

Editorial

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People's aspiration assume significant role in democracy. Democracy becomes meaningful only when it enables people to demand and enjoy their basic rights like right to food, right to information, right to livelihood etc. The union government of United Progressive Alliance which also called UPA-2 began its inking in extreme confidence, became complacent about issues that were considered essential for social security. Enactment of RTI (Right to Information Act), Forest Right Act, NREGA and a host of other laws that had brought cheer to the toiling masses, became less attractive for peers of the UPA-2 and the government became less enthusiastic about Right to Food or Food Security Act, in spite of the demand of social movements and many human rights organizations to accord it a high priority.

In this regard the commitments made by the government at the centre become essential tool for uplift of people's living standard. In contemporary India, the importance of these acts is vital for keeping democracy vibrant and also for making the underbelly of population happy. In this light we can say that the rightful implementation of these Acts could go a long way in transforming people from being hapless citizen to enthusiastic lot.

The UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi's keen interest in the issues that can transform the life of the people and gave sufficient push to these laws. National Advisory Council (NAC) is the outcome of this initiative. It (NAC) comprises renowned right to food activist, social activist and ideologue on food and social issues.

But some concern ministries inspired by the elitists people, the concept of the governance itself is loaded in favour of the proponents of the macro-management of development. While this approach resource use as the primary parameter of efficiency, the perspective that gets ignored is that of effective use of resources for social justice and equity. This necessitates a critical perspective on the dimension on governance.

All this approach was manifest in some of the steps initiated by the government. For instance the grain quota per family who are from below poverty line (BPL) got reduced from 35 kg to 25 kg every month. Prices of essential commodity went to the roof. Some of the ministers of the UPA government kept on saying that the prices can't be brought down. All this could be achieved by shaking the administrative apparatus out of its atrophy and inertia and initiate effective reforms that have hitherto remained an unfinished agenda of the government. It is a fact that the government has come to accept the role of the civil society in policy making and implementation of programmes of development. Amidst these pulls and pressure, redefinition of roles and special thrust on social sectors is the only appropriate step for taking the upward march of people fast.

Happy reading!

Sanjay K Rai

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For Proposed Food Security Bill in India : Towards Food for All

FIAN (Food First Information Action Network) welcomes the proposed move to legislate food security law. Ensuring adequate nutritious food is of crucial importance for enjoyment of all other rights and achieving social justice. It is indeed a credible step of the Government but the Act should include provisions to guarantee that public policies respect and promote the protection of the access of all inhabitants of India to the productive resources (land, water, seeds, etc) and/or adequate income needed to feed oneself and their families in dignity. This is a fundamental component of the effective promotion and protection of Adequate Food Security for All, with a clear objective of reducing Hunger, Malnutrition and Poverty. The promotion of Food and Nutritional security for all will never be achieved only through food distribution schemes, which are needed, but not sufficient to guarantee the full realization of the Right to Adequate Food. At the same time, without adequate food, people cannot lead healthy active lives. They are not employable, cannot care for their children and their children become victim of exploitation and cannot learn to read and write. Hence the right to food cuts across the entire spectrum of human rights. Its fulfillments are essential in the fight against poverty and hunger. Therefore the proposed bill should be in coherence with all the constitutional and international obligations stipulated in the human right treaties ratified by the Govt.

Main international binding human rights instruments are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 25), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] (Art. 11), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW), Indigenous and Tribal People Convention and the Statute of Rome on the International Criminal Court.

There are also significant numbers of non-binding standards, which are real parameters to state action with regard to the Food security e.g. The Voluntary Guidelines adopted by the FAO council in 2004, reiterate the legally binding standards already existing for the right to food, focusing on how states can fulfill their general obligation, in developing, implementing and monitoring its public policies.

Therefore proposed Act should focus not only on assured physical, economic and social access to adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate food to lead an active and healthy life with dignity, but also on respecting, protecting and promoting the access to productive resources and jobs.

Therefore Govt must take into account the following important and crucial points before drafting the bill of Food Security Act.

1. The Act must create an obligation for governments to prevent and address chronic starvation, and reach food pro-actively to persons threatened with starvation.
2. Availability and Access to food -The Act must place an obligation on the government to encourage food production through sustainable and equitable means, and ensure adequate food availability in all locations at all times. And in doing so, local and indigenous food production and existing livelihood rights, and the traditional and indigenous knowledge systems of local communities should be protected and supported. The state should adopt policies to incentivise the production of coarse food grains. Adequate allocation of resources on agricultural education, research and technological interventions need to be ensured to increase the food production.
3. The Act should prevent the forcible diversion and acquisition of agriculture lands, water and forests for non-agricultural purposes.
4. The Act should include provisions that guarantee that a minimum of 80% of the food purchased for the food distribution and nutrition supplementation programs are purchased directly from peasants/small holder farmers and associated with governmental policies that support these farmers to produce in agro ecological and adequate ways. This will provide local market to the small and medium farmers on the one hand and save the agriculture produce from wastage in transporting. Govt estimates (April2008) that on an average 15-30 percent of country's food gets damaged while on its way from the farm to fork.
5. The Act must incorporate measures that guarantee that all Policies and Development Programs which might directly or indirectly affect the ability of citizens to realize their Right to Adequate Food, must be submitted to ex ante Human Rights and Environmental Impact Assessment. In case the impact is excessive the policies and projects should not be implemented. In case the implementation is decided, effective full compensation should be guaranteed to all affected individuals and families, including equal or better access to resources, housing, and services.
6. Trade policy has become a major component policy of govts in recent years under the expectation that "external integration "will increase the productivity levels, increase growth and improve living standards through trade, technology and capital flows. Therefore act must incorporate measure that guarantees all trade agreements bilateral or multilateral that directly or indirectly affects the ability of citizen in realization of their Right to Food. These agreements must be made public including before the elected bodies, prior to approval.
7. The act must include the safe guards against the invasion of corporate interests and private contractors in food policy and nutrition related schemes, especially when they affect food safety and child nutrition. Govt must not enter into any partnership with the private sector where there is conflict of interest.
8. The Act should INCORPORATE, CONSOLIDATE and UNIVERSALISE all entitlements currently existing under Supreme Court orders of existing schemes, especially:
9. The entitlements available to the poor people must be based upon a rational definition of Poverty, the recommendations of the Saxena Committee (on the identification of BPL) must be taken into account.
10. Besides providing 35 kgs of cereals per family at Rs 3 per kg under PDS, extra provisions in terms of subsidized oil and pulses should be made available to people to be adequately nourished. The Act should facilitate formation of clear guidelines to address the food distribution system in the cases of natural disasters of large scale. The ACT must not undermine the provisions in the existing schemes in any way.

