

## **Pacific Consultation**

### **Food Security**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the basis for discussion on the issue of food security at the Anglican Alliance's Honiara conference. It examines the experience of different regions of the communion and explores common global challenges, drawing on the experience of the church and setting out options for continuing work aimed at achieving food security.

### **1. The Issue**

What do we mean when we talk of food security? This situation exists when all have access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food. The main factors which can make a population food insecure are:

- Poor availability of food. Inefficient agriculture or even famine or drought can prevent food from being produced or transported to where it is needed.
- Poor access to food. Often caused by high prices. If people cannot afford food they can be food insecure – even if there is plenty of food available. Poor people spend much more of their money on food - up to 80 per cent - and so are hardest hit by high food prices.
- Inability to utilise the food available. High fuel prices or limited access to water can prevent people from being able to cook the food they have
- Disrupted food supplies. People who are food insecure may not be hungry all the time, but can be tipped into hunger or even famine by conflict or high food prices.

The international community has pledged to end extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), making an explicit commitment to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger; yet at present there are 925 million undernourished people in the world, and achieving this goal looks unlikely. Since the food price crisis of 2006-09, prices have dropped from their global high, but remain higher than before the crisis, and higher than 40 years ago. Local conditions contribute to creating situations of food insecurity, and local crises, economic or political, can prevent local populations from accessing safe supplies of food and disrupt local distribution networks. Nowhere can this effect be seen more strongly than in the current crisis in the Horn of Africa, where the turmoil caused by the absence of effective government in Somalia tipped the crisis over from a drought to a famine, and have subsequently hindered relief efforts by humanitarian agencies. In this global context, the church has a mission to promote the dignity of all human creatures and to strive to bring food justice to peoples around the world, regardless of their economic circumstance.

### **2. Challenges to achieving food security in the Global South**

#### **2.1 Africa**

The Horn of Africa famine is the most visible and pressing current food crisis, where 11.5 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. While this is the worst drought for many

years, the shortage of rain is not unusual – there have been droughts and crises in Horn of Africa in 1999-2000, 2002-3, 2005-6, and 2008-9. This drought has only turned to famine in areas of the country controlled by the al Shabaab militant group, where conflict has increased disorder and exacerbated the crisis. It has in the past targeted international aid groups and the flow of aid to affected areas in Somalia has suffered severe restrictions. Political problems such as these need political solutions; solving the immediate problems of food and water is not enough.

In Africa more generally, food insecurity is rife, and it has a rural face – rural communities are home to 70-80% of the poor. Regionally, 30% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa is undernourished, but this figure hides stark variations – the figure is as high as 47% in Sierra Leone and 46% in Angola and Ethiopia. In Sub-Saharan Africa, however, the agricultural industry is a major employer, providing work for 62% of the population; it is, however, very underdeveloped. Saddled with low fertility soils, it has the lowest average production intensity of all regions.

The most prevalent form of farming is the smallholder farm which comprises 80% of all farms - it is this type of farming which is struggling to provide sufficient food, both for farmers themselves and for sale. Smallholder farmers face the challenge of a widespread lack of access to finance or credit (only 4% of sub-Saharan Africans have a bank account), preventing them from diversifying their crops or producing higher-quality ones. When these obstacles are combined with the transport difficulties which plague the region (only 34% of all Africans live within 2km of an all-season road), smallholder farmers are trapped without access to technology and equipment which could greatly improve their productivity.

## **2.2 Latin America and the Caribbean**

Latin America faces some of the greatest inequalities of any region. General economic growth since the 1980s has positioned Brazil as a major global economic player, yet this economic growth has been uneven, and has failed to eradicate high poverty and malnutrition rates. These rates vary across the region – 6% of Brazil's population is undernourished, though in Bolivia the figure stands at 27%. In some parts of Central America and the Caribbean, these figures are higher –in Haiti it is 57% as systemic poverty was exacerbated by the 2010 earthquake and subsequent cholera epidemic. Furthermore, the 2010 la Niña weather system brought heavy rains to Central America, Colombia and Venezuela, destroying crops and damaging agricultural equipment, which aggravated the food shortage in Guatemala and led to flooding in Colombia and Venezuela, causing a shortage of rice.

