

# The State of the Food and Land Policy Situation in 4 West African Countries

(Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Mali)

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## 1. Poverty and Nutrition in the Four West African Countries



In matters of all relevant hunger and poverty indicators, the four selected countries are to be found at the bottom of the world scale. This even holds true for a comparison with other African regions. Only failed African states like Eritrea, Dem. Rep. of Congo, Central African Republic or South Sudan are worse off than our area of investigation.

The devastating state is hard to explain. The recent civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia or the present fighting of insurgent groups for the independence of Northern Mali (Azawaad) explain just a part of the story. Burkina Faso (B.F.) for instance never experienced amilitary conflict. Still the poverty and hunger indicators of B.F. are not better. In addition, as the only one from our group, B.F. was also not affected by the Ebola disease, whichin the last two years made the

economic and social development of the other three countries shake.

Also differences of the climate conditions, agro-ecological zonings or the natural endowments with good arable soil, mineral resources and the transport connections do not enlighten us much on the question of the origin of hunger. The four countries differ a lot, like most of S.L. and Liberia are part of the humid tropics, while B.F. and Mali are mainly part of the semi-arid Sahel region. Another example is their location: The last two countries are land locked, while S.L. and Liberia have an extensive coastal line with several international ports. And still, we are



dealing here with astonishing similar socio-economic conditions of underdevelopment.

With less than 700 USD per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) all four countries belong to the global group of the 48 LDCs (Least Developed Countries); Liberia is even one third more poor than the other three (see Table 1, 2nd column). The Human Development Index (HDI) is an indicator that takes more aspects into account than just the

GDP per capita, like life expectancy, health, education and gender criteria. From all 187 countries thus evaluated in 2013, our four countries of this investigation score at the very end of the line (177 to 181)(see Tab. 1, last column). There is little improvement in their HDI-raking in the last 4 years

**Table 1: How Do the Four Countries Perform Economically**

Countries	GDP (Billion USD) 2014	GDP per Capita (2012 in USD)	Human Development Index (rank of 187 countries)
Sierra Leone	4.8	618	181
Burkina Faso	12.5	673	183
Liberia	2.0	414	177
Mali	12	641	179
	Source: World Bank Databank	Source: World Bank Databank	Source: UNDP, HDI; 187 is the lowest HDI



(<https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2015-global-hunger-index-armed-conflict-and-challenge-hunger>). The following aspects enter the calculation: undernourishment by 1/3, child stunting and child wasting by 1/6 each, and child mortality by 1/3.

Also in matters of their state of nutrition, our four countries belong to the world's bottom. The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger in the world. It is calculated each year fresh by IFPRI and aims to provide insights into the drivers of hunger.

**Table 2: 2015 Global Hunger Index and Score for 4 West African States**

	Global Hunger Index	Score (among 104 Countries)
Sierra Leone	38.9	100.
Burkina Faso	31.8	87.
Liberia	30.8	85.
Mali	29.6	81.

Source: IFPRI, cit.op.

Three of our four countries with their GHIs fall into the category of countries with GHI of 20–34.9, which is categorized by IFPRI as the group of countries being "seriously affected by hunger". S.L. is even more extreme and falls under the category of countries of being affected by an "alarming severity of hunger" (35–50 GHI) (see Table 2, first column). From the 104 countries entering this calculation (the Developed Countries have not been included), three of our four countries are definitely at the lower end of the score, and S.L. is at the very last end (see Table 2, 2nd column).

Looking closer into the situation of hunger, we notice that the absolute percentage of undernourished is still considerable (see Table 3, column 2). All countries had made remarkable progress to reduce the

percentage of their undernourished in the last 15 years by 12 to 70 percent. In this regard Mali is special. Mali started off from a much lower level of undernutrition in 1999–2001 compared to the others (from only 13.9%), and Mali almost got rid of undernourishment in 2014–2016. Liberia's situation is the worse, and it made the least progress.

Nearly a third of the Liberians are still suffering from undernourishment, while it has been reduced to less than a quarter of the population in B.F. and S.L. Our countries do much worse than the rest of West Africa, because on average there are only 10% of the people in this region affected by undernourishment (FAO, 2015, page 1). In absolute numbers, 7.9 million people (from a total population of 35.4 million) suffer from undernourishment in these 4 countries.