Sugarcane being loaded on a trolley to be taken to a sugar mill in Haryana's Yumananagar, Jaggery a home made raw sugar, a rich source of iron, has become unaffordable to the common people because of the decline in the production of sugarcane in the State.

Social scientists and experts in the health sector had little to cheer as the overall results of the NFHS-3 (National Family Health Survey) came in. The results were particularly alarming in the case of States that were not traditionally considered backward. For instance, nearly 82.3 per cent of children in the age group of 6-35 months in Haryana were anaemic. Here was a State that was not in the BIMARU category but boasted a high per capita income, a high agricultural growth rate and high per capita availability of foodgrains, in addition to being a centre of the Green Revolution. (BIMARU is a term coined by the renowned demographer Ashish Bose to denote Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, which were lagging behind in most indices of growth. Later, Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh were added to the list.) The highest prevalence of anemia was recorded in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, along with Haryana.

The NFHS-3 results showed that only 44.8 per cent of the children in the 6-9 months age group in Haryana got solid or semi-solid food and breast milk; 43.3 per cent of the children under three years were stunted, and 38.2 per cent of the children below one year were underweight. Though the State government does not deny the prevalence of malnutrition, it sees it as a matter of health and hygiene alone. NFHS-3 did not delve deeper into the matter to find why there was a regression in the nutritional levels in the States that fell outside the BIMARU fold.

In the course of its interviews with functionaries of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), children and mothers, A Delhi based journal found that there was a definite connection between the food consumption baskets, which itself is a function of the wealth index (a correlation that NFHS-3 also established); the agrarian pattern of development; and irregular employment. With rising prices and changing agricultural patterns of production, there has been a visible decline in the consumption of certain kinds of food that are rich sources of protein, iron and essential nutrients. The main crops now grown are paddy, wheat, cotton and oilseeds.

A senior functionary of the ICDS, with nearly two decades of experience, said that all along she had seen mothers being told to give their children gur (jaggery), ber (a kind of berry) or lassi (whey). "How can we ask them to eat jaggery when we know that it is not affordable? It is a rich source of iron but costs Rs.30-35 a kg." With chana, or gram, cultivation almost non-existent, another rich source of iron is lost.

Jaggery became unaffordable to the common man mainly because of the decline in the production of sugarcane in the State. In fact, the area under sugarcane cultivation now (74,000 hectares) is only half of what it was in 1966-67 (150,000 hectares).

According to Economic Survey the area under sugarcane cultivation has seen a fall since 2008. In one year from 2008-09, there was a quantitative decrease of the area under sugarcane when there was substantial increase in the area under cotton and a 3 per cent increase in the area under oilseeds. ICDS scheme is weighed down by several flaws, the worst of them being the attempt to target it for children of the poorest among the poor.

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme has been conceived as a major intervention by the Central government to deal with the high rates of infant mortality, low birth weight, and malnutrition among women and children. The scheme essentially targets children in the age group of zero to six years and women in the reproductive age group. The problem is that the ICDS is seen as

the success story behind bringing down the rates of malnutrition and morbidity, but at the same time it has been held singularly responsible for the failure to reach targeted levels.

It was 10 years ago, in 2001, that the Supreme Court directed the government to universalise the ICDS by 2012 in order to cover all children under six years and open anganwadi centres in all human habitations. That target is still to be met. Many anganwadi centres are run from rented, low-budget facilities without even the basic amenities.

In Haryana, for instance, the majority of the centres are run from chaupals, or common grounds, where the scope for a toilet is extremely limited, inconveniencing not only children but anganwadi workers as well. Also, allocations for the ICDS have not increased meaningfully; in fact, only a mere Rs.538 crore was added on in the Union Budget for 2010-11. The revised Plan outlay was set at Rs.72,877.52 crore under the Eleventh Plan, though the total budget allocations so far, into the fourth year of the Plan period, have amounted to only Rs.26,998 crore.

The All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers, which has been demanding regularisation of employment for anganwadi workers and helpers, feels that the budget outlay is a complete sell-out to a World Bank project (ICDS IV), which demands a more targeted intervention of ICDS funds. The federation feels that apart from the low budgetary allocation, the government's indifference to anganwadi workers and helpers has contributed to the lack of improvement in the status of malnourished children.

The government's reluctance to consider the federation's demands, despite agreeing initially to consider social security and pension for anganwadi workers, while at the same time overburdening the workers and helpers with the implementation of a scheme for adolescent girls, has not helped matters. The federation argued that the majority of the workers worked for far below the minimum wage, while helpers received one-third of the minimum wage applicable in their areas.

The problem, it said, was that even after 30 years, the ICDS was still being conceived as a scheme and not as a programme. The diffidence to give permanence of employment to anganwadi workers and helpers had not exactly strengthened the system.

The federation said there was a retirement age for the workers and helpers but no corresponding social security scheme upon retirement. "Why is it that the poorest among the poor are expected to do voluntary work, be content with poor pay packages, yet have a sense of deep dedication, and end up being insecure at the time of retirement?" asked an anganwadi worker in Haryana.

A typical anganwadi worker or helper is responsible for pre-school education from 9 a.m. to 11-45 a.m. for three- to six-year-olds. She has to keep records of rations every day; weigh the children, especially those who were malnourished; conduct a certain number of home visits every day; and also give immunisation shots. After 2 p.m., she is supposed to motivate people to build toilets, keep a record of how many homes have toilets, do surveys of handicapped people in the village, and sometimes even bring them to the special camps whenever they are organised. Enumeration work for any kind of census is over and above all these responsibilities.