Guatemala faces particular problems – with the highest rate of malnutrition in Latin America, its rates of hunger follow strong geographic and ethnic lines. Small farmers are most at risk; the particular problem which faces them is lack of access to land. In Guatemala, less than 8% of agricultural producers hold almost 80% of the land, a figure which is not atypical for Central America as a whole. This unequal distribution of land keeps many rural people in wage labour, often seasonally migrating to look for work such as coffee and sugar cane harvesting, while the best land remains in the hands of export-orientated agricultural companies. So even though a significant number of countries within the region are net food exporters, who should therefore be able to benefit from globally high food prices, any economic gains will be unequally distributed.

Moreover, these inequalities are structured along ethnic lines, as the result of centuries of discrimination against indigenous people. While their rights are usually enshrined in law, everyday discrimination is still common and indigenous populations face practical barriers as a result of their rural and often isolated homes, and the lack of proper government services in these areas. At present, poverty is more severe among indigenous peoples - rates of child malnutrition among indigenous communities are at 69% as opposed to 35% among non-indigenous groups.

## 2.3 Southeast Asia

Despite having a considerable agriculture industry (Thailand, for example, is the world's biggest rice exporter) this region is still plagued by problems of food security. Vietnam, for example, despite being a large exporter of rice, is very vulnerable to price increases which hit the poorest hardest – the retail price of rice increased by 65% in Hanoi in the first half of 2008. This concern is heightened by the fact that, despite the fact that 62% of people depend on agriculture for a living, many rural households in Vietnam are still net purchasers of food. Progress has been made, however – Vietnam actually achieved Millennium Development Goal 1 (to halve the proportion of those suffering from hunger) five years ahead of schedule, though 9.6 million people remain undernourished.

Similarly, even though Indonesia doubled cereal production between 1979 and 2009, other constraints such as vulnerability to natural disasters and a large and growing population mean that 19.9 million of its population are undernourished and 28% of its children are underweight. Undernourishment is still a significant problem across the region – in Cambodia, it affects 22% of the population and 23% in Lao PDR. More worryingly, the prevalence of underweight children is high – the percentage of children that are underweight is 45.2% in Cambodia, and 31.8% in Myanmar.

In the long term, climate change could pose a serious problem to this region's food security. Southeast Asia's long coastlines and concentration of population and economic activity on the coast, along with the region's heavy reliance on agriculture, fisheries and forestry, make it vulnerable to sea level rises and the effects of disturbed weather patterns on agriculture.

## 2.4 South Asia

In terms of numbers, Asia is the most undernourished region of the world by far. The massive and growing populations of China and India together account for 40% of the world's undernourished people. The improvements in agriculture made in the green revolution of the 1960s and 1970s are proving insufficient to provide food for the rapidly expanding populations of today (the population of India increases every year by 18 million). At its current rate of change, India will halve hunger and meet MDG 1 only by 2083. 41% of rural households are effectively landless in India after decades of failed land reforms, preventing them from farming independently.

Vulnerability to sudden changes to the availability or price of food is still a major issue - Pakistan and Bangladesh were both badly affected by food price rises. In Pakistan, the number of severely food insecure people has risen since 2005-6 by 9.6 million, and it now includes 28% of the population. 2/3 of these people live in rural areas, suggesting that the agricultural system is underperforming, leaving the rural poor vulnerable. In Bangladesh, the number of people who are food insecure (i.e. with less than 2,100 calories per day) increased by 7.5 million due to high food prices and floods, which decimated the low-lying coastal areas, damaging and destroying lives and livelihoods.

Part of the food insecurity problem in this region is intertwined with the continuing and pressing problems of gender inequality. In extremely patriarchal societies, it is women who tend to eat least and last, even though they are generally responsible for food security through the tasks of procuring and preparing food. A socio-cultural preference for males means that women are less likely to be educated and achieve economic independence than their male counterparts, especially in the poorest families, and more likely to be married and have children young. In India, an estimated 2/3 of girls are married while still in their teens, often due to poverty; their children are more likely to be malnourished (as 46% of children are in Bangladesh) and to live in poverty. The economic, social and

nutritional status of women thus has a disproportionate impact on the rest of the family; by working to support and empower women, the benefits will quickly spread.