**Table 3: Proportion of Undernourished in the Population**

	1999-2001	2014-2016	% Reduction
Sierra Leone	38.0	22.3	41 %
Burkina Faso	26.6	20.7	22 %
Liberia	36.5	31.9	12.6 %
Mali	13.9	4.1	70 %

Since children are particularly vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies, because their undernourishment might damage their physical and mental capacities for the rest of their life, their nutritional wellbeing is very important for the long-term sustainability of a society. On top children's nutrition situation provides insights into the distributional justice within the families and measures the quality of the diet and utilization of food in a society.

One decisive indicator for the children's welfare is the mortality rate. Much progress can be recorded about reducing the mortality of children under the age of five (see Table 4). Here all four countries show high rates of reduction, which is very encouraging. However the absolute numbers

are still worrisome. Since the population has grown at a similar rate as the reduction rate, as many children die early in their lifespan nowadays as in earlier times. The best performing country with regards of child mortality is Liberia, just in contrast to its bad score in its figures on undernutrition, and the figures of Mali and S.L. fall way behind.



**Table 4: Mortality of Children under the Age of Five**

	1999 - 2001	2014-2016	% Reduction
Sierra Leone	23.2 %	16.1 %	30.6 %
Burkina Faso	18.6 %	9.8 %	47.3 %
Liberia	17.5 %	7.1 %	59.4 %
Mali	22.0 %	12.3 %	44.0 %

**Table 5: Prevalence of Stunting in Children under the Age of Five**

	1999-2001	2014-2016	% Reduction
Sierra Leone	38.4 %	37.9 %	1.3 %
Burkina Faso	45.5 %	32.9 %	27.6 %
Liberia	45.3 %	32.7 %	27.8 %
Mali	42.7 %	38.3 %	12.6 %

Source: IFPRI, cit.op



As explained before, stunting and wasting of children only count together for a third of the GHI. Stunting is defined as a lower height of the child for its age, while wasting means that the child has low weight for its height. Wasting reflects acute undernutrition of a child, and stunting reflects chronic undernutrition. In all four countries the extend of stunting is still alarmingly high,



even if some reduction has taken place in the last 15 years (see Table 5, last column). But if 30 to 40 percent of the children are lacking behind in their physical development, the burden for the future of the society will be grave. Surprisingly, this is the same for all four countries. For Mali these figures sound contradictory: While the quota of undernourishment in society is minor in Mali, the children's state is as detrimental as in the other countries. In matters of wasting it is even the worse in Mali, and the quota even increased (see Tab. 6, last column). This indicates a serious neglectance of children in that country.

In matters of wasting, a much lower proportion of the children is affected from wasting than from stunting, which indicates that there is less acute malnutrition among children, but more of a chronic deficiency (see Table 6, second column).

**Table 6: Prevalence of Wasting in Children under the Age of Five**

	1999-2001	2014-2016	% Reduction
Sierra Leone	15.7 %	9.4 %	40 %
Burkina Faso	15.7 %	10.9 %	24.2%
Liberia	7.4 %	5.6 %	24.3 %
Mali	12.6 %	12.7 %	+7.9 %

Source: IFPRI, cit.op.

In matters of reaching the MDG-target (Millennium Development Goals) of 1 c, which is about reducing the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by half, Liberia is off the record, S.L. and B.F. show slow progress, and Mali is about to achieve the target.

*Summary:*  
*However reliable the individual empirical figures quoted here might be, in their totality and compared to the world, where similar statistical errors can be assumed, the four West African countries give reason for grave concerns about their nutritional situation. Especially the children are affected strongly from lack of healthy and*

sufficient food. The region is a global hotspot of poverty and hunger. The bad basic situation was aggravated in L.S. and Liberia by the Ebola disease, which increased the chronic undernourishment by 1/3 (170,000 people). A large-scale, drought-induced famine occurred in Africa's Sahel region in 2010 and 2012, of which Mali and B.F. have not yet fully recuperated. The coup d'état of March 2012 in Mali, coupled with the taking over of Northern Mali by armed groups, has caused displacement of populations into neighboring countries; it burdened Burkina Faso as well with refugees.

Comparing the performance of the four countries (see Tab. 7), it is striking to see that the picture is somewhat confusing. S.L. is the only one of the four countries that is not a best performer with regards of any one of the indicators we looked at. B.F. is the best in matters of one of the seven indicators, while Mali performs best in matters of 3 indicators and Liberia in 4. This is true even in spite of the fact that Liberia has the highest percentage of undernourished, and has by far the lowest per capita GDP. It seems that the country has made up leeway in human matters, like child healthcare, even if it is so absolutely poor.