Under the World Bank project, several features of which are already under way in eight States, initiatives such as the setting up of mini-anganwadi centres, involvement of the private sector in ICDS activities such as food distribution, handing over management of the ICDS to panchayat centres, formation of mothers' committees, and involving self-help groups (SHGs), are in place.

With the Centre likely to expand the policy of blending 5 per cent ethanol with petrol, called gasohol, Uttar Pradesh stands to gain much from the policy. At present blending of 5 per cent ethanol with petrol is allowed in Uttar Pradesh along with Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab and four Union territories. This policy was introduced by the Centre in 2001.

Previously the ethanol could be produced from molasses, an intermediate step that made commercial ethanol production commercially unfeasible. This move will also allow sugarcane farmers to lessen the impact of the global slump in sugar prices. The move comes as India is expected to move from a 5 per cent to 10 per cent biofuel blend this October.

Now in UP factories will be able to produce about 75 million litres of ethanol. But Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have imposed a tax of 0.20 dollars per gallon tax on ethanol exported to other states.

Ethanol, or anhydrous alcohol which is produced from molasses, a by product of sugarcane, is being manufactured in Uttar Pradesh by 15 private sugar mills. These mills have installed their separate distillery units. The total ethanol production in the state during the 2005-2006 season was 2154.50 lakh litres, with the Gola Sugar Mills in Lakhimpur district contributing 250 lakh litres. The break-up of ethanol manufactured by other sugar mills was as follows: Seohara 164.50 lakh litres; Hargaon 135 lakh litres; Dhampur Sugar Mill, Bijnore 350 lakh litres; Balrampur Chinni Mill 120 lakh litres; K M Sugar Mills, Masaudha, Faizabad 75 lakh litres; Sardarnagar (Gorakhpur) 165 lakh litres; Sibholi, Ghaziabad 45 lakh litres; Daurala, Meerut 90 lakh litres; Babhanan (Gonda) 120 lakh litres; Palia 180 lakh litres; Sampurnpur 120 lakh litres and Dwarikesh, Bijnore 90 lakh litres.

Ethanol produced by the sugar mills was being sold to Indian Oil Corporation at the rate of Rs 27 per litre. Before being supplied to the IOC petrol outlets in the state, the product is blended with petrol at the IOC depot in Panki, Kanpur.

Uttar Pradesh's case as the biggest producer of ethanol has been strengthened by whopping Rs 700 crore investment in sugar sector under the new sugar industry promotion policy, 2004 along with the fact that the state is the largest producer of the sugar cane in the country. Uttar Pradesh produced 1,590 lakh tones of sugarcane in 2005-06 season against the country's total output of 2370.88 lakh tones. After the policy came into existence in 2004, ten new mills were established in UP at Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnore, Ambedkarnagar, Bahraich and Bulandsahar with total sugarcane crushing capacity of 634,200 TCD (tones crushed per day) these mills began their operation in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 crushing seasons. According to the sugarcane commissioner, the area under sugarcane for the 2006-07 season had increased to 26.61 lakh hectares from 23.03 hectares in the 2005-06.

Also Uttar Pradesh has 3500 acres under jatropha cultivation. About 90 lakh plants in government nurseries and 3 to 4 crore plants private nurseries are there.

With these accelerations the availability of raw materials will considerably enhance the production of Jatropha which ultimately will give sugar mills sufficient boost. Simultaneously the state government is evolving methods to back up the production of molasses. A raise in molasses production will eventually pull out the sugar mills from deep financial crunch in which many have landed up of all the sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh, many had requested the government to allow them to manufacture molasses. Some agencies from the states such as Maharashtra had volunteered to help up sugar mills to manufacture molasses. The centre is also issuing instruction to states (other states as well) to encourage the molasses production.

Myth 1

People are hungry because of scarcity, both of food and land.

Scarcity cannot be considered the cause of hunger when even in the worst years of famine there is always plenty of food in the world - enough in grain alone to provide everyone in the world with 3000 to 4000 calories a day, not counting all the beans, root crops, fruits, nuts, vegetables and non grain-fed meat?

And what about land scarcity?

We looked at the most crowded countries in the world to see if we could find a correlation between population density and hunger. We could not. Bangladesh, for example has just half the people per cultivated hectare that Taiwan has. Yet Taiwan has no starvation while people in Bangladesh often experience food shortages. China has more than twice as many people for each cultivated hectare as many other countries. Yet in China people are not hungry.

Conversely, in Central America and in the Caribbean, where as much as 70% of the children are undernourished, at least half of the agricultural land (and the best land) grows crops for export - not food for the local people.

Myth 2

There are just too many people in the world. An exploding world population means there is less food for everyone.

If 'too many people' cause hunger, we would expect to find more hungry people in countries with more people per agricultural hectare. Yet we can find no such correlation.

Countries with comparatively large amounts of agricultural land per person have some of the most severe and chronic hunger in the world. While severe hunger is a recurring problem for many people in Bolivia, for example, they live in a country with well over one-half acre of cultivated land per person, significantly more than in France. Brazil has more cultivated land per person than the United States. Mexico, where many rural people have suffered from undernourishment, has more cultivated land per person than Cuba, where now virtually no-one is underfed.

Rapid population growth often reflects people's need to have many children in an attempt to provide labourers to increase meagre family income, to provide old age security and to compensate for the high infant death rate, the result of inadequate nutrition and health care. Moreover, high birth rates reflect the social powerlessness of women which is intensified by poverty.

Myth 3

Hunger will be overcome by concentrating on producing more food.

Diagnosing the cause of hunger as scarcity inevitably leads to the conclusion that increased

production in itself will solve the problem. Techniques to boost production have thus been the central thrust of the 'war on hunger' for at least 50 years. Governments, international agencies and agribusiness corporations have promoted 'modernisation' - large-scale irrigation, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, machinery and the seeds dependent on such inputs - all to make the land produce more. Such farming practices have been labelled the 'green revolution'.

