

# Philippines needs national food policy to lower hunger incidence - food groups network

By: [InterAksyon.com](http://InterAksyon.com)

October 9, 2012 11:58 AM



[InterAksyon.com](http://InterAksyon.com)

The online news portal of TV5

MANILA - The lack of a comprehensive national food policy is one of the major reasons why the country has high incidence of hunger, said the FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines.

“The result of the latest survey on hunger incidence is unacceptable and alarming. We urge the President to declare as urgent the crafting of a national food policy that will rectify incoherent, non-complementary and conflicting legal mechanisms,” said Aurea Miclat-Teves, FIAN Philippines president.

Last week, the Social Weather Station released its third quarter findings which showed that 21% or an estimated 4.3 million households experienced having nothing to eat in the last three months, up from 18.4% in May. This was due to an 18% increase in moderate hunger -- defined as experiencing having nothing to eat only once or a few times. SWS said that the overall hunger rose the sharpest in Metro Manila, by 10 points to 26% or an estimated 738,000 families. Miclat-Teves said such a policy needs the full and active participation of all actors concerned, including those most vulnerable to hunger. She said the policy must be along the recommendations by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in General Comment No. 12 (1999) and the FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (2004).

## **More hungry people**

Ricardo Reyes, FIAN Philippines vice president, said: “In a country with a total population of almost 100 million, one percent is too many, 21% is too much. *Hindi ganito karami ang nagugutom noon*. Old folks used to say that even during the Japanese occupation, hunger did not become a problem because our land has been blessed with fertile land and plenty of water and sunshine.”

“We want the President to give the Filipino people a reason to celebrate the forthcoming World Food Day by declaring as urgent the crafting of a national food policy,” said Reyes.

World Food Day is celebrated every October 16 in honor of the founding date of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945. The annual celebration was established by FAO's member countries at the Organization's 20th General Conference in November 1979.

Citing the study authored by Virgilio de los Reyes and Maria Socorro I. Diokno, entitled “The Filipinos’ Right to Food: An Assessment of the Philippine Legal Framework Governing the Right to Food” and published by the Right to Food and Nutrition (RTFN) Watch this year, Miclat-Teves explained why the current laws do not ensure availability, accessibility and safety of food for the entire population.

## **Availability**

Food availability laws relate to agrarian reform, agricultural policy, and trade measures as determinants of people’s access to land, agricultural productivity, and food supply.

Miclat-Teves said that the passage of Republic Act 8178, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, repealed laws that provided for prohibitions and quantitative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products such as onions, potatoes, garlic, coffee, livestock, seeds, and tobacco.

“This law removed the protection granted to small farmers from importation of agricultural products that are produced in sufficient quantity in the country,” she stressed.

The study also showed that there are no safeguards to cushion the negative effects of food price volatility that affects first the most vulnerable groups. In addition, it warned that the obligation to respect the right to adequate food could be seriously affected by the implementation of laws such as the Biofuels Act, if their implementation is not integrated into an over-all agricultural plan and a national food policy.

Miclat-Teves also lamented the still unfinished agrarian reform program in the country. “Access to land by farmers tilling or working on private agricultural land remains unreachable to around 1.4 million supposed beneficiaries working on 1.8 million hectares of land,” she said.

## **Accessibility**

Laws on food accessibility incorporate both dimensions of the physical and economic access to food.

The study revealed that physical accessibility laws are so far limited to mobility such as ramps for persons with disabilities and do not focus on enhancing people's physical access to land to grow their own food.

It also found out that existing laws on economic accessibility do not have sufficient impact as they do not make food affordable for everyone. Laws on prices just refer to the requirement of price tags, while price regulation or price control is only used during calamities or emergency situations. Laws on wages and income are insufficient and to some extent have negative effects like the one-year ban on wage hikes. Credit laws do not address easy access to loans for small holders but enumerate rigid requirements and guidelines. Worse, most existing laws are not properly or fully implemented.

## **Safety**

Food safety laws refer to the nutritive quality of food, safety standards and regulations, and sanitation that ensure that food available for consumption contains enough nutritive values and is free from contaminants and other harmful microorganisms. These include aspects of food fortification, salt iodization, breastfeeding/milk code or food safety standards, whose inspection, monitoring and regulation are the responsibilities of the Food and Drug Administration, National Meat Inspection Service, and Local Government Units.

