



Alapinta crew in Paris

## editorial: nutrition and food sovereignty

This edition of the *Nyéleni newsletter* focuses on nutrition as a key element of the human right to adequate food and nutrition within the framework of food sovereignty. It puts the spotlight on the artificial fragmentation of food and nutrition and attempts by the private sector to capture nutrition policy spaces. Its authors describe the impact this has on people's nutrition and the ways communities are resisting and building alternative food systems.

Human nutrition refers to the interaction between food and the human body, and the resulting health and wellbeing of individuals. The best source of nutrition continues to be breastfeeding and diversified rich traditional foods developed by cultures throughout history. Nutrition is only one of the dimensions of eating linked to human health. **The best way to guarantee adequate nutrition is through the provision of diversified, safe, and balanced diets, based on local fresh produce which is agroecologically produced, and prepared according to cultural practices. Nutrition cannot be separated from food, production models, food systems or eating practices.**

Malnutrition in all its forms, including obesity, is the result of poverty, hunger, deprivation and monotony of diets, with the consumption of ultra-processed products. Nutrition-specific interventions may be fundamental to reverse acute cases of and prevent malnutrition; however, nutrition supplements or similar interventions cannot replace regular access to locally-produced, healthy, and adequate diets through access and control over productive resources, adequate wages, social protection, non-discrimination, promotion of women's rights, and food systems built within the principle of agroecology and food sovereignty.

Flavio Luiz Schiek Valente, *FIAN International*

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## who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéleni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéleni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéleni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved: Development Fund, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, TNI, VSF-Justicia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger.

**now is time for food sovereignty!**

Across the Occupied Palestinian Territories, **urban agriculture and livestock keeping** have always been an important component to community survival and resistance to occupation<sup>1</sup>. In the Gaza Strip, these small, but ubiquitous rooftop gardens have become a necessity. Traditional peasant agriculture in the Gaza Strip is practically impossible. This densely populated territory hosting a large local and refugee population consistently loses its productive land for many reasons. With a current population estimated at 1.8 million, land is often lost to the necessary expansion of human settlements and land pollution resulting from non-functioning or damaged sewage systems. Conflict and security controls have seriously damaged or restricted access to arable land. The destruction caused by operation 'Cast Lead' in 2009 and the expansion of a "security buffer zone" along the south-east border with Israel, rendered 46% of agricultural land in the Gaza Strip inaccessible or out of production<sup>2</sup>. The buffer zone contains some 30% of Gaza's arable land and previously held many rain-fed crops and grazing lands for livestock; *many producers risk their lives trying to access this land that they so desperately need*. Recent Israeli offensives in 2012 and 2014 have further damaged arable lands and agricultural infrastructure, including equipment and other inputs, as have export and import sanctions by Israel<sup>3</sup>.

*With the limitations on traditional food production, agriculture in Gaza has become more urban than rural*. With the increasing need for access to safe and nutritious food, income generating activities, and improved environmental quality, rooftop gardens have become a critical and necessary solution, as well as a mode of resistance for the people of Gaza. Rooftops are some of the only open spaces left in many parts of Gaza and many families rely on these gardens for staple items keeping small animals, and growing foods such as tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. When there are market shortages or during times of conflict it is unsafe to go to the markets or venture out into the street and many families and neighbourhoods rely on what they can access from their roofs.

The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) has led the way in supporting improved urban agriculture across Gaza, through providing training courses and assisting families set up home and rooftop gardens. Recognizing the critical need for urban food production to ensure the nutritional, health and food needs, many international organizations are now also providing technical support to help Gazan families grow household and community gardens. After each Israeli attack that Gaza has suffered, as the homes and lives are rebuilt, the gardens also continue to emerge. **The green roofs that mark the crowded landscape of Gaza represent the tenacity and resilience of the community and are a real testament to the depths of the struggle for food sovereignty; what external bodies and states deny the people, they provide for themselves**<sup>4</sup>.