But when a new agricultural technology enters a system where there are power inequalities it tends to profit only those who already possess some combination of land, money, 'credit-access' or political influence. This selectivity alone has excluded most of the world's rural population and all the world's hungry.

Myth 4

To achieve food security the hungry world must rely on large land holders.

Governments and international lending agencies have sometimes passed over the small producer, believing that concentrating on large holders was the quickest road to production gains. However, a study of 83 countries reveals that just over 3% of the landholders control about 80% of the farmland. This gives some idea of how many of the world's farmers would be excluded by such a policy.

A study of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala found the small farmer to be three to fourteen times more productive per hectare than the larger farmer. In Thailand plots of one to two hectares yield almost 60% more rice per acre than farms of 55 hectares or more. Other proof that justice for the small farmer increases production comes from the experience of countries in which the redistribution of land and other basic agricultural resources like water has resulted in rapid growth in agricultural production: Japan, Taiwan, and China stand out.

Myth 5

We are faced with a tragic trade-off. A needed increase in food production can come only at the expense of the ecological integrity of our food base. Farming must be pushed onto marginal lands at the risk of irreparable erosion. The use of pesticides will have to be increased even if the risks are great.

Haiti offers a sad picture of environmental destruction. The majority of the farmers cultivate the once-green mountain slopes in a desperate effort to grow food. Has food production in Haiti used up every hectare of farm land so that only the mountain slopes are left? No. Those seeking to farm the fragile slopes can only be seen as exiles from their birthright - some of the world's richest agricultural land. The rich valley lands are in the control of a handful of elites (and their overseas partners) whose concern is not food but dollars to pay for an imported lifestyle. These fertile lands are thus made to produce largely low-nutrition crops (sugar, coffee, cocoa) exclusively for export.

With the urgent need to grow more food, won't we have to accept some level of harm from deadly chemicals?

Nearly half the pesticides in the United States are used not on farmland, but on golf courses, parks and lawns. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that some American

farmers once used 50 million pounds of pesticides and lost 7% of their crop before harvest. Today they use 12 times more pesticides yet the percentage of the crop lost before harvest has almost doubled. In the South, most pesticides are used for export crops, (principally cotton and to a lesser extent for fruits and vegetables) grown under plantation conditions. The quantities of pesticides injected into the world's environment therefore have little to do with the food needs of the hungry.

Myth 6

A developing country's best hope for development is to export crops in which it has a natural advantage and to use the earnings to import food and industrial goods.

Export-orientated agricultural operations invariably import capital-intensive technologies, such as chemical fertilisers and pesticides, to maximise yields as well as to meet the foreign markets' 'beauty standards' and processing specifications. Basing an agricultural system on imported technologies helps ensure that whatever is produced will be exported to pay the import bill - a vicious circle of dependency.

Export crops were mostly chosen by former colonial powers on the basis of what would bring the greatest profit in the high-paying markets back home. The same land now growing cocoa, coffee, rubber, tea, or sugar, could grow an incredible diversity of nutritious crops - grains, high-protein legumes, vegetables, fruits and root crops.

Myth 7

Hunger is a contest between the Rich World and the Poor World.

Terms like 'hungry world' and 'poor world' make us think of uniformly hungry masses. They hide the reality of hierarchical societies in which hunger afflicts the lower rungs in both the North and the South. The hungry all over the world are linked through a common threat: the tightening of control over the most basic human need - food. The process of increasing concentration of control over land and other productive resources that we have identified as the direct cause of hunger in the South is also going on in the North.

Myth 8

Peasants are so oppressed, malnourished and conditioned into a state of dependency that they are beyond the point of being able to mobilise themselves.

This view ignores a fundamental reality in every country today. Because of the selective way news is transmitted to us, we are often unaware of the courageous struggle of millions of people everywhere to gain control over food-producing resources.

Many who question what peasant farmers can do for themselves seem unaware that people in many countries have, in our lifetimes, freed themselves from hunger through their own efforts. Even during the worst years of war in the 1960s, the Vietnamese were improving their agriculture. Yields were going up, and irrigation was extended from 20% of the cultivated area in the mid-1950s to nearly 60%. The

Chinese people, formerly at the mercy of droughts and floods, have built reservoirs and multiplied their irrigated land through a system based on local self-reliance and local initiative. The Chinese now cultivate one third of all irrigated land in the world, and have doubled their yields of major grains.

Myth 9

Hunger should be overcome by world trade redistributing food from areas where there is a surplus to areas where there is a shortage.

There is a problem in seeing trade as the solution to hunger. Distribution of food is a reflection of the control of the resources that produce food. Whoever controls the land determines who can grow food; what is grown; and where it goes.

Thus redistribution programmes cannot solve the problem of hunger. Instead we must face up to the real question: how can people everywhere begin to democratise the control of food resources?

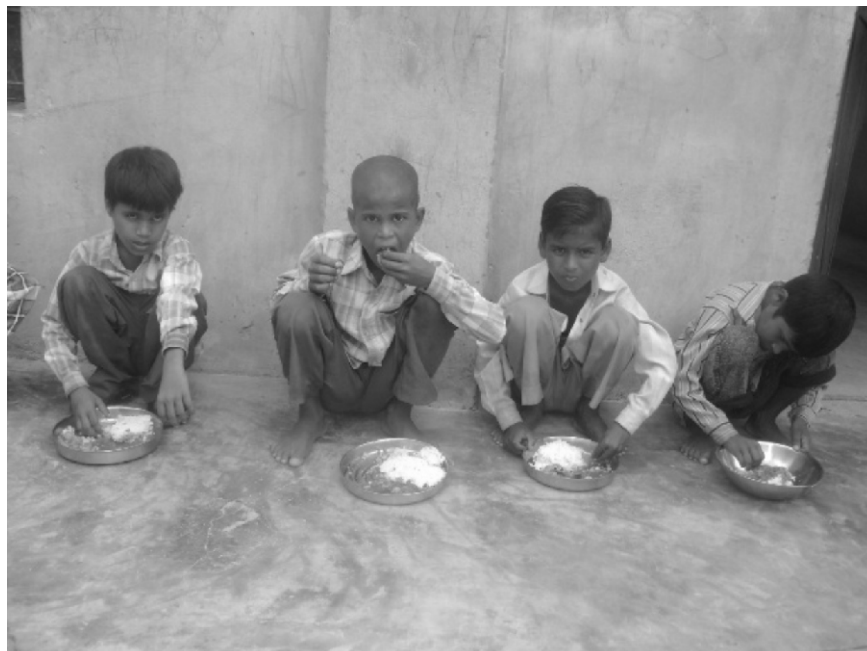
Myth 10

To solve the problem of hunger we must increase food aid.