## **Crucial steps**

Aside from adopting a national food policy, the government needs to rationalize the legal framework governing food.

“This can be done by synchronizing laws, addressing contradictions in policy objectives, correcting flaws and ambiguities, repealing laws that obstruct the realization of the right to adequate food, aligning the national budget to the national food policy, enhancing the mandates of the national human rights institutions, and improving the process of law-making,” Miclat-Teves said.

“Most important is to use the right based approach in adopting a national food policy and rationalizing its legal framework,” she stressed.

## **Govt urged to craft national food policy**

Published on Wednesday, 10 October 2012 18:15

Written by Jonathan L. Mayuga

FOOD security advocates on Wednesday underscored the urgent need to put in place a national food policy to address the high incidence of hunger in the Philippines.

President Aquino, they said, should take the lead in crafting the national food policy.

FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines President Aurea Miclat-Teves said that such national food policy needs the full and active participation of all actors concerned, including those most vulnerable to hunger.

The group issued the statement in time for World Food Day celebration. World Food Day is celebrated every Oct. 16, in honor of the founding date of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945. The annual celebration was established by FAO's member countries at the Organization's 20th General Conference in November 1979.

The crafting of a national food policy is among the recommendations by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in General Comment No. 12 (1999) and the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (2004).

"The result of the latest survey on hunger incidence is unacceptable and alarming. We urge the President to declare as urgent the crafting of a national food policy that will rectify incoherent, non-complementary and conflicting legal mechanisms," Miclat-Teves said.

She was referring to the third-quarter findings of the Social Weather Station, which showed that 21 percent or an estimated 4.3 million households experienced having nothing to eat in the last three months, up from 18.4 percent in May. This was due to an 18-percent increase in moderate hunger -- defined as experiencing having nothing to eat only once or a few times. SWS said that the overall hunger rose the sharpest in Metro Manila, by 10 points to 26 percent or an estimated 738,000 families.

"In a country with a total population of almost 100 million, one percent is too many and 21 percent is too much. Hindi ganito karami ang nagugutom noon. Old folks used to say that even during the Japanese occupation, hunger did not become a problem because our land has been blessed with fertile land and plenty of water and sunshine," FIAN Vice President Ricardo Reyes said.

"We want the President to give the Filipino people a reason to celebrate the forthcoming World Food Day by declaring as urgent the crafting of a national food policy," Reyes said.

According to Miclat-Teves, the current laws do not ensure availability, accessibility and safety of food for the entire population, citing a study authored by Virgilio de los Reyes and Maria

Socorro I. Diokno entitled “The Filipinos’ Right to Food: An Assessment of the Philippine Legal Framework Governing the Right to Food” and published by the Right to Food and Nutrition (RTFN) Watch this year.

The passage of Republic Act 8178, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, the study said, repealed laws that provided for prohibitions and quantitative restrictions on the importation of agricultural products such as onions, potatoes, garlic, coffee, livestock, seeds, and tobacco, which in effect left local food producers unprotected from massive importation of cheap, highly subsidized agricultural products from other countries.

Also, the study showed there are no safeguards to cushion the negative effects of food price volatility that affects the most vulnerable groups first.

“Access to land by farmers tilling or working on private agricultural land remains unreachable to around 1.4 million supposed beneficiaries working on 1.8 million hectares of land,” she said. Meanwhile, the study said physical accessibility laws are so far limited to mobility such as ramps for persons with disabilities and do not focus on enhancing people’s physical access to land to grow their own food.

Existing laws on economic accessibility do not have sufficient impact as they do not make food affordable for everyone, the study added.

Meanwhile, laws on prices just refer to the requirement of price tags, while price regulation or price control is only used during calamities or emergency situations.

Worse, laws on wages and income are insufficient and to some extent have negative effects like the one-year ban on wage hikes. Credit laws do not address easy access to loans for small holders but enumerate rigid requirements and guidelines. Besides, most existing laws are not properly or fully implemented.

