

VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

**RIGHTS OF
PEASANTS**

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Summary

| | |
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| Editorial | 3 |
| Rights of Peasants | 5 |
| FIMARC News | 12 |

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It highlights the rural world's life and activities of
the member movements belonging or not to the Federation

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Dear Readers of VMR

Greetings from International Secretariat!

This edition of VMR will bring you the updates of the UN Process on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. In 2010, FAO estimated the number of people involved in agriculture at 1.394 billion, 1.357 billion of whom were in the developing world. It is noted that since 1950, the proportion of people dedicated to farming had steadily gone down, as the percentage of people involved in other economic activities had grown. This is indeed due to the discrimination, denial of rights and lack of support faced by the peasants and rural people all over the world

An open-ended intergovernmental working group established with Ambassador Navarro Llanos, as Chairperson-Rapporteur in 2012 by the UN Human Rights Council to negotiate a UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. FIMARC has been actively involved in the UN process in relation to the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas from the very beginning. The Intergovernmental working group mandated to negotiate and finalize a draft United Nations declaration held its first session in Geneva from 15-19 July 2013. Our human rights working group members Gabriel Falchun(Coordinator), Gérard Boinon, Marcelle Favre , Elisabeth Pariat and George Dixon Fernandez (Secretary General) participated in this first working group meeting to bring the voice of the rural people and farmers and made very strong written and oral interventions. The UN Human Rights Council resolution 26/26 in 2014 gave the mandate to this intergovernmental working group to negotiate, finalize, and submit to the Council a draft UN declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. The mandate calls for existing human rights to be clarified and consolidated with a view to promoting and protecting the human rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas

The second session of the open-ended working group was held from 2-6 February 2015. Wolfgang Scharl, the president of FIMARC participated in this session along with the Human rights working group members of FIMARC



The draft declaration seeks to protect peasants who work the land themselves and rely above all on family labour in agriculture, cattle-raising, pastoralism, and handicrafts-related to agriculture. Industrialised nations critical of the draft document wanted to remove some fundamental elements from the text, such as references to land grabbing and intellectual property rights over agricultural technologies and inputs, especially seeds. Besides the human rights and fundamental freedoms of peasants, the document recognises their right to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, as well as their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. The declaration also upholds their right to land and territory and to benefit from land reform, as well as their right to determine the varieties of seeds they want to plant and to reject varieties of plants, which they consider to be dangerous economically, ecologically and culturally – aspects that collide with the interests of transnational agribusiness corporations. There is also a few gaps in the draft declaration, such as the lack of references to social security for peasants and to their protection in conflict zones

FIMARC is happy to see the ongoing process and the constructive contributions from many states and civil society organizations and we believe that the Declaration should extend universal rights to peasants and other people working in rural areas thus filling existing normative gaps in protection. As a movement representing peasants and other people working in rural areas, we stand ready to play our part and take up our responsibilities for the successful completion of this process. Many European governments are not in favor of this process and thus there is a need of collective lobby and advocacy work to be carried out. FIMARC is jointly working with Via Campesina, FIAN and CETIM in this regard

Enjoy your reading

George Dixon Fernandez
Secretary General



RIGHTS OF PEASANTS



We talk about more and more about it and on September 27, 2012, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) adopted a Resolution on the “Promotion of the human rights of peasants and other people living in rural areas. In this resolution the Council decides to create «an intergovernmental open ended group in charge of presenting a project of Declaration of the United Nations on the rights of peasants and other people living in rural areas»

But why a Declaration on the rights of the peasants?

The question is legitimate... Why a Declaration on the rights of peasants and why not a statement on the right of hunters or the right of employees or athletes?

According to the report of the International Fund for agricultural development (IFAD) rural on poverty from 2011, nearly a billion people suffer from hunger worldwide, 800 million of them living in rural areas. These people are farmers, agricultural workers, landless, fishermen, and shepherds. Among the 800 million living in rural areas, 70% are women and girls.

It is a paradox that we have often raised in the previous dossiers of VMR: how is it possible that people, who are producing food, are threatened by hunger? This paradox, or let us say this scandal has been denounced by many rural and peasant organizations in front of international institutions. To address this concern, the United Nations Human Rights Council commissioned the Advisory Committee to conduct a study on this subject, to reach in a near future at a Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people living in rural areas.

Five main causes of the impoverishment of the farmers and people living in rural areas

The report sponsored by the United Nations Human Rights Council highlights 5 main causes that led to this situation of insecurity for a large part of the rural population:

- the expropriations and forced evictions from ancestral lands
- gender-based discrimination
- the lack of agrarian reform and rural development strategies
- the lack of minimum wages and social standards
- the criminalization of struggles and activists.

In addition, we should add to all this the devastating effects of globalization: unfair competition from the major producers that break the market and prevent small farmers to be competitive; competition from products coming from countries subsidizing their producers (dumping), the lack of



infrastructure for the delivery of the products on the market and for the storage, the difficulty of processing of the products; defects of credits, the lack of access to education or appropriate technology and all this in a context where we see more and more the effects of climate change.

