**Call for experiences and good pratices in the use and application of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security**

**Template for submissions (approximately 1000 words in total)**

 **Please use this**[submission form](http://bit.ly/2nAitb1)**to share your experiences and good practices in the use and application of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.  For the necessary background and guidance, please refer to the topic note:** <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/open-calls/CFS_right_to_food>.

**You can upload the completed form to the** FSN Forum **(**[www.fao.org/fsnforum](http://www.fao.org/fsnforum)) **or send it via email to** fsn-moderator@fao.org**.**

**Title of the experience**

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| **The South Asian Dialogue on the Right to Food** |

**Geographical coverage**

(E.g. national, or regional if several countries of the same region, or global if several countries in more than one region)

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| **(Sub-)Regional (South Asia)** |

**Country(ies)/Region(s) covered by the experience**

(E.g. Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi)

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| **Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan** |

**Your affiliation**

(Please indicate government, UN organization, civil society/NGO, private sector, academia, donor or others)

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| **FAO** |

**How have the VGRtF been used in your context? Which specific guidelines of the VGRtF was most relevant to your experience?**

(E.g. VGRtF have been used to develop legislative framework on the Right to Food, with specific reference to Guideline 7)

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| **All Guidelines, in particular guidelines 3.8, 3.10 as well as 2, 5, 7, 11 and 17** |

**Brief description of the experience**

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| **The event was jointly organized by FAO and Oxfam. The Dialogue called for the participation of over 40 members from government, national Right to Food networks of civil society organizations and movements, academia and think tanks, from four countries in the region India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh with the aim to promote an emerging right to food community of practice for improved food security in South Asia.****The event allowed for a reflection over issues related to global, regional and national standards, policy processes and relevant thematic areas which could serve as entry-points for further action and strengthened commitment on the right to food at national level.****The Dialogue showed that challenges however are complex and multi-faceted:****- Poor policy implementation, coherence and harmonization;****- Insufficient allocation of resources, inefficient targeting of beneficiaries and exclusion of specific groups of social protection schemes and safety nets are obstacles to ensure effectiveness and sustainability;****- Weak tenure rights, especially in regards to customary tenure, and land-grabbing by national or multinational actors;****- Lack of proper information channels to inform and increase general awareness on this human right avoiding common misconceptions;****- Insufficient coordination among stakeholders for more integrated action both at national and regional level;****- Weak monitoring and redress mechanisms.** |

**Who was involved in the experience?**

(Please indicate as many as relevant e.g. government, UN organization, civil society/NGO, private sector, academia, donor or others)

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| **UN, government, national Right to Food networks of civil society organizations and movements, academia and think tanks** |

**How were those most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition involved?**

(E.g. participation of CSOs representing food insecure and malnourished segments of the population in all training)

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| **Participation of CSOs representing food insecure and malnourished segments of the population. Moreover, the event covered specific topics aiming at putting emphasis on most vulnerable groups:****1) the rights of vulnerable and extreme poor to access social protection, food security and nutrition;** **2) policy and implementation gaps; and** **3) access to productive resources and rights of farmers.** |

**Main activities**

(E.g. training of CSOs, lawyers, parliamentarians, government)

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| **One-time regional event** |

**Timeframe**

(Please specify starting date, and ending date/or if ongoing)

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| **23-25 Dhaka, Bangladesh, November 2015** |

**Results obtained/expected in the short term, with quantitative aspects where feasible (estimate of the number of people that have been or will be affected)**

(Please indicate the number of people that have been directly involved in activities, e.g. 6 training sessions involving 250 people)

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| **The Dialogue concluded with an explicit commitment from all participants to continue working on the right to food and an agreement on the added value of a community of practice on the right to food in South Asia. People affected equal to the population of the 4 countries involved.** |

**Results obtained/expected in the medium to long term, with quantitative aspects where feasible (estimate the number of people that have been or will be affected)**

(Please indicate the number of people that have been or are expected to be indirectly affected by activities e.g. training leading to drafting legislative framework that was adopted by parliament and has potential impact on entire population of about 5 million people)

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| **The group agreed to work towards a twofold objective to both strengthening national level advocacy, coherence and coordination, whilst begin to systematically and increasingly engage at the regional level. People affected equal to the population of the 4 countries involved.** |

**Results obtained – most significant changes to capture**

(Please indicate any significant change that resulted from the activities, e.g. change in the behavior of local authorities regarding the inclusion of civil society stakeholders in decision making, or the participation of vulnerable groups in the implementation of some programs, or a national ombudsperson/human rights institutions that started to include the Right to Food in their reporting, or changes in the access to justice, conflict resolution or administrative processes)