Aside from adopting a national food policy, the government needs to rationalize the legal framework governing food, she said.

“This can be done by synchronizing laws, addressing contradictions in policy objectives, correcting flaws and ambiguities, repealing laws that obstruct the realization of the right to adequate food, aligning the national budget to the national food policy, enhancing the mandates of the national human rights institutions, and improving the process of law-making,” Micalat-Teves said.

(Jonathan L. Mayuga)

**PHILIPPINE STAR**

## **6 million Pinoy children malnourished - UN report**

By Ted Torres and Rhodina Villanueva (The Philippine Star) Updated October 11, 2012 12:00 AM

MANILA, Philippines - The United Nations has reported that an estimated six million Filipino children are malnourished, 60,000 of them are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, while at least 66 percent under the age of six do not have childcare.

After the onslaught of typhoon "Sendong" last year, the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) expressed concern over the rising malnutrition cases in calamity-devastated communities.

Abdul Alim, Unicef country representative, said malnutrition has long been an issue among children in Mindanao and the typhoon worsened the situation.

"Malnutrition is an especially serious concern for Mindanao, where a significant number of children are already undernourished. Sendong dealt an additional blow to these children's health. That is why we need to keep a close eye on the situation of these vulnerable young children," Alim said.

The UN report titled "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012" also said that almost 870 million people in the world, or one in eight, are suffering from chronic malnutrition.

It said the vast majority of the hungry – 852 million – live in developing countries in Asia and Africa.

While the number of malnourished people declined by almost 30 percent in Asia and the Pacific over the past two decades, Africa experienced an increase from 175 million to 239 million during the same period.

The report strongly indicated that the world is still short of achieving its Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in terms of food and nutrition. It categorically expressed dismay that the MDG targets would not be achieved.

"In today's world of unprecedented technical and economic opportunities, we find it entirely unacceptable that more than 100 million children under five are underweight, and therefore unable to realize their full human and socio-economic potential, and that childhood malnutrition is a cause of death for more than 2.5 million children every year," the report said in its foreword, co-written by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) director general Jose Graziano da Silva, International Fund for Agricultural Development president Kanayo Nwanze and World Food Program executive director Ertharin Cousin.

“If the average annual hunger reduction in the past 20 years continues through to 2015, the percentage of undernourishment in the developing countries would reach 12.5 percent – still above the MDG target of 11.6 percent,” the UN report said.

Between the periods of 1990-1992 and 2010-2012, the number of hungry people declined by 132 million, from 18.6 percent to 12.5 percent of the world’s population.

However, since 2007, global progress in reducing hunger has slowed down and leveled off, requiring countries to take appropriate measures if they are to meet the MDG of reducing by half the number of people suffering from hunger by 2015.

The report suggested adopting a twin-track approach based on support for economic growth, including agriculture growth involving smallholders, and safety nets for the most vulnerable. It said higher priority must be given to getting quality nutrition to prevent malnutrition from co-existing with obesity and non-communicable diseases.

Meanwhile, officials of a non-government organization said the lack of a comprehensive national food policy is one of the major reasons why the country has high incidence of hunger. FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines president Aurea Miclat-Teves said there is an urgent need to craft policies, and for the full and active participation of all concerned, including those most vulnerable to hunger.

“The result of the latest survey on hunger incidence is unacceptable and alarming. We urge the President to declare as urgent the crafting of a national food policy that will rectify incoherent, non-complementary and conflicting legal mechanisms,” said Miclat-Teves.

Last week, the Social Weather Stations (SWS) released its third quarter findings that showed 21 percent or at least 4.3 million households experienced having nothing to eat in the last three months, up from 18.4 percent in May. This was due to an 18 percent increase in moderate hunger – defined as experiencing having nothing to eat only once or a few times.

# Cash dole no answer to poverty, says NGO

By DJ Yap

**Philippine Daily Inquirer**

3:39 am | Thursday, October 11th, 2012



AP PHOTO/AARON FAVILA

In spite of its successes, the government's conditional cash transfer (CCT) program is not the solution to rising hunger in the country, according to a nongovernmental organization. FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines criticized the Aquino government's reliance on the dole in easing poverty and reducing hunger, saying the program was insufficient to deal with these problems.