## The human right to adequate food and nutrition can only be fully realized within the food sovereignty framework

There is nothing more basic to every human being than the acts of breathing, eating and drinking. These are fundamental activities that guarantee the water, the nutrients and the oxygen in our bodies, which are present in the foods we eat and drink and the air we breathe. Without them, we do not grow, become weak, sick and die. The struggles of people against exploitation, discrimination, hunger and malnutrition conquered the human right to adequate food and nutrition for all, among other rights and in the context of peoples and food sovereignty.

Eating and feeding one's family and others are actions that most deeply reflect the richness and complexity of human life in society. The ways in which we eat are derived from our very nature but also constitute products of history and the struggles and lives of our ancestors. They are a reflection of the availability of food and water in our local environment, power relations, and economic and physical abilities to access food.

Discussions about food are inseparable from those about nutrition and health in the context of women's rights and food sovereignty. These discussions should touch upon the diversity, quantity, nutritional composition, quality and type of food production; who produces what, how and where and who makes these decisions; access to and control over productive resources and physical and economic access to food and water; preparation methods; information on diversity and the recommended nutritional balance of diets; and the definition of healthy eating habits and the risks of consuming various foods, such as ultra-processed foods, saturated fats, and genetically modified foods, among others.

Furthermore, the definition of a proper diet cannot be reduced to a nutritionally balanced basic food ration. Food and nutrition incorporate creativity, love, care, socialization, culture, and spirituality. Thus, a proper diet is one that addresses all these dimensions and contributes to building healthy human beings, aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of their country and the world, their environmental responsibilities and the quality of life of their descendants.

Food for humans is much more than an instinctive act of collecting and hunting that is born exclusively from hunger. It goes far beyond the mere intake of nutrients present in nature that go into our digestion and transform into body and life. Throughout its evolution, humankind has developed intricate relationships with food processes, turning these into rich rituals linking humans and nature itself, permeated with the cultural characteristics of each community and family. When eating typical dishes of our childhood and culture with friends and family, individuals are renewed in their human dignity, reaffirm their identity, and much more at other levels that reach far beyond the strengthening of their physical and mental health.



1 - Rami Zurayk, Anne Gough, Ahmad Sourani, and Mariam Al Jaajaa, "Food Security Challenges and Innovation: The Case of Gaza," High Level Expert Forum: Food Insecurity in Protracted Crises, Rome: 13-14 September 2012, at: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs\\_high\\_level\\_forum/documents/FS\\_Challenges\\_Innovation\\_-Gaza\\_Arab\\_Group.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs_high_level_forum/documents/FS_Challenges_Innovation_-Gaza_Arab_Group.pdf)

2 - FAO and OCHA, Farming without Land, Fishing without Water: Gaza's Agricultural Sector Struggles to Survive," May 2010, at: <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/9A265F2A909E9A1D8525772E004FC34B>

3 - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Gaza Situation Report 88, 16 April 2015, at: <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/86E8FC149D5DD37585257E29004EF35B>

4 - For more information see: Ahmed Sourani, "The Relief and Reconstruction Plans in Gaza Strip: Between the Resilient Development Strategy and Feed to Survive Strategy," UN Working Paper, 1 April 2015, at [http://hlrn.org/img/documents/UN%20Seminar%20%20PAPER%20%20\\_Ahmed%20Sourani%20Gaza%203.015%20Arabic.pdf](http://hlrn.org/img/documents/UN%20Seminar%20%20PAPER%20%20_Ahmed%20Sourani%20Gaza%203.015%20Arabic.pdf)

### Food Sovereignty, the right to food and the effects of conflicts of interest

The development of all human beings depends on the support of his or her parents, family, community and society from the moment of conception. This support manifests itself in the form of food, love, warmth, care, stimulation, education and security, among others. It is impossible to separate the individual value of each of these factors. Optimal infant and young child feeding practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age and continued breastfeeding until two years of age or beyond, together with timely introduction of adequate complementary foods, are vital and involves all of these dimensions. In this sense, it is essential to strengthen the collective responsibility, in the first place at State's level, for ensuring adequate conditions that enable women to optimally breastfeed without imposing additional burdens on them. In such an enabling environment, women's and children rights are protected and fulfilled and breastfeeding can be exercised as the first act of food sovereignty.

