community-based farms and 19 school-based farms using containerized gardening technology which recycles softdrink and water bottles as well as Styrofoam materials. Other features of the program include free seminars on urban farming and distribution of seedlings to public schools, barangays, and people's organizations.

Good UPA practices are also born at the level of the barangay. A well-known and multi-awarded example is the Gulayan at Bulaklakan (Vegetable and Flower Garden) Research and Training Center at Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City. In 1998, an unproductive 2.3 hectare lot owned by the National Government Center, the BF Homes Subdivision and Banco Filipino was cleared and converted into a vegetable farm by barangay officials in partnership with the Samahan ng Munting Manggugulay ng Holy Spirit (Small Vegetable Farmers Association of Barangay Holy Spirit). In 2002, an agriculturist was assigned to continue developing the lot into a model urban farm which is meant to alleviate hunger and poverty, prevent sickness and malnutrition, keep the environment clean and beautiful, and reduce waste. The impetus for this was provided by the law on solid waste management passed in 2003.

The program made sure that all biodegradable garbage would be turned into compost, all discarded containers will be used as potting materials and will be located in every available space, and residents will be educated in the latest urban gardening techniques. It advocates segregation and recycling of waste materials. It will embark on hydroponic culture full blast soon. As a result of its achievements, Barangay Holy Spirit earned the Greenest Barangay in Metro Manila award and bagged the bronze model in the nationwide search for the model barangay in ecological management.

Given these examples, community-based interventions with support from local governments and other stakeholders seem to work well. They provide a glimpse of the urban future, with organized groups claiming the right to produce and consume nutritious food for themselves and their communities.

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Endnotes

¹ The growing world demand for seafood has to be satisfied from aquaculture, where fish are fed mostly grain and soymeal. This puts additional pressure on the earth's land and water resources (Brown, 2004 p. 177).

² The surge in food prices by an estimate 50-200 percent in 2008 impoverished 110 million and added 44 million to the ranks of the malnourished. (UNEP, 2009 p. 6).

³ EU and the US do not honor the AoA and continue to provide substantial subsidies to their farmers and export subsidies as well, and they have not opened up their markets to developing countries' agricultural products, as will be explained in the next paragraph.

⁴ This section draws heavily from Pineda Ofreneo, R. and Narito Z. (2012). In rice-exporting Thailand, women working in the informal economy complained about the doubling of the cost of one meal with rice. Macan-Markar, Marwaan. "ASIA: Food Crisis Adds to Women's Burden." Inter Press Service (IPS) News Agency. April 29, 2008. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42162>

Dr. Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo is a full professor of the Department of Women and Development Studies, UP College of Social Work and Community Development . She served as dean of CSWCD from November 2010 to November 2013. She also teaches a course for the CSWCD doctoral program on social development. Active in the women's movement for more than four decades, she has focused her advocacy work on social protection, solidarity economy, food security, and the rights of informal workers.