"This program has a wide coverage and contributes to children's economic access to food. However, it remains very inadequate and is conditioned on performing other obligations whereas the right to food, which is a basic human right, is unconditional," said Aurea Micalat-Teves, FIAN Philippines president.

In a statement from the group issued Wednesday, Teves said the supply of conditional services, such as schools and medicines "has been far behind the demand for these services." "The CCT program is not part of a coherent food policy," Teves said.

FIAN Philippines said the rising hunger in the country was partly due to the lack of a comprehensive national food policy. It pointed to an urgent need for laws that would require full and active participation of all sectors concerned, including those most vulnerable to hunger. Last week, a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showed that 21 percent of the population, or an estimated 4.3 million families, went hungry at least once in the last three months, up from 18.4 percent in May.

The spike resulted from an 18 percent increase in "moderate hunger," defined by SWS as having nothing to eat once or a few times.

Overall hunger rose the sharpest in Metro Manila by 10 points to 26 percent, or an estimated 738,000 families.

Teves said the results of the hunger survey were “unacceptable and alarming.”

“In a country with a total population of almost 100 million, 1 percent is too many, 21 percent is too much. Not this many people were ever hungry before,” Ricardo Reyes, FIAN Philippines vice president, said.

“Old folks used to say that even during the Japanese occupation, hunger did not become a problem because our land has been blessed with fertile land and plenty of water and sunshine,” he said.

The group urged President Aquino to draw up a national food policy so the Filipino people would have reason to celebrate World Food Day on Oct. 16.

World Food Day is celebrated to remember the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945.

Referring to the study “The Filipinos’ Right to Food: An Assessment of the Philippine Legal Framework Governing the Right to Food” by Virgilio de los Reyes and Maria Socorro I. Diokno, Teves said current laws do not ensure availability, accessibility and safety of food for the entire population.



## **Human rights group: To end hunger, PHL needs comprehensive food policy**

October 12, 2012 10:00am

As World Food Day on October 16 approaches, a human rights organization said the Philippines needs a comprehensive national food policy to end its high incidence of hunger.

FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines said recent survey results showing hunger now stalks 21 percent of families is unacceptable.

"The result of the latest survey on hunger incidence is unacceptable and alarming. We urge the President to declare as urgent the crafting of a national food policy that will rectify incoherent, non-complementary and conflicting legal mechanisms," FIAN Philippines president Aurea Teves said.

World Food Day is celebrated every October 16 in honor of the founding date of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization in 1945.

In its survey conducted from August 24 to 27, Social Weather Stations had said 21 percent or 4.3 million families experience involuntary hunger at least once the last three months.

The SWS survey showed moderate hunger at 18 percent and severe hunger at 3 percent.

"In a country with a total population of almost 100 million, one percent is too many, 21% is too much," said FIAN Philippines vice president Ricardo Reyes.

Reyes added that even during the Japanese occupation, hunger did not become a problem because the country is blessed with fertile land and plenty of water and sunshine.

"We want the President to give the Filipino people a reason to celebrate the forthcoming World Food Day by declaring as urgent the crafting of a national food policy," he added.

According to Teves, the food policy should involve all stakeholders, including those most vulnerable to hunger.

The policy should also be along the recommendations by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

## **Food availability**

FIAN cited a study by Virgilio de los Reyes and Maria Socorro Diokno, “The Filipinos’ Right to Food: An Assessment of the Philippine Legal Framework Governing the Right to Food” and published by the Right to Food and Nutrition (RTFN) Watch this year, that showed current laws do not ensure availability, accessibility and safety of food for all.

FIAN noted that present food availability laws relate to agrarian reform, agricultural policy, and trade measures to determine access to land, agricultural productivity, and food supply.

Teves noted Republic Act 8178, the Agricultural Tariffication Act, repealed laws that restricted the importation of agricultural products such as onions, potatoes, garlic, coffee, livestock, seeds, and tobacco.

“This law removed the protection granted to small farmers from importation of agricultural products that are produced in sufficient quantity in the country,” she said.

The study also showed that there were no safeguards to cushion the negative effects of food price volatility.