*Promoting food sovereignty, with the objective of the full realization of the human right to adequate food and nutrition for all, necessarily requires the full realization of women's human rights.* The impact of structural violence against women and girls and the systematic violations of women's human rights on the nutrition of women and children have been concealed by the hegemonic vision of food security and nutrition. Cases of malnutrition in women and children can be attributed in large part to pervasive gender discrimination in regards to access to education and information, disproportionate burden of household responsibilities, child marriage, and teenage pregnancies. As main caregivers, families and especially mothers are also the main targets of malevolent marketing of unhealthy foods, such as breastmilk substitutes and high-fat/high-sugar foods, and thus receive inadequate, confusing messages about the best way to feed their families. Finally, food security policies and programs traditionally do not effectively tackle these structural issues, and in the name of "gender equality promotion" end up further increasing the burden on women, by placing additional responsibilities on them that in reality should be collectively shared.

*This holistic conceptualization of food and nutrition leads us to the understanding that hunger and the different forms of malnutrition are not "natural" processes. They are in fact the result of social and economic exclusion and exploitation, particularly of:*

1. The grabbing of land and other natural resources, as well as of human knowledge and practices, labour, productive and reproductive capacity and ways of life.
2. The low and unequal wage, poor working conditions and other violations of workers' rights.
3. The indiscriminate expansion (and public promotion) of the agribusiness production model, which reduces the diversity and quality of food and poisons soils, water, workers, farming communities, and promotes global warming.
4. The accumulation of land and wealth in the hands of a few.
5. The structural violence against women and girls, including violations of their right to education, limitations on their autonomy and control over their lives and bodies.
6. The unregulated marketing practices promoting the consumption of processed food products such as breastmilk substitutes, genetically modified products, nutraceuticals, nutritional supplements and fortified food products, as well as their increasingly broad distribution.

The struggles for the human right to food and nutrition do not solely aim to satisfy hunger and nutritional needs, but rather to nourish ourselves and each other, family, friends and even strangers, to reaffirm ourselves and leverage each other as human beings in our physical, intellectual, psychological and spiritual dimensions. It is not without reason that all family and community festivities and many spiritual rituals involve acts of preparation and communion of food. In doing so, we reaffirm our identity and cultural diversity in the context of the universality of being human and we realize our food sovereignty.

It is imperative that policies are free of conflicts of interest, based on human rights (especially the right to health, to food, and to water), that they favour small producers, and as a consequence make the food available to consumers nutritious, fresh and free from agrochemicals.

Food sovereignty among the population is one of the rights most at risk, especially in Mexico. Political will is necessary in order to achieve food sovereignty among the population. The state has to establish the necessary mechanisms for guaranteeing this right among the people, not only by considering consumption but also by considering agricultural policies in the countryside.

Some of the factors which are creating instability for the population are: human rights violations, conflicts of interest and poor public policies which "rob" citizens of the power to decide what to consume and the quality of food to offer their families.

**In the last few decades the interests of the private sector have been strongly favoured over public health interests at the cost of deterioration in the health of the population.**

Much has been the result of misleading advertising, a lack of adequate labelling and clear guidance which allows the population to know where basic products like maize come from.

There has been a devastating abandonment of agricultural policies which favour small-scale producers with priority given instead to industrial-scale practices.

In Mexico political commitments in the countryside have been ignored, **nevertheless civil society continues to resist through demands for empowerment and fulfilment of their human rights.** Examples include the demands of the Alliance for Healthy Eating for a tax on fizzy drinks and the installation of drinking fountains in schools. This was successful in bringing about a tax on sugary drinks and the installation of drinking fountains in all the schools in the country. Both initiatives were big strides towards the improvement of public health, but much more still needs to be done (planning, implementation, appropriate evaluation) and all this needs to be implemented in its entirety, free of conflicts of interest.

