



THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN AFRICA PROGRAM

“From Policy to Plate”

BACKGROUND

The right to adequate food is a fundamental human right. Twenty years after the adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food, more food is being produced worldwide than ever before.¹ At the same time, with only five years to go until the SDG 2 target date, 295 million people are suffering from acute hunger² and almost three billion cannot afford a balanced diet. Although many countries have incorporated the right to food into their legal frameworks, implementation remains weak, and mechanisms for participation and accountability are often lacking.

THE PROGRAM

The “The Right to Food in Africa: From Policy to Plate” program, supported by Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation Development (BMZ) aims to contribute to the realization of the right to adequate food in four countries: Malawi, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. It envisions that administrative, political and traditional duty bearers at subnational and national level deliver better on the right to adequate food, guided by the principles of participation, transparency and accountability, non-discrimination, and rule of law.

OUR APPROACH

The program aims to address common governance challenges through a multi-level rights-based approach, whereby concerns and suggestions identified at the micro level (communities and villages) are channeled to meso level (districts, counties) and macro level (national and international level).

Through advocacy on the right to food, the program aims to increase government transparency, strengthen public accountability and make voices of the most marginalized heard in policy processes. To this end, the program:

- empowers food and nutrition insecure and marginalized groups to participate in decision-making processes and hold public officials and public servants accountable through **social accountability** processes
- strengthens **coalition building** of civil society actors to increase the leverage of their advocacy work on the right to food.
- enhances **capacities** and fosters **cross-country learning** through physical engagements and a digital learning platform
- reinforces links between **national and international advocacy**

Duration: 01.10.2024 – 31.03.2028 (42 months)

Budget: 5.46 Mio. EUR (75% BMZ, 25% WHH)

**Countries/
Partners:** **Malawi, Chitipa and Mangochi districts:** Centre for Social Accountability and Transparency (CSAT), Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)

Kenya, Vihiga country and Lake Region Economic Block: The Institute for Social Accountability (TISA)

Zimbabwe, Mutoku and Gokwe South districts: Community Technology Development Trust (CTDO), Centre for Conflict Management Transformation (CCMT)

Ethiopia, Afar and Amhara region: Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action (MELCA), Union of Ethiopian Women and Children Associations (UEWCA), Action for Integrated Sustainable Development Association (AISDA)

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAOSTAT: Food Balance Sheets*. FAO, Accessed 16 Sept. 2025

² FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises (2025). *Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2025*. Rome.

In **Malawi's** Mangochi district, our local partner CSAT is supporting communities to improve their access to the Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP), one of the key programs to address food insecurity in the country which allows small scale farmers to buy inputs at subsidized prices. The program has struggled to deliver on its promise due to poor targeting of farmers, delays and inadequacies in the delivery of inputs, and a shortage of agricultural extension workers.

Rights holders at the grassroots level, such as members of village and area development committees, women's and youth groups, as well as local government duty bearers and frontline government workers, have been sensitized on the right to food, including entitlements and obligations for its realization. Participatory social accountability tools, in particular community score cards and social audits, have been introduced to assess the provision of public services against agreed key indicators. In a dialogue with municipal administrations, services providers and the communities the identified gaps in service quality and adequacy are discussed and steps agreed.

As a result, AIP data to facilitate social audits was made available to the public. Moreover, AIP beneficiaries received their inputs (seeds and fertilizer) prior to the sowing season. The communities have also successfully lobbied for the district to increase the number of agricultural extension workers. In collaboration with these entities, the farmers have established field trials that demonstrate the efficacy of combining mineral fertilizer with animal manure, maize bran, and ash to enhance yield. By lowering input costs and minimizing reliance on synthetic fertilizers—which contributes to soil conservation and climate protection—these practices were ultimately adopted by farmers as a more sustainable and locally accessible alternative to conventional fertilization methods.

In **Kenya**, raising awareness among communities of their right to food and of the provision for public participation in the country's legal and policy framework has enabled them to actively engage in local development planning.

County government officials were sensitized and convinced to reform the consultative process for County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), focusing on the participation of village representatives. The resulting plans of three counties in Western Kenya now incorporate priorities put forward by the citizens.

These range from establishing a grievance redress mechanism to developing climate change adaptation strategies and expanding social security systems. In order to hold the county governments accountable for implementing the development plans, members of the *Lake Region Food Systems Network* and community *Right to Food Ambassadors* were trained in budget tracking for sectors related to the right to food. At the national level, the initiative supports the *Right to Food Coalition Kenya* by helping them to join forces in their grassroots mobilisation, media and policy engagement work, with the aim of influencing legislation, policies and their implementation. The coalition uses international instruments, such as the right to food guidelines and the Universal Periodic Review process of the United Nations Human Rights Council, to promote the realisation of the right to food at country level, and to bring the evidence and perspectives of marginalised groups to the attention of international policy processes.

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Meeting of a community Grievance Redress Committee in Mangochi, Malawi.

Image source: Welthungerhilfe



Community members receive legal advice at a legal aid clinic in Vihiga, Kenya.

Image source: ROA

WHAT DOES THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE FOOD ENTAIL?

The Right to adequate Food is a **fundamental human right** that was first recognized by the UN General Assembly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Art. 25 (1) in 1948 and ratified by all member states of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** as a legally binding state obligation.

It is realized “when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.” (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights CESCR, General Comment 12, 1999)

It compromises two aspects (art. 11 of ICESCR)

- 1) The fundamental right to be free from hunger
- 2) The right to adequate food or the means for its procurement, without discrimination of any kind

And four core elements (General Comment 12)

- 1) Availability
- 2) Adequacy
- 3) Accessibility
- 4) Sustainability