Laws like the Biofuels Act may affect the obligation to respect the right to adequate food, the study said.

The study also showed that physical accessibility laws are so far limited to mobility such as ramps for persons with disabilities and do not focus on enhancing people's physical access to land to grow their own food.

It also found out that existing laws on economic accessibility do not have sufficient impact as they do not make food affordable for everyone.

"Laws on prices just refer to the requirement of price tags, while price regulation or price control is only used during calamities or emergency situations. Laws on wages and income are insufficient and to some extent have negative effects like the one-year ban on wage hikes. Credit laws do not address easy access to loans for small holders but enumerate rigid requirements and guidelines. Worse, most existing laws are not properly or fully implemented," the group said.

## **"Unfinished" agrarian reform**

Teves also lamented the agrarian reform program in the country is still unfinished.

“Access to land by farmers tilling or working on private agricultural land remains unreachable to around 1.4 million supposed beneficiaries working on 1.8 million hectares of land,” she said.

Teves noted there are special laws for the most vulnerable, such as one that requires day care centers to provide a feeding program, nutritional monitoring and supplementary feeding as it considers that food deprivation is a form of child abuse.

She also cited the Senior Citizens Law that provides discounts for elderly people, "especially on basic food items."

"However, the right to food of people with disabilities or people living with HIV and the specific obstacles they face are not legally recognized nor subject to particular attention," she said.

### **Conditional cash transfer**

Meanwhile, Teves criticized the government's conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, which she said "remains very inadequate and is conditioned on performing other obligations whereas the right to food, which is a basic human right, is unconditional."

"In addition, the supply of conditioned services like school facilities and medicines and doctors and nurses in health centers has been far behind the demand for these services. The CCT program is not part of a coherent food policy," she said.

The group also urged the Philippine government to rationalize the legal framework governing food.

Teves suggested synchronizing laws, addressing contradictions in policy objectives, correcting flaws and ambiguities, repealing laws that obstruct the realization of the right to adequate food, aligning the national budget to the national food policy, enhancing the mandates of the national human rights institutions, and improving the process of law-making.

"Most important is to use the right-based approach in adopting a national food policy and rationalizing its legal framework," she said. - **VVP, GMA News**

## **Food for all**

Published on Saturday, 13 October 2012 18:52

Written by The Business Mirror Editorial



THE statistics are alarming. Last week the Social Weather Stations (SWS) released its third-quarter findings that showed 21 percent, or at least 4.3 million, households experienced having nothing to eat in the last three months, up from 18.4 percent in May. The spike resulted from an 18-percent increase in “moderate hunger,” defined by SWS as having nothing to eat once or a few times. Overall hunger rose the sharpest in Metro Manila by 10 points to 26 percent, or an estimated 738,000 families.

On the other hand, the United Nations Children’s Fund has reported that an estimated 6 million Filipino children are malnourished. After the onslaught of Typhoon Sendong last year, it said, malnutrition cases increased in calamity-devastated communities. Malnutrition has long been an issue among children in Mindanao, and the typhoon worsened the situation.

World Food Day is observed on October 16 every year, coinciding with the date of the founding of the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization back in 1945. And this is a good time as any to focus attention on the state of food security in the country.

For the non-governmental organization (NGO) Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines, the lack of a comprehensive national food policy is one of the major reasons the country has high incidence of hunger.

Thus, it said, there is an urgent need to craft policies, and for the full and active participation of all concerned, including those most vulnerable to hunger.

“The result of the latest survey on hunger incidence is unacceptable and alarming. We urge the President to declare as urgent the crafting of a national food policy that will rectify incoherent, non-complementary and conflicting legal mechanisms,” FIAN said.

The NGO argues that the government's Conditional Cash-Transfer (CCT) Program is not the solution to rising hunger in the country: "This program has a wide coverage and contributes to children's economic access to food. However, it remains very inadequate and is conditioned on performing other obligations, whereas the right to food, which is a basic human right, is unconditional."

The NGO is correct. But then, the CCT was never touted by the government as the solution to widespread poverty. What the program wants to do is to reduce absolute poverty incidence by helping the poorest of the poor survive their harsh economic situation. The CCT is not an outright dole but rather compels beneficiaries to send their children to school and for mothers to get regular health checkups.