Another big achievement in the area of public health has been the prevention of mass cultivation of transgenic maize in the country. This was achieved through a Demanda Colectiva Ciudadana (Citizens Collective Claim) to protect native maize. Other initiatives have arisen in the same way to protect lives and land such as national days for the defence of the earth, employment, water, life, and the Mexican Alliance against Fracking, to name just a few important causes<sup>1</sup>.

## Box 3 Building alternative food systems through Community Supported Agriculture

URGENCI is the global network of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) around the world. As such, we are part of the food sovereignty movement and the Nyéléni Europe process. The network is built on the principles of shared risks and benefits and solidarity between producers and consumers. It has now over 1 million members.

Our key objectives are to strengthen small-scale farmers' role in the food chain, relocalise food chains and peasant agriculture, and ensure that solidarity and commitment towards farmers remain at the core of short supply chains.

One central aspect of CSAs, from a right to adequate food and nutrition perspective, is the participation of marginalised members of the community through a diversity of mechanisms. An interesting example is the Community Farm in Cloughjordan, Ireland's famous Ecovillage. Here there is a sliding scale of payment, where the elderly, unemployed and students pay less than those who have jobs. And because the system is trust-based, the vegetables are just laid out for people to take what they need. This encourages people to really think about how much food they actually require, ensures equity of access, and discourages any potential waste. The very nature of CSA implies that all produce is organic – although not necessarily certified – and that the local producer to consumer chain ensures maximum freshness. These two factors are both key in terms of preserving a high nutritional value in the food, as it is chemical-free and travels from farm to fork at a record rate.

CSAs cover a wide range of produce, and the current trend is towards multi-producer CSAs. The meat is always from grass-fed, pastured animals and free-range chickens. Other produce varies from country to country and is always seasonal. In some cases in Europe there are now arrangements between CSAs in different countries: in South-West France, near Toulouse, some CSAs have a monthly direct delivery of oranges and olive oil from across the border in Spain<sup>1</sup>. In China, where the next URGENCI conference will be held, there are now over 500 CSAs, with a membership of 750 000 families. The farmers here, like in many other countries, are generally young, qualified neo-rural populations, who have,

returned to the land to be closer to and care for their aging relatives and to ensure their communities have access to healthy locally-grown food. By using not only the State-allocated land, but also renting additional communal lands, they are building alternative food systems to the industrial agribusiness model. The Chinese and other CSAs are providing millions of people at global level with locally grown, safe, nutritious and organically grown food, in line with the principles of agroecology. [www.urgenci.net](http://www.urgenci.net)

1 - For a selection of case studies, see Hungry for Rights project (2015) Community Based Food System: a collection of case studies and recommendations from Cyprus, France, Italy, Lithuania, Senegal and UK-Scotland, available at <http://www.hungryforrights.org/index.php/en/alternative-food-systems>.

# in the spotlight

# 2

## The corporate take-over of food and nutrition policy spaces

**Deregulation policies over the past decades have led to an immense concentration of corporate power in global food systems<sup>1</sup> and have consolidated the influence of corporations over public policy making, both at national and international levels, stripping communities and families of their abilities to transform nature and food into nutritional well-being and health.** Under the umbrella of *public-private partnerships* (PPPs) and multi-stakeholder initiatives, private corporations are assuming an increasingly prominent role in shaping public policies, and are thereby taking over the functions of elected governments, undermining the very core of the democratic governance. This new trend carries serious implications for food sovereignty. Indeed, policies and interventions aimed at food and nutrition are increasingly oriented in the profit-seeking interests of corporations and their shareholders, rather than the physiological and nutritional needs of the general population and more specifically the communities affected by hunger and malnutrition, which become further marginalized.

The *World Economic Forum* (WEF) in 2010 launched the final report of its *Global Redesign Initiative* (GRI)<sup>2</sup>, in which it proposes the radical restructuring of global governance towards a multi-stakeholder arrangement in which private corporations take part in negotiations and decision-making processes together with government representatives. While this may sound like wishful thinking it is unfortunately a reality, with nutrition and health issues being at the forefront of the corporate takeover of public governance spaces. According to the GRI proposal, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) would be replaced by a "Global Food, Agriculture and Nutrition Redesign Initiative" operating under joint state and non-state supervision.