Increasing foreign aid budgets is a narrow view because direct assistance through aid is only a small fraction of the total economic impact of international investments.

Of course, food aid is essential in times of emergency. However, it needs to be part of a long-term strategy of agricultural reform - to help prevent famines from recurring. This will require serious steps to redistribute control over food-producing resources.

Source: Adapted from Lappe, F.M. and Collins J. (1998) World Hunger: Twelve Myths, 2nd edition, Grove Press, New York



Though starvation deaths have been reported from west and southern Odisha, especially from the infamous KBK districts (Undivided Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi districts), the recent news item of Hindustan Times reporting 50 people dying of starvation, has made it into a central issue of Odisha. The case of Jhintu Bariha has come up in the Odisha High Court. Jhintu Bariha belongs to Chabiripali village of Khaprakhol block of Bolangir district.

The district administration tried to hide the fact but media coverage, High Court involvement and after a huge cry by mass movements, the Government of Odisha took Jhintu Bariha's case seriously. Jhintu Bariha's village is in the foothills of Gandhamardan hills - in this hamlet Chabiripali, the population is 370 out of which 80% are Adivasis. They depend on farming and forestry for their living. Jhintu Bariha's family comprises his parents, wife, two sons and a daughter. In the drought he lost his crops and by widespread deforestation by vested interests saw a sharp deterioration in Jhintu Bariha's subsistence especially managing enough food for the household, thus resulting in starvation. On September 6, 2009 Jhintu Bariha's daughter died, the next day his younger son died, and two days later his wife Vimla Bariha died. Within three days three members of Jhintu Bariha's family died due to starvation. Jhintu Bariha's name does not figure in the BPL list. This indicates deep seated corruption and manipulation in the making of the BPL list in rural Odisha, especially in tribal areas. Jhintu Bariha's father has been allotted a BPL card, but since Jhintu has been separated he does not have a BPL card. Bolangir is in the K.B.K. district. In entire K.B.K. districts, all the A.P.L. and B.P.L. people get 25 Kgs. rice at Rs. 2 a Kilo; but Jhintu could not even get A.P.L. rice from the P.P.S. This shows widespread corruption and the impact on rural poor, the Adivasis and Dalits. The overwhelming majority in K.B.K. districts are Adivasis and Dalits. We will discuss the widespread failure of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) later. Poverty, malnutrition, migration, starvation deaths and recently farmers' suicide have all become the hallmark of the western and southern districts of Odisha, including districts like Keonjhar, Kandhmal, Gajpati and Sundergarh, which are predominantly tribal. In these districts thousands die every year due to gastroenteritis, diarrhea, cholera, malaria and tuberculosis, under-nutrition, infant mortality and maternal mortality, anemia is among the highest in the country. The main cause is chronic poverty in these districts. A glaring example is the malaria and cholera deaths in Kashipur Block of Rayagada district, which comes in the K.B.K. region. Kashipur Block also has a high level bauxite deposit. A heroic resistance is continuing by the Adivasis against the displacement, which will be caused by bauxite mining by Utkal Alumina now owned by Birlas. Kashipur Block has 17 Village Panchayats and 704 villages. Its population is 1,01,541 out of which 60,402 are Adivasis, and 20,767 are Dalits. Over 85% of them are below poverty line. They practice rainfed agriculture, including growing grains like ragi on the hill slopes. Kashipur is known for its malaria and cholera deaths between August 2007 and November 2007. More than 400 people had died in Kashipur Block, Kucheipadar, Dangasil and Maikanch Panchayat, accounting for 300 deaths until mid- September 2007. In August 2001, 12 people had died of hunger and gastroenteritis, extremely low levels of poverty with no access to food grain as the chief cause of starvation and cholera deaths in Kashipur. Kashipur comes under the K.B.K. programme and IFAD grants. The main reason of poverty and starvation deaths is due to widespread deforestation, displacement and loss of land because of various development projects like big dams, mines, factories, townships, etc.

Most of the under-nutrition happens in the predominantly Adivasi areas of western and southern Orissa. Most of the Adivasis used to collect substantial amount of food from minor forests but with

widespread deforestation, had to lose agricultural land and forests, and also because of different development projects due to mines. Total lack of basic services like health and education, with their land getting diminished due to displacement with no irrigation facilities, with water sources getting dried up due to deforestation, has further marginalized and pauperized the Adivasis and other rural poor in most of the Adivasi areas including the K.B.K. region.

Destructive development projects, mines and the timber mafia are responsible for large-scale deforestation in Odisha. In the year 2005 Survey of India estimated 48,000 acres of forestland, 31% of the geographical area out of this 28,000 is dense forest and 20,000 acres are degraded and due to various mine, dam and development projects and deforestation further degraded the land in Adivasi areas totally shattering their food security. Starvation deaths never happened in Adivasi areas when they had access to land, water and forest. Starvation deaths became national headlines in the 1980s in Kalahandi. There was news of distress migration, starvation deaths and selling of women and children in Kalahandi. In the mid 1980s, 30 people died due to starvation in Kalahandi. Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, visited Kalahandi. Narasimha Rao visited Kalahandi in the early 1990s. K.B.K. (Kalahandi, Bolangir, Koraput) the then predominantly tribal undivided districts of western and southern part of Odisha. After the division of the K.B.K. districts, the new districts are Koraput, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kalahandi, Nuapara, Bolangir and Sonepur. K.B.K. came into national focus after the high profile visit of Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao. The K.B.K. project was launched and funded by the Central Government.