Human rights exist...

Peasants, fishermen, shepherds... are human beings among the mass of all humans and thereby benefit from the protection of their rights in the same way as all others. But, despite the existence of several international instruments for the protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the persons, the number of people affected by hunger in rural areas has steadily increased.



Studies on human rights violations against rural populations demonstrate that existing human rights instruments are not enough to protect them and that some specific aspects of the condition of farmers or peasants are not sufficiently taken into account. Thus, the conclusions of the study of the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council recommend the development of a specific international instrument aimed at strengthening explicitly the rights of people living and working in rural areas.

Actual situation

Taking into account this unjust situation denounced by organizations of the civil society that the ECOSOC has heard the urgent need to remedy

this. Beginning of 2011, the Via Campesina sought support of the CETIM to assist in the drafting of a proposal to present to the United Nations. Ensued a long work of awareness, especially among the States, and following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, the Human Rights Council adopted on 27 September 2012, a Resolution inviting the States, civil society organizations and other representatives to form a group to work for a draft Declaration on “rights of peasants and other people who work in rural areas”. This group, joined by the FIMARC was created at the initiative of Bolivia in 2013. Our human rights working group follows this work very closely and is actively involved in this project.

The content of the draft Declaration text

Article 1: Definition of peasant, including the landless who work in rural areas or as agricultural workers, shepherds, nomads, etc.

Article 2: Farmers have the same rights, they cannot be the subject of discrimination, must be able to participate in political decisions concerning their land, have the right to food sovereignty.

Article 3: Right to life and to a satisfactory standard of living





Article 4: Right to land and territory

Article 5: Right to seed and the traditional agricultural knowledge

Article 6: Right to the means of agricultural production

Article 7: Right to information

Article 8: Freedom to determine prices and market for agricultural production

Article 9: Right to the protection of agricultural values

Article 10: Right to biological diversity

Article 11: Right to preservation of the environment

Article 12: Freedom of association, of opinion and of expression

Article 13: Right of access to justice

A major step forward but which does not go uncontested

This draft declaration and what it contains in terms of rights, is a major step forward for the rights of farmers and other persons living in rural areas because it intends to set up a series of mechanisms that are conditions to the realization of the right to food of the populations. The most important include the right to land, the right to seeds, the right to the means of production such as water, tools, credits...

But from the outset, this victory has been tarnished by an opposition of the United States and the representatives of the European Union, in-

cluding Belgium at the moment of voting at the Human Rights Council. They voted against the resolution creating the intergovernmental working group. They cite the fact that the existing human rights conventions and the voluntary guidelines on the right to food and the land governance are sufficient and that an additional legal instrument is not necessary.

To this, the proponents of the Declaration for the rights of peasants say that the case law must evolve taking into account new developments and the current situation. In the Declaration, for example, new rights are asserted, that do not appear in any other text of the United Nations, such as the right to land, seed and the means of production. It confirms also several rights essential for the peasants, mentioned in other texts as for example the text of the rights of indigenous peoples.

We understand that for some countries, a statement along the lines of the protection of the rights of peasants, especially in these matters of rights to land or seed, are really not welcomed.

And now...

At the beginning of the month of February 2015, the UN Human Rights Council Working Group met for the second time in Geneva to discuss this text. For the moment, the States of the European Union (EU), including Belgium, showed their opposition to the draft declaration. Not surprisingly, the United States opposed fiercely, as well as some of its closest allies like Great Britain and South Korea. As the countries of Western Europe, as France and Germany, they went from refusal to forbearance during the last vote in 2014, indicating some progress. They know, however, that



they will accept no new rights for farmers, such as the right to seed or the right to land. However, their agreement is not necessary for the adoption of the Declaration by the United Nations, since developing countries which support the text have a clear majority. But the political weight of the document would be lessened.

Of course, the Declaration is not an end in itself. But it would be a tool that would translate its principles into national legislation, to improve public policies and enforce them on the ground.



*Ms. Angelica C. Navarro Llanos,
Ambassador of Bolivia to the
United Nations and President of
the Inter Governmental Working
Group of Peasant Rights*

The fight is still long...

At the last world meeting of the FIMARC, in Wurzburg in March 2014, we had the opportunity to welcome her Excellency, Ms. Angelica C. Navarro Llanos, Ambassador of Bolivia to the United Nations and President of the Working Group in charge of drafting the Declaration. She encouraged us to follow the debates on this subject in each country and to press each nation, each country to vote this statement.