In 2008, the *UN Standing Committee on Nutrition* (SCN), the harmonising body for nutrition-related policies and programmes of the United Nations, was effectively shut down due to its relatively strong policy on engagement with private sector<sup>3</sup> and the civil society constituency's resistance to including the private sector as a constituency. At the same time, the same actors who had (unsuccessfully) pushed for private sector participation in the SCN, and subsequently led the way in discrediting and draining it out of funding, were promoting a new initiative of global reach – the *Scaling up Nutrition Initiative* (SUN). In contrast to the SCN, which is accountable to governments, SUN opens the door for strong private sector engagement in nutrition in line with the GRI vision. Its members (including of its Lead Group) include large transnational food and beverage corporations and agribusinesses<sup>4</sup>, some of which have been involved in human rights abuses in the past and are known for their resistance to public health regulations.

Involvement of private corporations in food and nutrition governance through PPPs such as SUN presents a real threat to food sovereignty. It introduces a bias towards technical, artificial and product-based solutions, such as therapeutic and fortified food products, genetically-modified crops, and nutritional supplements, and diverts attention from the social determinants and human rights violations which underlie hunger and malnutrition.



1 - See Berne Declaration & EcoNexus (2013) 'Agropoly – A handful of corporations control world food production', available at [www.econexus.info/sites/econexus/files/Agropoly\\_Econexus\\_BerneDeclaration.pdf](http://www.econexus.info/sites/econexus/files/Agropoly_Econexus_BerneDeclaration.pdf)

2 - See Readers' Guide to the Global Redesign Initiative of the University of Massachusetts which summarizes the key proposals of the WEF, available at <https://www.umb.edu/gri>. The full report can be found at <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-redesign-initiative>

3 - See [www.unscn.org/files/Core\\_documents/SCN\\_Private\\_Sector\\_Engagement\\_Policy\\_Agreed\\_June\\_2006.doc](http://www.unscn.org/files/Core_documents/SCN_Private_Sector_Engagement_Policy_Agreed_June_2006.doc)

4 - Companies participating in SUN include PepsiCo, Mars, Unilever, Syngenta and BASF, see <http://sun-businessnetwork.org/sun-resources/sbn-company-list/>

Moreover, a blind eye is turned on the role of corporations that are causing hunger and malnutrition through inappropriate marketing of breastmilk substitutes and unhealthy foods, abusive labour and contracting policies, land and resources grabbing, pollution and destruction of eco-systems and biodiversity, etc., and the urgent need for binding regulations. Perhaps most importantly, this corporate take-over of food and nutrition governance spaces has negative implications for the rich and complex socio-cultural processes of eating and nourishment for individual communities and families around the world, by promoting unsustainable production methods and global warming.

In November last year, the *Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)* took place in Rome. In the run-up to and during the conference, social movements and civil society organisations formed a broad alliance to advocate for nutrition policies and interventions which have people – and in particular affected communities and small-scale food producers – at their centre and are based on and promote the human right to adequate food and nutrition in the broader framework of food sovereignty, indivisibility of rights and women's and children's rights<sup>5</sup>.

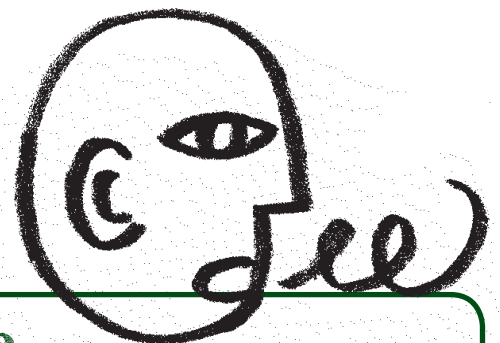
They called on States to put a coherent governance mechanism in place, charged with following-up and ensuring accountability in relation to States' obligations and commitments on nutrition, while meaningfully engaging civil society and, in particular, groups affected by any form of malnutrition. The *Committee on World Food Security (CFS)* should play a key role in this, ensuring policy coherence for food security and nutrition and was requested to fully integrate nutrition in its work plan. Social movements and CSOs strongly voiced their opposition to private sector participation in food and nutrition policy making and demanded the enactment of robust conflict of interest safeguards for all forms of engagement with the private sector.