The K.B.K. districts accounted for 19.80% population and 30.60% of the geographical area. According to the census of 2001, 38.41% mere Adivasis including 4 tribes are classified as primitive tribes - they are Bonda, Diday, Langia Saura and Dongria Kondh. Its Dalit population is 16.25%. 44 Blocks of K.B.K. districts are in the tribal sub-plan area. After Rajiv Gandhi's visit, Area Development Approach for Poverty Termination (ADAPT) programme was started in 15 Blocks of Kalahandi and Koraput in the year 1988. This programme was a complete failure. Then in 1993 long term action plan was initiated with central assistance during the Prime Ministership of Narasimha Rao. This was done due to the failure of the earlier programmes and the acute marginalization and poverty caused by drought and deforestation. In 1998, a revived long term action plan (RLTAP) was started for nine years from 1998 to 2007. The total outlay was Rs. 6,251.06 crores. In the year 2000, the Government of Odisha launched Biju K.B.K. with State Government's funds. The total expenditure of the State Government and Central Government was Rs. 6,801 crores by the year 2012.

According to official statistics, 80% of K.B.K. residents are below poverty line. The K.B.K. plan had three main aims (1) Prevention of drought, (2) Removal of poverty, and (3) Increasing quality and life of livelihood. The main livelihood of K.B.K. districts are farming, forest based collection of forest produce, rearing animals, wage labourer and other hereditary professions. Farming is the main livelihood. Forests provide additional income and food. The K.B.K. districts have an average rainfall ranging from 1,285 mm to 1,667 mm; Rayagada being the lowest 1,285 mm. The actual irrigated area of K.B.K. is around 20% except Sonepur. Other districts have less than 20% irrigation. This irrigation system includes big dams, medium river dams, minor irrigation projects, lift irrigation, bore wells, open wells, etc. Odisha claimed in the year 2007 that in the next 5 years the irrigation potential of K.B.K. districts will be increased to 35%. The pertinent question is what about the rest 65% of the land. The most of the

arable village lands are in the hands to 4 to 5% money lenders and landlords known as Gauntias in western Orissa. Those people employ labourers to till their land. The rest of the rural poor, mostly Adivasis and Dalits, are landless or have little land. Though there are abundant Government lands, no serious effort has been made by the State Government to distribute the Government land amongst landless and other rural poor. In these areas there are laws according to which tribal lands cannot be transferred to non-tribals, especially money lenders, liquor traders and landlords with active connivance of the bureaucracy, who are mostly from coastal districts and other non-tribal areas. There is widespread prevalence of various forms of slavery and bondage due to usury and land grabbing. Most of the Adivasis and Dalits in K.B.K. lead a sub-human existence. Development projects, mines and deforestations have marginalized them further. In K.B.K. plan there is no provision of providing land to the landless and small farmers. Many poor families have possession of land but until today the Government has not given permanent pattas for those lands. It is due to this reason that the farmers are reluctant to invest in those lands for improvement, hence the productivity is low. In K.B.K. districts no land settlement is done till date. The priority of the Government should be to allot permanent pattas to the farmers who are tilling forests and other lands since generations. Years of deforestation and lack of maintenance of land have resulted in rapid deforestation and drying up of water sources. So many lands are becoming unfit for cultivation. At the household level preventing soil erosion is quite expensive, almost impossible. The task of preventing soil erosion is linked with forest conservation and conservation of rain water. But K.B.K. plans have no provision for soil conservation. No provision has been made for rain water harvesting. Most poor people in K.B.K. and other Adivasi districts like Sundergarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar depend on forests for different fruits, roots, leaves, berries, seeds and Mahua flowers. Wherever there are forests, the local people get 20 to 40% of their annual income.

Deforestation, soil erosion and lands lost to development projects have taken away this income and deprived them of food items from forests. Bringing the income down and pushing up the poverty line, lack of political will, selling of the natural resources for national and international big capital, lack of any pro-rural, pro-farmer commitment, hunger, starvation, displacement, and growing poverty levels show that K.B.K. plans were a super flop while the State Government is selling its mines, forestlands and water to multinational corporations forcing millions of Adivasis, Dalits and other rural poor out of their land, livelihood and habitats, makes the K.B.K. plan a big joke. If one looks at the financial outlays of K.B.K. plan during Narasimha Rao's tenure, it started off with Rs. 4,600 crores. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government. raised it to Rs. 5,500 crores. During June/July 2006 when the Government of India's Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs decided to lower the allocation, Naveen Patnaik to score a political point started Biju K.B.K. with a grant of Rs. 600 crores. All these Central and State Government plans were for providing livelihood, employment and irrigation and other amenities for 80 lakh people of 12,300 villages of 8 K.B.K. districts within 9 years.

Almost a decade after the launch of K.B.K. plan, widespread hunger, poverty, starvation deaths and distress migration show how the K.B.K. plan was a cropper and totally irrelevant to the needs of Adivasis, Dalits and other rural poor in the K.B.K. region. The main factor of poverty and destitution of K.B.K. districts are feudal exploitation, senseless industrialization, land alienation, deforestation, mining, big dams and massive displacement of the local population. Though government owns almost 75% of agriculture and forestland in K.B.K. districts, no effort has been made to distribute these among the rural poor in those districts. One of the most important factors has been land alienation of the

Adivasis, through money lending, usury and other unscrupulous and exploitative measures by the landlords, money lenders and liquor mafia, most of whom are non-Adivasis. This ruthless appropriation of tribal lands happens inspite of a number of tribal land protection laws of the State Government. For exploitative land alienation and land-hold people in the K.B.K. district, one can look at the example of Patraguda village in Bissam Cuttack Block of Rayagada district. Patraguda is in Bissam Cuttack Block of Rayagada district. Adivasis in this village are 90.4% and the Dalits 5.03%, i.e., around 96%. The rest 4% are upper caste traders, landlords and money lenders. Out of a total of 217.41 acres of privately owned land of Patraguda, the Adivasis own only 7.40 acres of land and Dalits 0.4 acre. The rest above 85% of the land is owned only by 4% of upper caste landlords and money lenders. After Independence, there have been fierce struggles by the Adivasis against the landlords snatching their land though ruthless feudal exploitation and money lending.