The FIMARC, member of the Working Group will keep you abreast of the progress of the work and will provide you with all the necessary information to continue this work of lobby our Governments. Alternatively, you can read the full text of the draft Declaration on the CETIM website www.cetim.ch

FIMARC NEWS

FIMARC AT CIDSE DIRECTORS MID YEAR CONFERENCE 2014



29th Session of the CIDSE MID-YEAR MEETING was held at Worth Abbey, Crawley in United Kingdom on 6-7 July 2014. A Special Session on : How can Catholic NGOs be more effective and distinct actors on the global stage? had been organized during this conference. George Fernandez, the Secretary General of FIMARC was one among the few special invitee for the conference and the speaker of the topic on “How to create change at the international stage – building on promising examples and new advocacy approaches – towards sustainable use of natural resources within planetary boundaries. Markus Heinze

(Franciscans International) and Simone Filippini (Cordaid) were the other two speakers of this topic. Bernd Nilles (CIDSE Secretary General) ,Denis Auclair(Senior Policy Advisor) Heinz Hödl (KOO Austria and President of CIDSE),Bernard Pinaud (CCFD-Terre Solidaire and Vice-President of CIDSE ,Simone Filippini (CORDAID),Angelo Simonassi(Enraid et Fraternite) etc lead the various sessions .For FIMARC ,it was in important space to raise the concerns and importance of the Catholic social action movement being a strategic partner of CIDSE and partner of various CIDSE members

FIMARC AT CIDSE PARADIGM SHIFT SEMINAR ON “TO ACT FOR TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD”

The main aim of the CIDSE workshop, “Acting for transformation towards a just & sustainable world,” was to develop strategies towards pathways for change. The seminar was held on 9-10 September in Brussels, which gathered 70 participants from across CIDSE membership, allies and partners from all continents. The workshop created a space to learn from experiences, voice challenging questions, and inspire strategies in order to realise human rights and a life in dignity for all. Over the past six years, CIDSE has been working to challenge assumptions on growth, development and consumption. The first workshop held in May 2013 was an important milestone, to put forward a common vision on “what” key changes are needed for a just and sustainable world. The focus of the second workshop CIDSE organized in September 2014 was on “how” we can act to bring this about. George Dixon Fernandez, the secretary General of FIMARC was invited as a panelist of these two workshops.

CELEBRATION AND EVALUATION OF THE WORLD FOOD DAY - MARC-CAMEROON



During one week of intense activities, the MARC Cameroon celebrated the World Food Day of October 16, 2014 in Ayos, a small town in the South of the country where the farmers are the main economic force. Its particularity is to be located at the crossroads of major highways leading to Chad and Central African Republic, close to the theatre of the ongoing conflict in Central Africa, and also the operative site of the notorious sect BOKO HARAM. And in both cases, the main victims are rural populations, undergoing many abuses and causing the displacement of people fleeing hunger and insecurity. If these conflicts do not quickly reach a happy ending, this situation would constitute a great threat to food sovereignty and the ecological balance of the entire sub region.

The choice of this locality was therefore done deliberately to raise the alarm to challenge the State, the local elected representatives, the development partners, young people, women and rural populations on the challenges of health, security, culture, economy, tourism as well as the challenge of food and the important role played by family Agriculture in this purpose.

NEWS FROM DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (DESECE) –KENYA

DESECE work with an integrated approach. and try to bring solutions for supporting the marginalized, stigmatized and vulnerable people in the community like widows, women, youth, people living with HIV/Aids , internally displaced people and small scale farmers.



Main Activities

The main activities of the organization are:

1. Peace building workshops, peace tournaments, peace road shows, trainings on conflict and conflict resolution, formation of theatre groups, reconciliation activities for disputes in the society
2. Human Rights trainings for the community members, daily Human Rights days with mediation, counseling and referral of violation cases to the relevant authorities, children rights trainings and formation of children rights clubs in schools, training on the constitution, devolved governance, social audit and accountability, lobbying and advocacy on identified issues affecting the community
3. Leadership workshops for Training of Trainers (TOT's) with DELTA (Development Education and Leadership Teams in Action) and WINDOW (Women in National Development of Women) workshops and mentoring of the trainees
4. Gender TOT workshops and

one-day workshops for community members

5. HIV/Aids trainings and work with HIV support groups, behavior change trainings
6. Organic agriculture and marketing trainings for farmer groups and smallholder associations in the villages and TOT's, agricultural events like exhibitions, field days, exchange programs and farmer competitions, use of demo plots in the communities



7. Ecological activities like reforestation campaigns in institutions such as schools, irrigation and tree nursery projects on demo plots, climate change activities and riverbank protection projects

LATIN AMERICA CONTINENTAL ACTION PLAN

- Identification of individuals and catholic grassroots organizations

- Strengthening of associated and adherents movements as well as movements in process
- Autonomy of the rural communities
- Organization and impact on policies in favour of rural areas

ANALYSIS: HOW TO STRUCTURE THE WORK IN LATIN AMERICA

- Sacrifice
- Committed effort
- Delivery to people and the people of God
- Daily and collective struggle
- Philosophy
- Spirituality
- Contribution
- Missing new generation in Spain



*Manuel Moran and Modesta Arevalos
(FIMARC Latin American Coordinators)
with George Dixon Fernandez
(Secretary General of FIMARC)*



*FIMARC global consultation on Peasant Rights,
Volkersberg - Germany 2014*

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