Earlier this year, there have been attempts by some actors to carve out a prominent space for SUN in the CFS as the body is examining its future role in advancing nutrition. In response to these attempts, the nutrition working group of the *Civil Society Mechanism (CSM)* has called for the establishment of a transparent, informed, and participatory process within the CFS to discuss its engagement in nutrition. Last month a decision was taken by the *Multi Year Program of Work (MYPOW)* working group that nutrition will become a major work stream of the CFS in the coming years and that an open-ended working group on nutrition will be established.

**This is a critical moment for bringing nutrition more strongly into the CFS and setting up a global harmonising body which can ensure policy coherence across sectors in line with the human right to adequate food and nutrition.** However, for this to happen, CFS must develop adequate safeguards to protect its policy-making space from undue corporate influence. It is thus essential that social movements and civil society organisations, through the lens of the food sovereignty framework, bring to the centre the dimension of power in the discussions about food and nutrition governance, advocate for strengthening of conflicts of interest safeguards on the CFS and remain alert and monitor closely developments within and beyond the CFS in the nutrition arena, resisting corporate capture of this vital space and the further detachment of nutrition from food, humans and nature.

5 - The civil society and social movement statements before and at ICN2 can be found at [http://www.fian.org/news/article/detail/civil\\_society\\_and\\_social\\_movements\\_present\\_their\\_final\\_declaration\\_at\\_the\\_icn2/](http://www.fian.org/news/article/detail/civil_society_and_social_movements_present_their_final_declaration_at_the_icn2/)

1. All women and men have equitable access and control over productive resources, jobs and incomes.
2. Women are guaranteed equal rights to study, to work, to have full control over their bodies and lives.
3. Families and communities guarantee the conditions for a woman to exercise her right to breastfeed, as the first act of food sovereignty.
4. Small scale producers, communities and consumers define public food and nutrition policies in a participatory way.
5. Agro industrial and big food production and marketing are regulated by public interest.
6. Priority given to local diversified production, by small scale producers, in line with agroecological principles.
7. Consume preferentially locally produced fresh and diversified food, products of agro-ecology, purchased at local producer markets or similar.
8. Prepare your own food, according to traditional recipes or create new ones.
9. Use oil, fats, salt and sugar in small quantities.
10. Limit the use of process products and avoid ultra-processed foods.
11. Eat regularly, attentively, with adequate time and preferably in the company of family or friends.
12. Be critical in relation to the marketing of food.
13. Exercise regularly.



## to read, listen, watch and share

- Olivier de Schutter (2012) "The right to an adequate diet: the agriculture-food-health nexus", Report presented at the 19th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council [www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20120306\\_nutrition\\_en.pdf](http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20120306_nutrition_en.pdf)
- Development. 57.2 Nutrition Edition. 2014. <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/development/journal/v57/n2/index.html>
- ARROW for Change. Linking Poverty, Food Sovereignty and Security, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Vol. 20 no. 1 2014. [http://www.arrow.org.my/uploads/20140616121147\\_v20n1.pdf](http://www.arrow.org.my/uploads/20140616121147_v20n1.pdf)
- Right to Food and Nutrition Watch, available at <http://www.rfn-watch.org/> (the 2015 edition, upcoming in October, will focus on nutrition).

# Voices from the field 1

## Food and nutrition under the neoliberal model in our Chile

World March of Women-Chile (MMM-Chile),  
[www.marchamujereschile.cl](http://www.marchamujereschile.cl)

The neoliberal model in Chile transformed the economy through a system of privatization of goods and services such as: education, health and social services. It also drastically separated the rich neighborhoods from the poor ones. If you do not want to see poverty, you will never find it because, modern urban planning created large avenues and direct access tunnels from the airport towards the big city. This way, businessmen and business women are taken straight to the upper districts. Today, this is our Chile: firmly set on extractive industries and with an income gap which puts us between the top seven countries with the highest inequality and worst wealth distribution.