For the past two decades there have been heroic struggles by Adivasis in Malkangiri, and Raigarh of Rayagada district in Muniguda Block, led by the different mass organizations of Adivasis and in Narayan Patna Block in Koraput led by Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh. K.B.K. region also witnessed massive deforestation, loss of agricultural land by big dams and industrial projects. People have built resistance to these destructive projects which will uproot them from their habitats and ruin their livelihood. In Kashipur Block the Prakrutik Sampad Suraksha Parishad is leading a one-and-half-decade-old struggle against Utkal Alumina. The Dongria Kondhs of Niyamgiri hills of Rayagada and Kalahandi districts are struggling against the bauxite mining project of Vedanta under the banner of Niyamgiri Suraksha Samity Manch. The farmers of Lower Suktel in Bolangir district are fighting against a big dam. The Adivasis of Deomali are fighting against the proposed bauxite mining in Koraput. Apart from K.B.K. plan, there are other official development agencies in poorer districts of Odisha like the Western Odisha Development Council of Government of Odisha established in the year 1999 which has been working for the past 10 years, its annual grant has been increased to Rs. 300 crores from Rs. 100 crores. The other projects are Odisha Scheduled Tribe Empowerment and Livelihood Project (OSTELP) and Western Odisha Rural Livelihood Project. Odisha Scheduled Tribe Empowerment and Livelihood Project (WORLP). OSTELP was started in the year 2004 October and will go on until 2014 for 10 years. Its financial allocation is Rs. 464 crores funded by DFID and IAD. OSTELP covers 7 districts like Koraput, Kalahandi, Malkangiri, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Nabarangpur. 30 Blocks are covered under the scheme which has 94.5% Adivasis and 67% of them are below poverty level. Western Odisha Rural Livelihood Programme (WORLP) has been functioning since the year 2000 in Bargarh, Bolangir, Kalahandi and Nuapada. These programmes have completely failed to provide a dignified livelihood and stop migration due to widespread corruption, apathy, lack of political will, usury, landlordism, and massive deforestation and displacement caused due to destructive anti-people industrialization and development projects for the super profits of national and international big businesses through a totally servile and corrupt political class.

Apart from K.B.K. districts, starvation deaths are also reported from Gajapati, Kandhamal and Sundergarh districts. K.B.K. and other districts like Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sundergarh, Kandhamal and Gajapati are predominantly Adivasi areas where more than 80% are below poverty level. Central Schemes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is a total failure here due to corruption and lack of political will. Most of the funds are siphoned off by contractors, traders, politicians and bureaucracy. Irregularities and pilferage are the rule rather than exception in the implementation of

NREGS in Orissa. Totally going against the spirit of the employment guarantee act, contractors and machines are widely used in NREGS in Odisha. Even after four years of implementation of MGNREGS, The National Level Monitor report of March 2010 says that MNREGS in Odisha has totally failed to create awareness about their employment rights amongst the rural poor in Odisha. It says that people who work under the scheme are totally unaware of their rights. Though they are paid their wages very late they, do not demand compensation. Giving the example of Rayagada district, it says that not only the people but Panchayat and block level officials and elected representatives also do not know about this law. The report says that in Odisha the rural poor are not demanding work and those who are working do not work according to their own free will. According to National Level Monitors, there is over-writing in muster rolls. It says there is a need for proper record keeping at the village level, and the present record keep is inadequate and faulty. The same is the case in Khandapara Block of Nayagarh district where there is no entry of work done in the job cards, there are no photos in the job card.

The National Level Monitor report says that the money allocated for MNREGS in Odisha is diverted to other heads. The report says the Odisha government does not conduct social audit of MNREGS in Odisha. In Kashipur Block of Rayagada district no work has been provided, none of the job cards in Bhadrak district in Odisha has photographs of beneficiaries. According to the report though 80,252 families have been registered under the scheme, they have not been provided with job cards. Though funds have been provided for 1,24,653 mandays, no money has been disbursed for this. Delayed wages were shown in 58,191 muster rolls whose total amount is Rs.41,58,79,958.00. In the entire state only 23126 families have been provided work for 100 days, likewise 30,11,618 families have got work for less than 15 days. 4,63,087 muster rolls out of 4,76,096 muster rolls do not have the entry of the date of payment. 84,669 muster rolls do not have the description or the measurement of the work done. 14 Panchayats of 5 Blocks in three districts do not have any registration for work. 477 villages of 104 Blocks in 22 districts have not demanded any work. According to the Management Information System (MIS) of Odisha, only 2.81% of job cards have photographs and only 11.6% workers have an entry of job description in the job cards. 283 villages of 61 blocks in 12 districts have no record of ongoing work. The CAG report says 670 households in 16 Gram Panchayats of Narla Block in Kalahandi district were not registered for NREGS and BPL list.

NREGS is a total failure in Odisha, therefore, it has proved to be totally irrelevant for stopping migration and starvation deaths. Most of the starvation deaths happen due to lack of food caused by widespread deforestation, mining, low growth of agriculture, etc. In these conditions the Adivasis and other rural poor in western and southern Odisha consume non-food products like mango kernel, which does not supplement the nutritional intake, resulting in starvation death or death through cholera, malaria, etc. The main reason is acute poverty, landlessness and lack of access to natural resources. In July 2001 in the Panasguda village of Kashipur, 7 people were reported dead due to the consumption of poisonous mushrooms; in the same block 4 people died in Bilamala village, they had not access to food grains hence were eating only mango kernel. By August 25 such deaths had reached the figure of 19 in the same block. More than 46% children in Odisha are under-nourished, 88% women in western and southern Odisha are anemic. 60 years after independence the Adivasis are forced to eat mango kernel, bark of Salap tree, wild mushrooms, tamarind seeds, etc.