## **2.5 Pacific**

Small island states in the Pacific face difficult challenges because of their size and isolation - as a group, it is their poverty and the difficulties they face in economic development that keep them in situations of food insecurity. A combination of high population growth and low levels of economic growth has meant that Pacific island states have a low or even negative average income growth per person. Moreover, despite the large role that agriculture plays (about 80% of the population of all Pacific communities rely on agriculture for their livelihoods) Pacific island countries are dependent on a lot of imports from abroad – especially cereals like rice and flour. Pacific islands also import oil, meaning that food prices can vary according to the price of the oil required to transport the food. The combination of these two variables leaves food prices in the Pacific islands very vulnerable to changes in the world economy. While no one has been reported to have died of starvation on the islands, food insecurity caused by poverty and high prices has adverse effects on the health and lives of many inhabitants. The impact of climate change in this context could be devastating – possibly forcing evacuation of low-lying areas and disrupting agricultural production elsewhere.

For a more detailed analysis of the situation in the Pacific, please refer to the attached paper by George Kiriaiu.

## **3. Key Global Challenges**

The key global challenges to feeding the world's hungry people are set out in more detail below. They include:

- Underdevelopment of agriculture - to feed the growing world population farming needs to become more productive, especially in developing countries.
- Challenges facing subsistence farmers including access to finance and lack of infrastructure such as roads to take their produce to market.
- Lack of investment in farming, especially in research and development.
- Climate change affecting especially traditional farming.
- Extra difficulties for women farmers
- The increasing production of biofuels which requires large amounts of crops which could be used as food
- Lack of secure land tenure for poor people, and land-grabbing by companies.
- Speculation in food on the world markets.

### *Underdevelopment of Agriculture*

The concentration of so much poverty and food insecurity in rural areas globally indicates the presence of real and serious barriers to access to food in rural areas. Some of the challenges faced by these communities are shared across the world – including a absence of fair access to land, inadequate infrastructure and limited access to products (such as fertiliser or seeds) that could improve a small farmer's income. Common problems such as transport difficulties and lack of access to finance (particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa and certain parts of other regions, such as Guatemala in Latin America) prevent isolated rural farmers from investing in their farms and making a profit.

At an even more basic level, the usual inability of women to access their full economic rights means that half of the productive capacity of the population goes underused – Oxfam estimates, for example, that in developing countries women account for only 10-20% of landowners, due to either informal or formal discrimination in land access and ownership. For the same historical and cultural reasons, they are also more likely to lack access to education and finance. Both women and men, however, suffer from the dispossession of local communities from their land by big, multinational companies. Following the food price spike in 2008, for example, Africa saw 22 years worth of land investment in 12 months; this was effectively a land grab as companies in developed countries (particularly from the Middle East and Asia) sought to buy up land in order to feed their own growing populations. These processes drive local people off the land; without land, they cannot farm.

### *Climate Change*

The reality of climate change is now generally accepted across the world. While it is difficult to predict its exact effects, unconventional changes in weather patterns will disrupt agricultural production globally – and in this scenario, it is always the poor who are least buffered from price rises. The International Food Policy Research Institute has recently calculated that in a scenario taking into account climate change, 12 million more children will be consigned to hunger, compared to a scenario without climate change. Even the slightest change in climate could render marginal agricultural land (be this inland in Sub-Saharan Africa or on the coasts of Malaysia) unusable, with potentially very serious consequences for communities which are already food insecure and reliant on imports. In this situation, the challenging task is to provide development assistance for producers which will allow them to adapt to changing conditions – made much more difficult by consistent gaps in understanding, research and information in the places where it is most vitally needed.

### *Global Markets*

Some of the problems which cause global price fluctuations and thus hit the poor hardest are themselves global in nature – global economic practices which affect the developing world but are carried through by developed countries. These challenges have no easy solution. One of the problems is the increasing development of biofuels primarily by the US and EU (though some emerging nations, such as India, which has set a 20% biofuels target by 2020, are following suit). Biofuels policies are nearly always mandatory or heavily subsidised to meet a certain target, meaning that the quantity of crops that they demand is more or less unchanging. So price rises will not significantly affect the amount of foodstuffs used to generate biofuels, but less food will be left, and at high prices, for the hungry around the world. Another example is the practice of speculation in food markets. Though there is little hard evidence as to the adverse effects of speculation on fluctuations in food prices, there is a strong moral objection to the practice of effectively betting on changes in the price of foodstuffs and trading food as a commercial investment while so many people still go hungry.

