



**SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY  
FOR ALL BY 2020**  
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**SUMMARY NOTE**

**Panel Discussion:** 800 Million Still Hungry: Why Have We Made So Little Progress?  
**Panelist:** Volker Hausmann, Secretary General, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe  
**Title:** Perspectives from the Viewpoint of Nongovernmental Development Organizations (NGDOs)

- (1) In the last decade of the last century, the existence, work, and role of NGDOs has clearly emerged into the public's awareness. Exemplary of this was their appearance at the important world conferences, beginning with the Rio Summit and following through to the World Food Summit in Rome. However, when the number of the hungry still has not decreased, this must be a cause for everyone who believes in the power of NGDOs to give serious thought to their possibilities and their wasted chances. Alongside this thought stand the commitments made by various countries during international conferences; untouched as well is the role of NGDOs to demand the fulfillment of these commitments.
- (2) In order to achieve the target of the World Food Summit, which is to half the number of the hungry by the year 2015, according to the FAO, 20 million people must yearly and permanently escape hunger; in reality, only 8 million people succeed in this. The extent of this gap makes it clear that this increase cannot be expected, even from the totality of all operating NGDOs. Additionally, taking into consideration that, in most developing countries, democracy is not the self-evident, practiced form of government and that, in most of these countries, effective local and regional self-governing bodies do not exist, it also becomes clear that the lobby and advocacy work of NGDOs, especially in developing countries, does have limits. In general, far too much has been expected from NGDOs in the North and the South.
- (3) Nevertheless, the specific advantage of NGDOs is now clear and recognized worldwide: their direct cooperation with the hungry and poor, a cooperation which takes sides with their interests. Although NGDOs cannot solve the problem of hunger alone, they know where the answers to our question must be: directly with and from the perspective of the concerned people. Only this viewpoint ensures an effective answer and especially makes the abstract concept of a "civil society" concrete. This viewpoint is, by the way, the only one which corresponds to a human rights approach.
- (4) From this approach, it is useful to describe what NGDOs can achieve with the target groups and where they come up against limits to further development which they are unable to overcome. In this, I can name a few examples and take these from the work of my organization.

| What NGOs can do on local and regional basis (non-exhaustive)                            | What NGOs are not able to do on national basis (exhaustive)                             |
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| ! To increase and disseminate agricultural production                                    | ! To open market access through road and transport systems                              |
| ! To establish water supplies through wells or simple gravity systems                    | ! To operate technically-demanding water supply systems                                 |
| ! To build, establish, and expand social infrastructures (schools, basic health centers) | ! To train and pay teachers, doctors and nurses   |
| ! To begin the processing of agricultural raw products                                   | ! To open markets and introduce brands  |
| ! To establish and promote savings and credit groups                                     | ! To achieve extensive access to the established bank system                            |
| ! To set up or promote small businesses  | ! To create larger business communities to support the founding of business enterprises |
| ! To initiate land reform  | ! To build up and sustain comprehensive extension services                              |

These examples could be expanded. But they are sufficient to show that the limitations of the possibilities of NGOs are always reached when the specific services of other systems are necessary in order to drive forward further development. This could be government services, research or services from the private sector. Here is where the field of lobby work for NGOs begins.

- (5) For as diverse as the lobby work of NGOs is, it can be easily established that the main addressee of their work is the same, the government or the community of nations and their institutions. Because every development is dependent upon national and international framework conditions, the concentration of lobby work must be also maintained. Most recently, the campaign for debt reduction has especially had great success. In regard to our theme, this involves assuring that released financial resources are employed, as well and specifically for the targeted fight against hunger. It makes little sense to use funds released through debt relief to build hospitals in rural areas where only the effects of malnutrition are being cured without hunger itself being fought. In this, it is surely also necessary to stop the decline in development aid from donor countries and turn around development. For the fight against hunger, this will only bear fruit when it is achieved at the same time that these funds are focused in particular on rural development: in view of the widely-spread policy concentration on urban areas, a difficult task, especially for NGOs in the South.
- (6) Lobby and advocacy work by NGOs in regard to economics or science is much less pronounced as that in relation to the state. This is, before all else, often shaped by the criticism of particular developments, as the most recent debate over the meaning of biotechnology for the fight against hunger makes clear. This criticism is correct and important, especially in regard to the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor. But it would be fatal only to stay with criticism and not to look after possibilities of cooperation.
- (7) Our starting point is that the number of the hungry has not declined. In light of this fact, NGOs also cannot avoid self-critical examination of their relations, especially in regard to economics. One might conclude that the massive criticism of globalization alone will not motivate economic enterprises to make their own contributions towards the eradication of hunger. When the private sector can make an effective contribution towards the fight against

hunger, then NGDOs must seek to use this chance — albeit, a surely uncomfortable one — for cooperation with the private sector. In the end, this is dictated by their proper approach: they know the people who suffer hunger and they know that these people have a much shorter lifespan to wait for progress than the well-fed citizens of the North. Because of this, every chance for more support must be seized. In the course of this, however, the experience of NGOs which are engaged in environmental protection shows that the capacity to continue to criticize the economic sector must not be lost.

- (8) NGDOs can do more in the areas of their capacities when they receive more money. And more investments are necessary in order to ensure, first of all, self-sufficiency for as many of the hungry as possible. But self-sufficiency is only sustainably assurable through further development in which NGDOs must cross over their borders. For this, the development of rural infrastructure and basic social services in the rural areas are sometimes necessary. Here, government and international donor organizations are sought. The significant increase in the economic capacities of the population threatened by hunger is just as important. Further development means, before all else, to bring economic processes into action, an art from which business enterprises obviously understand more than most NGDOs. They have developed their work on a humanitarian basis and a nonprofit way of thinking. So, NGDOs must ask business enterprises if they also will and want to make available their know-how for innovations which are not immediately profitable. In addition, this will be in the context of NGDO work, namely adapted to the participation and capacities of the hungry. And they must also develop ways to ask some areas of the private sector if they are prepared to make available their products — for example, seeds — at prices which are payable by the hungry, consequently calculating prices specific to the clients and not only cost-oriented. Managers often claim that the business sector takes responsibility for the welfare of people. It is necessary to provide practical evidence of this verbal commitment.
- (9) The same basically applies also to the relationship of NGDOs to science. It seems to be necessary to ask researchers to become involved with the improvement of primary foodstuffs which are already cultivated. It is here, because of the already-present knowledge and capacities of the target groups, where probably the fastest route to increasing food production lies.
- (10) In the area of NGDO work, there are some individual examples of interactions with economic enterprises and research institutions. What is missing is the search for possibilities to bring coalitions together on a wider basis which can achieve a greater and more widespread impact. Without such widespread impact, there will be no acceleration in the fight against hunger, which is imperative in order to achieve the target of the World Food Summit and Vision 2020 in the prescribed time. A great chance of this conference lies in showing ways for such coalitions.

*Note: The views expressed in this summary note are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.*