

While Kenya has the right to food enshrined in its Constitution, translating this right through laws, policies and programmes has still to take place. Participants from Kenya were invited to a workshop to learn from the Indian efforts around social protection and food security.

‘Every person has a right to be free from hunger, and have adequate food of acceptable quality’

- Article 43 (1) (c), Constitution of Kenya, 2010



Nov 5, 6 2015 witnessed the coming together of 25 participants across Kenya for a workshop on ‘Feeding Kenya: Establishing Viable Safety Nets to tackle vulnerabilities and harness opportunities’ as part of the project ‘Global Dialogues on Food and Nutrition Security:

Sharing Experiences from India and Brazil to Develop National Frameworks.’ An ambitious project, Global Dialogues is led by the Centre for Equity Studies (CES), New Delhi with DFID support under the Knowledge Partnership Programme (KPP). The workshop was hosted by Society for International Development (SID), an organisation focused on addressing issues of exclusion.

The purpose of the workshop was to understand the food and nutrition security challenges in Kenya and to identify opportunities for cross learning, based on the sharing of Indian experiences in legal frameworks, policy formulation and programmes.

“Our collective conscience has been pricked by the lack of food and nutrition security for the poor in Kenya. We must work together to bring about change.” By stating this, Ali Hersi, Associate Director, SID, Kenya echoed the sentiments and the commitment of all the participants of this workshop.

Participants represented the interests of children, women, pastoralists, youth, the urban poor production, donors, academic institutions and the government.

Lisa Phillips, head of DFID, Kenya suggested that the participants learn as much as possible from this opportunity. “Malnutrition in Kenya is unacceptably high and there is an urgent need for raising this issue in the public domain to facilitate action,” she said.

Indira Khurana, Policy Lead, KPP, IPE Global shared information on KPP and the purpose of the dialogues. She stressed on the opportunity this platform provided for cross learning to influence policy, programmes and practice to address the global challenge of hunger and malnutrition.

Ali Hersi shared a brief background of the prevailing scenario around safety nets and food and nutrition security in Kenya. While Kenya has the right to food enshrined in the Constitution and a Food Security Bill, 2014, there are no supporting policies or programmes that provide state provisioning for different vulnerable groups. Says Hersi, “The mandate to protect Kenyans from hunger exists at a Constitutional level, and in the form of a Food Security Bill, 2014. However, there is a need to translate this into legislation that can underpin agricultural, market and social protection policies. While monitoring systems exist for prices, incomes and nutrition levels, in the absence of standards and specific legislation, these systems churn out information that is of limited use in identifying failure and attributing responsibility for it. Sanctions for failure are also absent.”

Harsh Mander of CES shared experiences of the journey of the Right to Food and the ten critical debates that arose while the Act was drafted in India. Hunger and malnutrition was given a human face through film clips from Kenya and India. Information shared on various programmes being implemented in India included the public distribution system, mid day meal scheme for

school children, maternity benefits and benefits for lactating mothers and the role of judicial activism.

Participants were asked to develop a baseline on existing laws, policies and programmes and areas of further learning. They shared their anguish over the lack of accountability in governance and the issues of natural calamities like drought and floods. While appreciating the learning opportunity, they stressed on the need to keep the dialogue and knowledge sharing going.

Areas for further learning and support included advocacy around developing policies around a public distribution system that enabled the provision of Unga, the traditional staple maize food at low prices. Other areas for further learning included (a) Policy around development of a hot and culturally meal programme for children (b) maternity benefits and (c) Judicial activism to facilitate translation of the Constitutional right to food.

The Global Dialogues project is supported by DFID under the KPP in partnership with IPE Global. KPP is a South-South cooperation programme promoting knowledge sharing in the areas of Food Security, Resource Scarcity and Climate Change; Health and Disease Control; Trade and Investment; and Women and Girls. KPP is funded by the Government of UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and managed by a consortium led by IPE Global Private Limited under its Knowledge Initiative. The main objective of KPP is 'Gathering and uptake of evidence on issues central to India's national development that have potential for replication in LICs and impact on global poverty.'