#### ***Talking Points:***

- Which of these challenges do you recognise in your area of action/community/diocese?
- How do the challenges that you are familiar with compare to those in other regions?
- Does the description of these challenges correspond with your experiences? If not, how do your experiences differ?

## 4. World action on food

### *Global Action*

The international community has committed to a series of actions to deal with the problem of food insecurity. Their response to the food crisis of 2007-08 was made in the agreement at l'Aquila, Italy, in 2009, which signed by more than 40 major donors (including 18 members of the G20) and pledged US\$ 22 billion over 3 years for sustainable agriculture and emergency food aid. Two years on from this agreement, however, there is concern over whether countries are meeting the promises that they made. While most countries are making progress in the amount of money they have committed, they are not yet on track to meet their promised targets. The recent meeting of the G20 agriculture ministers in Paris (June, 2011) raised hopes for serious action on the issue of food security. While the outcome mentioned several challenges to food security, it was weak on proposing solutions – on the issue of regulating financial agricultural markets, the ministers simply referred the issue to their colleagues the financial ministers.

### *Regional Initiatives*

There have also been several regional initiatives, most notably in Africa where the problems of agricultural development are most acute. In 2003 at a summit in Maputo, Mozambique, 25 African heads of state committed to spend 10% of their budgets on agriculture. In Windhoek, Namibia, in 2009, a High Level Ministerial Declaration acknowledged the international consensus on the actions needed to promote food security, and declared the political will to carry it out.

The Church has acted in many countries to tackle problems of food insecurity, working with local communities to increase farm productivity, access to markets, and also to provide emergency help to people in crisis. In Nairobi, Anglicans held the first ecumenical church leaders meeting to consider the crisis in the East and Horn of Africa, and issued a call to action to the international community.

## 5. Strategies for food security

There are a variety of strategies being implemented to work towards food security. They include:

- New farming techniques to improve farmers' productivity
- Introducing new crops on small farms which give better yields
- Social protection measures. These act as a safety net to protect people from the worst impacts of shocks or disasters, such as a failed harvest
- Micro-finance organisations which provide access to loans and credit
- Giving women resources and training to earn money themselves
- Introducing new farming techniques in areas badly affected by climate change

### *Working with small farmers*

With regard to the agricultural challenges faced by farmers in the developing world, many programs focus on empowering small farmers to increase their productivity or their resilience to shocks. Oxfam's *Growing a Better Future* campaign, for example, focuses on prioritising the needs of small farmers in developing countries where, it argues, the greatest gains in productivity, poverty reduction and sustainable intensification of farming can be achieved. While part of their strategy is advocacy-based, arguing that 'the global food system is broken' and calling on governments and big

business to support small farmers, nonetheless the action they propose is by nature local and particular to each area.

Anglican agencies and churches are already involved in working with farmers to bring them new technologies and techniques to increase productivity. Episcopal Relief and Development works in the Democratic Republic of Congo, giving technical training in advanced farming techniques to produce more nutritious crops – in the diocese of Boga they train women to grow new crops - ground nuts in Bukiringi, corn in Boga and palm oil trees in Bwakadi. The organisation Foundations for Farming teaches a conservation farming technique in Zimbabwe, Malawia and South Africa, according to which the farmer does not till the land and relies on the natural formation of mulch on the ground to conserve precious rainfall and prevent soil erosion. This technique enables farmers to increase his yields to a very large extent. On the demand side of the farming business, the World Food Program's Purchase for Progress Program seeks to buy food in a smallholder friendly way – shifting the paradigm of food aid to include helping small farmers by being a reliable buyer at a fair price. Their intention is that this will encourage other donors and governments to follow suit.

### *Social Protection Measures*

Various small scale social protection measures are also being piloted to increase the resilience of families when disasters or shocks do hit, and to prevent their food insecurity becoming hunger. One such measure is weather insurance, which would allow farmers to buy weather-index based insurance before the planting season. Buying this insurance can be more effective than the aid needed afterwards if the harvest fails. Programs like this also encourage private sector investment in rural areas. They form a safety net between the vulnerable and food insecure farming family and hunger and starvation if the rains or harvest fail.