We need to ensure availability, accessibility and safety of food for the entire population. The UN suggests adopting a twin-track approach based on support for economic growth, including agriculture growth involving smallholders, and safety nets for the most vulnerable. These are steps in the right direction. Food for all should be the goal, so that hunger and malnutrition can be kept from casting a dark shadow over the daily lives of the poor and the marginalized.

## **Campaign launched on ‘right to adequate food’**

Published on Monday, 15 October 2012 19:25

Written by Jonathan L. Mayuga / Reporter

VARIOUS stakeholders representing more than 50 people’s and non-governmental organizations from all over the country on Monday gathered in Quezon City to launch a national campaign on the “right to adequate food.”

The launch came on Oct. 16, a day ahead of celebration of World Food Day. Incidentally, the Aquino administration released its latest study, claiming that a daily budget of P172 is enough for a family of five members to be considered “non-poor.” The findings released through the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), apparently raised eyebrows and earned the flak of government critics.

Led by the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines and the Peoples Development Institute for Asia (PDI), together with the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PHILRIGHTS), the event’s participant launched the National Food Campaign to push for a comprehensive national food policy with the slogan “Pagkain: Sapat Dapat!”

Aurea Micalat-Teves, head of the secretariat of the newly-found National Food Coalition, earlier said that the lack of a comprehensive national food policy is one of the major reasons why the country has a high incidence of hunger.

The crafting of such policy needs the full and active participation of all actors concerned, especially those most vulnerable to hunger, she said.

The proposed national food policy, according to Micalat-Teves, must conform with the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in General Comment No. 12 (1999) and the FAO’s Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (2004).

General Comment No. 12 explicitly states that “[t]he right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. The right to adequate food shall therefore not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with a minimum package of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients.”

“How can we celebrate the World Food Day if one in every five households in our country has experienced hunger in the past three months? We are hopeful that other stakeholders, especially those in the government, heed our call as there is undoubtedly an increasing incidence of hunger and poverty in our country,” said Teves, also the president of FIAN Philippines.

The Social Weather Stations' (SWS) third-quarter findings released in September showed that 21 percent or an estimated 4.3 million households experienced having nothing to eat in the last three months, up from 18.4 percent in May.

SWS said overall hunger rose sharpest in Metro Manila, by 10 points to 26 percent or an estimated 738,000 families.

Also launched during the event was the fifth Right to Food and Nutrition Watch Magazine, which provides information and analysis on the right to food.

## National Policy On Food Urged

By ELLALYN B. DE VERA

October 15, 2012, 7:35pm

Some 300 food security advocates from around the country gathered to craft a comprehensive national policy on the right to adequate food, in celebration of the World Food Day.

The advocates, representing more than 50 people's and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and led by the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN)-Philippines and the Peoples Development Institute for Asia (PDI), together with the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PHILRIGHTS), launched the National Food Campaign with the slogan "Pagkain: Sapat Dapat!"

Aurea Miclat-Teves, head of the secretariat of the National Food Coalition, said the lack of a comprehensive national food policy is one of the major reasons why the country has a high incidence of hunger.

Teves said crafting such a policy needs the full and active participation of all actors concerned, especially those most vulnerable to hunger.

The proposed national food policy must conform with the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in General Comment No. 12 (1999) and the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food (2004), she explained. General Comment No. 12 explicitly states that "the right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement. The right to adequate food shall therefore not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with a minimum package of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients."

"How can we celebrate the World Food Day if one in every five households in our country has experienced hunger in the past three months? We are hopeful that other stakeholders, especially those in the government, heed our call as there is undoubtedly an increasing incidence of hunger and poverty in our country," said Teves, also the president of FIAN Philippines.

The Social Weather Stations' third quarter findings released in September showed that 21 percent, or an estimated 4.3 million households, experienced having nothing to eat in the last three months, up from 18.4 percent in May.

SWS said overall hunger rose sharpest in Metro Manila, by 10 points to 26 percent or an estimated 738,000 families.

Also launched during the event was the 5th Right to Food and Nutrition Watch Magazine, which provides information and analysis on the right to food.