**Table 7: Scores of the Four Countries in Comparison to Each Other (Score of „1“ performs best)**

country	Hunger Index	HDI	GDP per Capita	Stunting	Wasting	Under-nourishment	Child Mortality
S. Leone	4	3	3	3	2	3	4
Burkina	3	4	1	2	3	2	2
Liberia	2	1	4	1	1	4	1
Mali	1	1	2	4	4	1	3

Source: Own scoring according to the data of the previous tables

## 2. The State of Food Security in the Four West African Countries

The concept of food security goes beyond that of hunger and starvation. It encompasses the four dimensions: **availability, access, utilization and stability** of the food supply. "Availability" of food means that there is sufficient food available in the country to meet the dietary needs of all people of society according to the prevailing food preferences to live an active and healthy life. "Access" refers to the possibility of people to enter the available food stock either through their purchasing power in the market, or their subsistence production, or by any kind of social



distribution (food aid). "Utilization" makes reference to the situation of food handling in the household, whether the preparation, processing, storage and cooking can be done properly, the food is fairly distributed to all household members and whether the health care of the people makes them able to metabolize the food properly. "Stability" means the ability to obtain food over time, in all seasons and in societal crisis times. Since "food security" of a society is a complex concept, it is not possible to measure it empirically, like malnutrition. The term refers much more to a political orientation.

The extent to which the four countries suffer from under- and malnutrition proves that there is a serious lack of food security for a big proportion of the populations. The UN Economic Committee for Africa assesses that the food security situation in the Sahel, involving B.F. and Mali, is very daunting and needs immediate attention from national Governments and donors, because of a serious drop of cereal production (26 % in 2011/2012) (UN 2012, page 4).

While the situation is grave, FAO experts see signs of hope for West Africa. The FAO

attests that the region of West Africa is doing well in improving their food security. (FAO 2015, page 2), because the region reduced the absolute number of undernourished from 44.6 (1990-92) million to 33.7 million (2014-16) people. Credit for this they give to committed political action in the region, like the Malabo Declaration, the national implementation strategies of the CAADP, NEPAD's commitment, ECOWAS Siro Hunger Initiative. In addition FAO praises the recent involvement of West African regional organizations: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). They have invested extensively in building regional institutions and human capacities for agricultural development in the sub-region, particularly with respect to food security monitoring and risk mitigation. The success of Mali to reach the MDG target 1 c they attribute to consequent sectoral strategy with best practice implementation.

**Table 9: African Food Import Bill**





In spite of the fact that 60 to 80 percent of the population in our West African countries live from agriculture, the countries are drifting more and more in recent years into the situation of net food importing countries. The food import bill of Africa is escalating (see Tab. 9), sometimes outpacing the agricultural export revenues. West Africa is no exception to this. 2012 the region had to import as much cereals as 25 percent what they produce (UN 2012, Tab. 4, Annex). At least 50 % of the food imports are cereal and livestock products. This embarrassing import dependence on even basic foodstuff happens in the face of sufficiently available arable land and massive financial problems to pay the escalating food import bills. All our four countries belong to the FAO-category of "Net Food Importers" and all of them had difficulties to pay for their food imports through their agricultural exports in 2007 (FAO 211, Tab. 6 and 7)

### 1. The Conflict over Land

Although Africa contains about 25 % of arable land in the world, and 60 % of uncultivated potentially arable land, Africa is also home of 30 % of the world's hungry population. This reality calls for a rethinking of land tenure issue.



As a result of future's global food insecurity, the threats of price surges and fluctuation on



the world food markets especially for net food importing countries, and as result from mitigation efforts, like carbon farming for the global carbon market, international investors seek land for projects of the upcoming Green Economy. Access to land is vital for adapting to and mitigating climate change. The large tracts of supposedly unused land in Africa are a favorable target for the new land rush.

The issue, of what is often referred to as "landgrabbing", is widely discussed all over Africa in literature, media and academia. Conflicts between the new investors and the local communities have drawn public attention to these phenomena. Also in our



four countries of investigation some substantial cases of large scale land acquisitions have been recorded (see Tab. 8). Also case studies on severe conflicts with the local affected communities are recorded in

<sup>1</sup>Comprehensive African Agricultural development Program of the African Union and NEPAD



S.L. (Addix). Liberia (Sime Darby, Golden Verolem) and Mali (see Anaru 2011, Polaris 2011, Strokes 2015, Buntzel 2013, Namati 2015, Kudika 2010).