### *Empowering Women*

Many such programs also focus on empowering women in a variety of ways. Evidence suggests that when women and girls earn income they reinvest 90% into their families, as opposed to only 40% for a man. Microfinance programs, such as the Micro-finance Women's Cooperative in northern Mozambique supported by the Primates' World Relief and Development Fund provide women with access to very small loans and saving programs – giving them the access to finance which they so often are denied. Programs such as this, and others which focus on the women as the economic agent, allow women to become financially independent and reinvest money into their businesses and families.

### *Combating Climate Change*

The challenges posed by a changing climate are wide-reaching and impossible to tackle in their entirety, not least because the global north continues to emit destructive levels of greenhouse gases, the consequences of which are often felt in the global south. One strategy to improve the resilience of the food supply and farmers' livelihoods are agricultural adaptation projects, which seek to help farmers adapt their crops and techniques to a disturbed climate. For example, Episcopal Relief and Development are involved in testing salt-resistant crops to prosper in rising sea levels and increased salt spray on the island of Ontong Java, Solomon Islands. Some strategies have involved empowering communities to reduce their dependence on oil and replace it with more convenient green energy. Again in the Solomon Islands, for example, Anglicord is pioneering a program to help young people sell solar-powered lamps to rural communities to reduce dependence on kerosene which is expensive and dangerous.

### **Talking Points**

- Which strategies or practices do you know of in your diocese/community to improve food security?
- How successful are these different strategies?
- Do you know of successful strategies not mentioned here?
- What potential is there for south-south learning in your area of action? How far could the experience of others be of relevance to your work?

## **6. Options**

The analysis of strategies and challenges in this paper is not meant to be exhaustive or all-inclusive – in a constrained space, it would be impossible to encompass the global complexity of the Anglican Communion’s development work. After providing a very brief orientation, the issue now is to discuss options for how, in this context, the Anglican Alliance should function.

How can it most helpfully link together areas of action with relation to food security? Both geographically near and distant projects may be able to learn from the experience of each other.

How does the global experience translate into local issues? Local areas of Anglican action can and do apply some of the strategies outlined in this paper, but inevitably some strategies are inappropriate for particular situations, just as there will be many other strategies which are less well known but could have a wider application.

What role should the Alliance have in advocacy? Speaking for the voiceless to bring them justice is a mission of the church, and with this in mind, the Alliance is organising an advocacy campaign for World Food Day on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October, to incorporate the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance’s Week of Action on Food on 10-17 October. The G20 meets 3 weeks later (3-4 November), and the mission is to press for rule changes in global agriculture, particularly with regard to increasing budgetary spend on agriculture and tightening rules on speculation in food markets.

| <b>Goal</b>                            | <b>Strategies</b>   | <b>Anglican Examples</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| Developing agriculture                 | Increasing productivity through advanced farming techniques | <i>Anglican Board of Mission, Australia:</i><br>Philippines – providing agricultural equipment, seeds and fertiliser to help small farmers increase yields from their crops<br><b>HOW THE ALLIANCE CAN HELP :</b> helping exchange of successful models; assisting agencies and dioceses to coordinate work in the region |
|  | Increasing access to finance                                |   |
| Combating the impact of climate change | Adapting agricultural techniques                            | <i>Episcopal Relief and Development:</i> Lord Howe Islands - developing new crops and ways of farming following the destruction of their staple crop<br><b>HOW THE ALLIANCE CAN HELP:</b> facilitating sharing of technical information and techniques  |
|  | Introducing climate resistant and nutritious types of crop  |   |

|                                  |                                       |   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Utilising women's full potential | Increasing access to finance          | <i>USPG and the Church of Bangladesh:</i><br>establishing and supporting women's community groups to enable them to gain new skills to generate an income<br><b>HOW THE ALLIANCE CAN HELP:</b><br>collaborating with partner organisations to share effective models for increasing women's access to finance |
|                                  | Encouraging participation in business |   |

**Talking Points:**

- How can the Alliance best work to support the work in your community/diocese?
- What advocacy role should the Alliance play?
- In which ways could the Alliance helpfully work to coordinate Anglican development work in your locality?

South-south learning:

- How could the varied experiences discussed here be of use in your locality?
- Which practices or areas of knowledge would be most useful for you to learn from others about?
- What areas of experience do you have that could be shared with other regions?