# Zero hunger challenge: Is it attainable?

by Voltaire Tupaz

Posted on 10/16/2012 10:55 PM | Updated 11/03/2012 2:47 PM



**RIGHT TO FOOD.** Indigenous young people demand for adequate food during the observance of World Food Day in the Philippines. Photo by Project Development Institute  
MANILA, Philippines - "Eliminating hunger in our lifetimes."

This is the "next big push," according to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a message to a UN food body at a meeting on food security taking place in Rome.

Ki-moon was referring to his "Zero Hunger Challenge," an initiative he first pitched before the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Brazil in June 2012.

The goal of the challenge is for every human being to have adequate nutrition and for food sources to be resilient.

The campaign pursues the following objectives:

- Make sure that everyone in the world has access to enough nutritious food all year long
- End childhood stunting
- Build sustainable food systems
- Double the productivity and income of smallholder farmers, especially women
- Prevent food from being lost or wasted

CFS or the Committee on World Food Security, an intergovernmental body tasked to review and follow up food security policies, convened the meeting in time for the observance of the World Food Day Tuesday, October 16.

## **Cut hunger by half**

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) took up the challenge even as it attempts to meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) 2015 deadline for decreasing global hunger.

“As we renew and increase our commitment to reach the Millennium Development Goal for hunger reduction, let’s look beyond it, towards the total eradication of hunger because, when it comes to hunger, the only acceptable number is ‘zero,’” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said.

The FAO’s State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012 report revealed that nearly 870 million people around the world suffer from chronic malnutrition.

However, Graziano announced that the number of hungry people was reduced by 132 million since 1990, an “important progress,” he said. The proportion of hungry people in developing countries also decreased from 23.2% to 14.9% over the same period, according to the top UN official.

Graziano is optimistic that targets for cutting the proportion of hungry people around the world by half can still be achieved if countries step up their efforts to address hunger.



NATIONAL FOOD POLICY. Indigenous women launch campaign to craft legal framework on the right to adequate food. Photo by Project Development Institute

### **Hunger in the Philippines**

Advocates of food security in the Philippines expressed concern that the Philippines is not yet ready for the challenge, blaming the shortcomings of the government in providing an adequate budget and appropriate policies to address hunger in the country.

A survey released by the Social Weather Station in September revealed that 21% or about 4.3 million Filipino households experienced involuntary hunger the previous 3 months, up from 18.4% in May.

"The national budget does not reflect bias for addressing hunger situation," Aurea Micalat-Teves, president of the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) Philippines said, adding that it manifests "the weak political will of the government to eradicate hunger."

Only P70.8-B (around \$1.65-B) was allocated to the departments of agriculture and agrarian reform compared to the P106.9-B (around \$2.8-B) budget for the defense department, Teves noted in a report she co-wrote with Maria Socorro Diokno for the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2012 magazine.

The report also noted that access to land by farmers who are food producers has remained "unreachable to around 1.4 million supposed beneficiaries working on 1.8 million hectares of land."

The magazine, published by Germany-based *Brot fur die Welt* (Bread for the World) and other international organizations, was launched on October 15 at the University of the Philippines Diliman in a gathering of more than 300 food security advocates.

### **National food policy**

The gathering also kicked off a campaign that pushes for the recognition of the right to adequate food in government policies. The policy advocacy will be carried out by the National Food Coalition, a network of more than 50 organizations led by FIAN Philippines.

Teves said that the lack of a comprehensive national food policy is a key reason why the country experiences a high incidence of hunger.

"The government does not fulfill this obligation. One of the reasons is the lack of a national framework that would respond to the food needs of the people," Teves said.

This has resulted in incoherent and conflicting laws and legal mechanisms that deal with food concerns, according to Teves.

Teves added that the Philippine Constitution does not explicitly recognize the right to adequate food, also explaining the weak food policy framework.

"We are hopeful that the government will heed our call as there is undoubtedly an increasing incidence of hunger and poverty in our country," Teves said.

According to Teves, the proposed policy on food must conform with the recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR) and the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food.

CESR defined the right to adequate food as "physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement." - **Rappler.com**