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| **The event showed how working towards the achievement of the right to food has the benefit and advantage to identify gaps in a wide-range of collateral issues to food security and nutrition, as well as other fundamental human rights, such as social protection, land tenure (grabbing), information, monitoring practices, budgets, laws and policies, and coordination. This is because to talk about the right to food means to talk about all aspects related to the ability of people to be free from hunger, whether through economic means of self-procurement or access to food (e.g. local markets).** **For instance, the following are participants’ perspectives on the way forward:****1. An important challenge identified by a number of participants from different countries was related to the weakness of targeting schemes, which were attributed to different causes. A solution proposed was to create open databases, which would enable people to challenge their accuracy. Another obstacle was the lack of information, to which the use of mobile phones and radios were thought of as solutions. Also, the group saw an important role for Non-governmental Organizations to help organize vulnerable people who have little time to do so. Other obstacles identified touched on: the size of allocations, which are currently too little; politically based bias and corruption; discrimination towards certain groups; and the need for stronger monitoring systems.** **2. In line with the question, each group presented its findings on a country basis. For Pakistan, an obstacle identified was related to the limited scope of the BISP, which the country would like to increase considerably over the coming years. It was explained that separate allocations are given to internally displaced populations while the targeting is carried out through a scorecard system and a yearly survey. In Nepal, targeting was identified as the main challenge. Other challenges touched on the lack of information and awareness raising for vulnerable groups as well as the absence of local elections for more than a decade. As for India, the lack of coherence and harmonization between selection criteria from different state governments was stressed as an obstacle to the implementation of good policies and laws. Also, the universalization of programmes without an increase in budget, as well as awareness raising, were some of the other main challenges. In Bangladesh, while there are a great number of social protection schemes, two important challenges were related to the lack of entitlements as well as the lack of focus on the needs of the most vulnerable. Also, the lack of implementation guidelines as well as the prevalence of political influence at the local level were seen as a considerable impediment.** **3. An important challenge was the lack of tenure security. In turn, several related challenges were identified, such as land grabbing by companies or individuals and the lack of recognition of customary tenure rights. In the case of Nepal, a related obstacle was the absence of a centralized database which would allow for verification of the amount of acres that are owned.** |

**What are the key catalysts that influenced the results?**

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| **The powerful role of right to food networks at national level, the commitment of government in the region to move the right to food agenda at national level forward, the capacity of participants to mobilize even more commitment to continue addressing major issues that affect the right to food in the region.** |

**What are the major constraints/challenges for achieving the Right to Food?**

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| **The absence of a regional mind-set in South Asia, as well as the absence of any regional economic, social and cultural mechanism/organization/entity through which the right to food could be actively promoted (see for instance the role of Parliamentary Fronts against Hunger in Latin America, or the ECOWAS in Africa).** |

**What mechanisms have been developed to monitor the Right to Food?**

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| **After intense discussions, participants acknowledged that while some other regional experiences were informative, South Asia does not have similar governmental-led regional processes. As such, an emphasis should be placed on strengthening social movements at the national level and, over time, seeing to an organic mobilization at the regional level, also needed for monitoring purposes. Still, the group stressed that it does not mean that national processes cannot be dealt with at a regional level, with assistance from one another. As for a Community of Practice (CoP) in South Asia (the potential goals set forth by the Dialogue), the group identified two levels at which it could be considerably useful:** **1. to help strengthen work at the national level through such regional cooperation; and 2. to work on regional issues such as cross-border matters and regional commitments already pledged but currently dormant.** **The event allowed to discuss that such a regional collaboration should start with a limited number of countries, then gradually reach out to other South Asian countries and organize events in external countries such as Thailand, with the assistance of FAO, so as to allow for the representation of all countries. As countries have common problems and face similar challenges, there are many opportunities to learn from each other’s experiences, by dealing jointly with cross-border issues and eventually developing a common understanding and agenda at a regional level. Such a regional network should be achieved through an organic process and that the current emphasis should be placed on strengthening national networks. The event also emphasized the need for increased regional awareness and collaboration as a way to strengthen capacities of local networks.** **To conclude, participants and organizers alike stressed the potential for and need of further and deeper cooperation among the different actors in the South Asian region.**  |

**What good practices would you recommend for successful results?**

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| **The Dialogue allowed to highlight a number of good practices in the region at the national level over the past few years, both in terms of establishing frameworks and reducing the number of hungry people. In terms of frameworks, several positive developments took place, including the adoption of the Nepalese Constitution that explicitly guarantees the right to adequate food; the strengthening of the Indian legislative frameworks with laws such as the National Food Security Act and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act; and the consolidation of a number of policies and programmes in Bangladesh and Pakistan, including the National Social Safety Net Policy in the former and the BISF in the latter. While some are very recent, others are currently aiming to improve their respective implementation and increase their outreach. As for the reduction in the number of hungry people, there has been encouraging progress, as exemplified by Bangladesh meeting the first Millennium Development Goal target to halve the proportion of hungry people. Still, a lot more remains to be done to ensure that everyone in the sub-region enjoys his or her right to adequate food. A range of actions could be evaluated to strengthen the implementation, efficiency and outreach of current policy and legislative frameworks pertinent for the right to adequate food, as well as to follow a human rights based approach to develop new and additional measures to progressively realize the right to adequate food for all, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups. As such, further work could be aimed at strengthening the capacity level and the backbone of civil society’s national structures on the right to food, building on recent progress in the sub-region and learning from neighboring countries’ experiences so as to empower right holders to claim their rights and duty bearers to meet their obligations. While sub-regional meetings such as this dialogue and the previous SARFC are great occasions to increase such collaboration, and networking between civil society movements already exists through informal channels, the aim should be to considerably expand the scope and to consolidate this collaboration in a systematic manner. Increasing the awareness, outreach and mobilization of grassroots movements on right to food related issues would enable a greater impact on the elaboration and implementation of legislative and policy processes related to the right to food.** |

**Links to additional information**

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| **Full report of the Dialogue available at this link:** [**http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5602e.pdf**](http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5602e.pdf) **(English only).**  |