The documented figures of Table 8 cannot be taken literally, because they are not from official sources. The academic project Land

Matrix is a private initiative that tries to keep track with all developments in this area. But it is incomplete. Older cases of land concessions are missing, like the 70,000 ha of the rubber estate concession of Firestone in Liberia. Forest concessions have not been counted.

**Table 8: Large Scale Land Acquisition in the Four West African Countries**

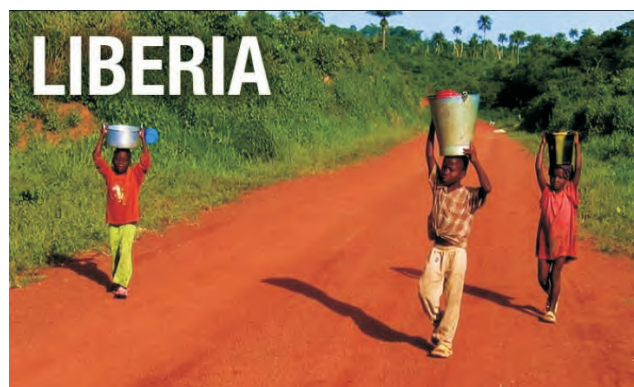
Country	Intended size of land concession (ha)	Total land under cereal production (ha), and landgrab as percentage thereof	Crops cultivated on the concessional land	No. of deals with foreign companies
Sierra Leone	1,474,790	763,781 (200%)	Sugar cane, corn, rice, cassava, oil palm, rubber	22 (100% of recorded cases)
Burkina Faso	402,000	4,210,656 (9.5%)	Peanut, sunflower, jatropha, sorghum	3 (100% of recorded cases)
Liberia	1,390,088	230,000 (600%)	Oil palm, rubber, trees	14 (100% of recorded cases)
Mali	389,286	3,661,338 (10.5%)	Peanut, sunflower, jatropha	9 (100% of recorded cases)

Source: Land Matrix, [www.landmatrix.org](http://www.landmatrix.org)

Most deficient is the failure to record the landgrabbing by domestic elites. Besides local agents operating on behalf of foreign investors, also many local people from the middle and upper class have entered the land rush and invested their savings in acquiring arable land for cash crop production and land speculation.

All four countries have allowed the transfer of considerable tracts of arable land into the hands of foreign companies for the growing of cash crops, mainly in the area of biomass for energy use abroad. The extend of this in comparison to the land cultivated for local cereal production for domestic use (see Tab.

8, third column) differs considerably among the four countries. While Mali and B.F. have only given out concessions of 10 percent of their own cereal area, S.L.'s concession area is the double and Liberia's is even the six fold of its acreage under cereals.



The sheer size of the concessions is not necessarily a major cause for malnutrition in the countries, even if the affected communities in the vicinity of the estates will have to suffer, losing their direct access to assets of livelihood, like crop land, forest resources, river banks and hunting grounds. The loss of a small plot of land may entail the destruction of their entire livelihood system for the affected local people.



The case here is whether the affected communities have been treated fairly, like by Free, Prior Informed Consent (FPIC)<sup>3</sup>, by proper compensation and by new employment opportunities. The phenomena of land grab points towards the legal justice issue of land tenure rights. It also uncovers the direction of the national agricultural policy, how much the production of food for domestic consumption and by local families is prioritized to progressively improve the national food security. Insofar a violation of FPIC reflects a disconnection between government and the local people. International guidance alone by Voluntary Guidelines of the FAO and World bank cannot reverse structural imbalances in hard law and political power.

Land concessions appear in different character, but most of them go along with neglect of customary land rights, the

marginalization of the local people and intimidation routinely take place. Very seldom the companies or the governments as intermediary enter into an open and transparent consultation with the affected communities. There are also other risks involved apart from the loss of land: losing access to water resources, loss of biodiversity, social strife, environmental degradation, reduced ecosystem services, loss of food production capacities of the region, violation of human rights (and right to food).

Contention surrounds the confidential character of these transactions. Especially with regards to certain obscure terms of such deals stand out. This is the case because the land appropriation by foreigners also converges and intersects with transnational deals. Governments usually treat the foreign land investors more favorable than other investors; they normally receive privileges regarding local content requirements, fiscal revenues, and local employment obligations. The deals do not take place on land markets, but as acts of public authority. Land prices are usually undervalued. Effective monitoring to follow-up on the diligence of the contract conditions is missing. The governments have liberalized their economy and revised investment



<sup>3</sup>The ration of food imports to agricultural export of the four countries in 2007 was: 5.13 for S.L., 0.70 for B.F., 1.24 for Liberia and 0.86 for Mali. More than 1 means higher ag. Exports revenues than food import bills.



policies to attract foreign investors. The contracts sometimes go beyond the requirements of international law and limit the policy space available to governments even further. The contracts normally include certain intangibility clauses like: no modification possible; any subsequent legislation in conflict with the contract does not apply; protection of the investor takes precedence over new legislation; if there is an inconsistency, any alteration leads to renegotiation of the contract to restore the original economic balance.