FIAN UP organized a public meeting on international women day on March 08, 2010 with this slogan” **Women are equal part of family and they should have equal right to work**”. More than three hundreds women from different villages assembled at village Kasta of of Lakhimpur Kheri district of U.P. FIAN also raised the same issue focus on Child Mortality and Maternal Health (MDG-4 and 5). FIAN UP started a case work on this issue at village Jalalpur of Mitauli Block of Lakhimpur Kheri district.



Gathering of women on March 08, 2010 by FIAN UP

JOINT STATEMENT CALLING FOR FOOD RIGHTS OF INFANTS (First Year of Life)

We, a group of civil society organizations and individuals working on children's and women's rights, food and livelihood rights, public health, professional organisations, economists and activists

Conscious that 1 million infants die every year before they are 28 days old, another 0.4 million die in the first year of life, and 0.6 million between 1-5 years of life, and that malnutrition is underlying most of them;

Conscious that 2/3rd of all under five child deaths are related to poor feeding during infancy, and therefore avoidable and preventable;

Aware that about 30% of India's children is born underweight and that severe wasting is highest in infants;

Aware that 70% of the brain development takes place during infancy, and proper development is linked to optimal nutrition;

Recognizing that infants too have a human right to food, and that this right depends upon proper feeding by caregivers exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and thereafter, continued breastfeeding while adding adequate and appropriate family foods to their diet after six months;

Conscious that breastfeeding provides all food, health and care during 0-6 months of life;

Recognizing that infant's right to food and nutritional security can be met only if women are supported to take care of infants, especially breastfeed them optimally, and are ensured maternity entitlements including adequate nutrition, financial and childcare assistance, and the family's food security is ensured;

Aware that most of the 2.60 crore infants born every year in our country are not able to realize their food rights during infancy; only about 40% of 0-6 months and 23% of 6-12 months are able to realize their optimal feeding according to the district level health survey (DLHS-3) conducted in 2008;

Aware that policy and public debates on the Food Security Act revolve primarily around access to food grains, and completely ignore the food security needs of infants;

Recalling that In the year 2006-2007, sixteen civil society groups and professional organizations and groups submitted to the Government of India a “Joint Statement on Infant and Young Child Feeding: ensuring Optimal Infant Nutrition, Survival and Development” demanding food rights of infants especially 0-6 months, maternity benefits, and ensuring coordinated and budgeted response to 'breastfeeding education' and infant and young child feeding counseling as a health service;

Recalling that the Prime Minister of India on 15 August 2007 called upon the nation to work hard on the problem of child malnutrition in India with additional inputs like breastfeeding of infants, safe water supply and access to health care.

Recalling that On 16th February 2010, a Public Declaration: Right to Food, Eighth Kolkatta Group Workshop from Calcutta called for a 'Right to Food Act' covering justiciable food entitlements which should be non-discriminatory and universal especially for the vulnerable groups of the society;

Recognizing that the Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production,

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Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act of 2003, the National Nutrition Policy and its Plan of Action 1995, the National Guidelines on infant and young child feeding 2006, provide for such services but action remains to be taken on this unfinished agenda;

Recalling that the Supreme Court of India order provides Rs.4/- per child per day for all children under the age 6 for supplementary nutrition in order to mitigate hunger and malnutrition in children; and children under six months require this in the form of breastfeeding promotion, protection and support.

We, the undersigned, call upon the Chairperson of the UPA and the Prime Minister, Government of India to:

- Include infants 0-6 months as a special vulnerable group in the Food Security Act.
- Allocate budgetary resources of at least Rs.4/- per child per day for infants 0-6 months old for the purpose of protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding.
- Declare 'breastfeeding education' and or infant and young child feeding counseling as a key component under NRHM or ICDS and budget it as is currently done for immunization.
- Establish a national nutrition authority to supervise and technically guide the government on nutrition of infants and children as an urgent measure.
- Effectively implement and universalize the maternity entitlements and ensure the provision of Crèches at all work places in the organised and unorganised sectors.

Signed by BPNI, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, FIAN India and others.



UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food Dr.Olivier De Schutter and his team members visited Cuddalore of Tamil Nadu on invitation of FIAN to study the land rights situation on March 30,2010. Adv.D Gurusamy,President FIAN India addressing the media with him.

FIAN India Delhi Office
7/37 B Jangpura-B, (Top Floor)
New Delhi 110014, INDIA
Tel: + 91 11 24374437
fianindia@yahoo.com
www.fian.in

FIAN Tamilnadu
11 P.T. Rajan Road, 5 Street
Madurai 625002
Tamilnadu, INDIA
Tel: +91 452 436 0810
fiantn@rediffmail.com

FIAN West Bengal
C/O IMSE 195 Jodhpur Park
Kolkata, West Bengal 700068,INDIA
Tel: +91 33 24128426, 24732740
fianwestbengal@vsnl.net

FIAN Uttar Pradesh
A-8,Sarvodaya Nagar
Indira Nagar Lucknow-226016
Uttar Pradesh, INDIA
Tel: +91 522 2349556
fianup@yahoo.com

FIAN Karnataka
th 9 Cross Bhagyanagar
Belgam 590006
Karnataka, INDIA
Tel: +91 831 2484491
fianashraya@sancharnet.in

FIAN Andhra Pradesh
FIAN Andhra Pradesh
5-20 / B,Ashoknagar,Kothur
Khammam,Andhra Pradesh, INDIA
Tel: +91 40 27015838
fian_andhrachapter@yahoo.co.in

FIAN Rajsthan
C/o GRAVIS
Milkman Colony, Jodhpur, Rajsthan
Tel: 0291-2785317
E-mail : tyagiprakash@hotmail.com

FIAN International Secretariat
P.O.Box 102243 D-69012
Heidelberg, Germany
Willy-Brandt-Platz-5 D-69115
Heidelberg, Germany
Tel: 0049-6221-6530030
fian@fian.org
www.fian.org

Editor

Sanjay K Rai

Editorial Board

D. Gurusamy, John Bosco, Rajiv Ranjan Jha,
T. Ravi Kumar & Dr. Ujjaini Halim

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