Within this neoliberal model, the food and nutrition of the population gradually changed for the worse, up to the point where it replaced the balanced diet of our Chilean kitchens. The agricultural counter-reform caused an agricultural change which led to a focus on fruit crops and vineries for export. As such, it eliminated traditional crops and forced out the peasants which in turn led to their massive migration to the cities and transformed them into a cheap labor force. Two consequences arose, the first being that on our tables we no longer have the high diversity of our fruits, cereals and vegetables. A second consequence is that home cooked food is no longer consumed by the public; they have replaced it with junk food which entered the market with feast and glory alongside big corporations and transnational companies which threaten the food sovereignty of the people.

The negative impact of this model on the lives of the peasants has mostly had repercussions on women, having a direct impact on them for decades. The phenomenon known as "the feminization of poverty" increased migration, school dropout rate and work insecurity and instability; it caused chronic health issues due to the haphazard use of insecticides on the plantations where women work (e.g. birth defects, spontaneous abortions, etc.). Currently, because of the direct effect of malnutrition on women of reproductive age, a diagnosis of gestational diabetes is often given to pregnant women.

Bad nutrition has surged considerably, up to the point where obesity level is high in the adult population, and with a rate that reaches 20% in children under six years-old. The natural relations between cities and the fields have been systematically wiped-out and the "farm-to-table" phrase, instituted decades ago, no longer exists. Sadly and usually, the population is not aware that said connection brings about a fair trade with a healthy, free from agricultural toxins and pesticides diet, which does not harm their health. Junk food is on the opposite end of the spectrum and in the long run it is the more expensive one due to its excess of carbohydrates and sugars which cause added damage and chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular conditions.

# Voices from the field 2

## When there are language, border and livestock, the nation of Mongolia is prosperous! (ZunduinDorj)

Munkhbolor (Bolor) Gungaa, Member of Mongolian Alliance of Nomadic Indigenous People, Mongolia.

Inadequate control over and ownership of land by nomadic herders in Mongolia has allowed foreign investors to lease significant areas of land for commercial purposes and has increased land concentration and landlordism in the country.

According to the World Bank, mining has led to rapid economic growth in Mongolia, but the reality for people living near the mines is different. Pollution has had an impact on everyone, but the people who have suffered the greatest impoverishment are the nomadic herder communities. Their life-sustaining pastures, water springs and seasonal camps are being lost to open-pit mines and the road building, waste dumping and water extraction that come along with the mining industry<sup>1</sup>. Mining exploitation has produced a shortage of animal grazing land and water sources, compelling pastoralists to leave their nomadic lifestyle and move to urban areas seeking for their survival. The population in the capital Ulaanbaatar has been growing rapidly as a result of the high forced exodus of many pastoralist families who had to settle down in urban areas without their free, prior and informed consent due to loss of their livelihoods in their customary lands. Migration to urban centres has impacted negatively on the nomadic Mongolians who have lost their traditional knowledge for food and nutrition security.

Mongolia in the heart of Inner Asia is known as spiritually and historically connected to the richness of nomadic culture and its horseback kitchen<sup>2</sup>. Mongols, as descendants of Chingis Khan, whether they are policy makers or pastoralists, are all blessed and will never fall on their knees, but stand ever brighter on their shoulders! As the descendants of the great queens of wisdom, Mongolian women and their children have the historical rights to live on their customary lands and feed the world with sustainable and nutritious food from generation to generation. The continuous resource exploitation in their customary lands is affecting women in a particular way, forcing them to give up their maintaining role in food security as well as causing health problems, especially in relation to birth defects on newly born children.

1 - Global Development Professional Network, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/mar/09/mongolian-nomads-displacement-mining-impact-development-projects>

2 - "Horseback kitchen" relates to the history and way of life of Mongolian nomadic people. They move long ways on horsebacks and eat their meals while riding.