With large scale land acquisitions large scale technology and corporate driven agriculture move in. If no processing and value chain goes along with the investment, the agricultural employment created is mostly meagre. The production methods of the plantation and of the surrounding smallholder farmer tend to be disconnected, which leads to the absence of spill-over effects from the estate to the peasants. The plantation economy sets agricultural

development on a wrong track. As modern enclaves amidst a peasant economy and society, the forward and backward linkages are limited. It is the total lack of local control that worries most.

The shift penalizes indigenous small-scale growers and herders. The social and political embeddedness that characterizes land relations in the local context, and the role of land a basis for social identity and spiritual values, are completely lost in these narratives.

The key-question arises: Why do countries like our four West African cases export land assets, while most of their population struggles with food shortage? Commonly used notions of "idle land", "modernity" and "backwardness" legitimize competing forms of resource use. The fascination with large scale agriculture provides a developmental legitimacy to the deals and hides power relations and vested interests that mix the pursuit of private and public goods (Cotula 2013, page 183).



Governments apparently get attracted by foreign land investments because of the promises the investors make: increased investments in agriculture and rural areas,





diversification of the rural economy, introduction of new processing facilities, access to untapped foreign markets, technology transfer and construction of rural infrastructure. Looking closely at the empirical case studies, evidence shows that few or none of the promises made by the investors are fulfilled. Yet land and water rights, food security and the livelihood of local people remain at stake (see also Nhamo/Chekwoti 2012, page 12).

The failure of the land deals make one point clear: Investing in farmers instead in farm land is the best strategy to increase food production. If land concessions take place, there is a need to place people at the center of the investment process. The protection and incentives provided to the investors need to be balanced by robust safeguards for local rights and mechanism to ensure that investment flows contribute to inclusive sustainable development in recipient countries and in the local environment.

Further guidance and indications in relation to the dangers of land grabbing were expressed in the Pope's Encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, in which he denounces an exploitative approach towards land while recalling: "For them (indigenous communities), land is not a

commodity, but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for its best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for [industrial] agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture." (Article 146). In support of *Laudato Si* and ahead of the climate conference COP 21 in Paris, the bishops' conferences across the world signed on the 22nd of October an appeal which called for COP 21 "to ensure people's access to water and to land for climate resilient and sustainable food systems, which give priority to people driven solutions rather than profits."

#### 4. Right to Food

The seriousness of hunger and malnutrition suggests to resort to international law. It might be a good leverage to pressurize the West African governments to take more pronounced action against the food insecurity of their people. Instead to just plea to moral benevolence, the recourse to law could be much more forceful. The most obvious reference that can be made is to call upon the "Right to Food".





**The Right to Food (RtF)** is part of the broader "Right to an Adequate Standard of Living" under Article 25 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, and Article 11 of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** from 1966. This Article 11 recognizes that adequate food is part of the right to an adequate standard of living. The second part expresses "the fundamental right of everyone to be free of hunger". The African Commission on Human and People's Rights understands the African Charter in the light of its provision on the Right to Life (Art. 4), to Health (Art. 16), and to Development (Art. 22) to encompass the Right to Food. The African Charter on Human Rights recognized the Right to Food Security under Art. 15 as part of Rights of Women in Africa.



The content of the RtF was clarified by the **Comment No. 12** of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1999. The normative character of it has been constituted by authoritative interpretations. It is understood as the right to feed oneself in dignity through economic and other activities. States must take steps to the maximum of their available resources with a view to achieving progressively realization by all appropriate means. It prioritizes the right



to food over other policy goals. Governments must take four steps: **respect, protect, facilitate and provide**. The obligation "to respect" requires States to refrain from taking measures that negatively affect the access to food. "To protect" is to ensure that third parties do not deprive people of their access to food. "To facilitate" means to support the efforts of people, and "to provide" means, to help if reasons are beyond the control of the

<sup>4</sup>FAO (2005), Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, Rome



affected people. The **Voluntary Guidelines of the FAO on the RtF<sup>4</sup>** reemphasize the Comment.



There is a strong link between protecting property rights and the right to food. The RtF is based on access to food, either by direct food production or by income-generating activities. Thus the protection of property rights is not at the core of the RtF, but a means to an end. If natural resource rights are taken away, but the affected people can earn new income that enables them to purchase food, the RtF is maintained. But taking away property rights, it must be compensated by durable improvements in access to other

capital assets such as income from employment. Even if not directly part of the legal text, to adopt compensatory measures, it arguably flows from the very logic of the RtF (Cotula 2012, page 51). But the International Covenant allows limitations, if they are determined by law and for the purpose of promoting the general welfare in a democratic society.

The key issue of the RtF is the conflict over land. Does the RtF offer sufficient comfort for local people's attempt to seek legal protection for their land rights? We have to admit that that is not the case. It is a recurring issue that the land local people have been using for generations and they see it as theirs, may be legally owned or controlled by the state. The local rights usually entail compensation for loss of improvements, but not for loss of land. And even if compensation is paid, it may be too low to restore livelihoods. The rights of non-agricultural use of land, like grazing, hunting, tapping building material, bee-keeping, is even more difficult to defend. Legal requirements that local rights be taken on a compensatory basis only if there is a public purpose, may be weakened by legislation that deems certain forms of resource use including large investments projects- as automatically fulfilling those requirements. In some cases there are







requirements for investors to consult local people before obtaining land from the government, such as in force in Liberia. But they may not redress the legal vulnerability of the local people, if these requirements are poorly implemented through opaque deals with local elites.

If local people resort to international human rights bodies to defend their rights, there is little chance that the case will be taken up (Cotula 2012, page 134). There is the exhaustion-of-domestic-remedy requirement. First they have to exploit fully all legal possibilities under domestic legislation. The legal value of a favorable international ruling would be weak in law, because the external rulings have a non-binding character and will be hard to enforce against the will of a national government. The compensation requirement that is arguably implicit in the RtF, this interpretation has not yet been tested before international human rights institutions. The very weak legal protection of local people's rights weakens their negotiating power if entering into negotiations with potential investors. Notwithstanding the enormous differences in access to information, resources and relations.

However it needs to be said that Africa is endowed with a regional human rights

system that recognizes the right to property, the right to food and other human rights to relevant for the protection of local people's livelihoods. But it is clear also that the outcome would be different if the investors would not be protected by international and bilateral investment agreements and if not consented to international arbitrations. The real strength of the people stays with local groups mobilized through political action. But also in these cases the investors may rely on the more effective legal protection provided by investment treaties, codes, contracts and arbitration to shelter the project from adverse changes. The balance of legal claims is unfavorable to local communities.



### 5) What can the Churches do?

The issues of malnutrition, food insecurity, Right to Food and land conflicts are at the center of our Christian Mission for the integrity of life. Churches are being tested in their sincerity of their faith whether they are getting involved to help to eliminate the biggest injustice of our region. Churches are equipped through their empathy to listen carefully to the voices of the weak and

oppressed and through their capacities to intervene.



They are called upon to opt for a policy that strengthens the food security of the society and the Right to Food of the people negatively affected by domestic and international action. Availability of food, access to food, utilization of the food and stability of the food supply is not a technocratic matter, but only achieved by love for the people and through the people. Through the strength of their faith Churches cannot be misled by simple technical or economic answers. The feeding of all is a matter of justice within a world that has all the means and capacities to satisfy the basic needs of everyone.

But intervention also needs competence. In matters of land issues, the analysis needs to relate legal claims to negotiating power in a globalized world. Here we are dealing with cross-border economic relations. Those draw

on multiple jurisdictions, including the law of the host country, transnational codes and contracts. The discussion of law and power must explore the complex interplay between different norms originating from various bodies that support competing interests, backed by unequal degrees of negotiating power. The affected communities are unable to handle such intransparent matter by themselves. They need the help from likeminded actors. The Churches would have the legal standing to bring disputes to the local and international arena and to acquire the necessary political and legal cloud.

But the local people are not passive victims of decisions by governments and transnational corporations. They deploy a range of resistance strategies with countervailing power, like reputational risk, local contestation, obstruction or even sabotage. That might increase the costs for the investors and might lead to his withdrawal. Churches can mediate relations and can affect the negotiating power in those relations. They should avoid the mistake Martin Luther did at his time, when the peasants of Germany revolted and based their demands on the bible, he became threatened of his reformation and preferred to succeed by taking the side of the authorities instead of the people.



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