





## SUCCESSES FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

### The Right to Food – a Basic Human Right

More than 850 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Scarce or low quality food, contaminated water and the resulting diseases are part of the normal course of life for these women, men and children. They lack control over basic resources like land, seeds or income to be able to feed themselves adequately. They also lack political power and access to justice in order to claim what should be a matter of course: to be free from hunger and having access to adequate food – a basic human right, that is enshrined in international law.

The international human rights organisation FIAN, that enjoys consultative status with the United Nations, is doing a unique work in fighting for more than two decades for the realization of the right to adequate food. FIAN makes conflicts between unequal counterparts public and brings the unacceptable living conditions and acts of injustice people are subjected to before an international audience.

The work of FIAN relies on a case to case basis. On the request of people who have been forcibly evicted from their land, whose drinking water has been contaminated by the residues of a mining company or who do not get any social support from their government despite being below the poverty line - FIAN's task is to research and clearly identify the violator of these people's human rights. When governments, private companies or large land owners responsible for the violation suddenly have their name publicly mentioned in newspapers or reports presented to the United Nations and receive hundreds of protest letters sent out by outraged people all over the world, the pressure may get unbearable. Afraid of losing their reputation by this "naming and shaming", these actors, although powerful, often may refrain from acts that threatened or violated people's human rights



FIAN also cooperates with other stakeholders in order to attain long-term effects. At the level of United Nations and further international institutions, FIAN advocates to improve the right to food protection system and to establish new instruments, like the Right to Food Guidelines adopted by the World Food Organisation in 2004. At the state level, FIAN informs judges, lawyers and other authorities to make them understand their obligations in order to be able to enforce human rights against opposing powerful interests.

The basis of FIAN's work is the direct contact with the people affected by violations of their human rights. People that had been marginalized and have decided to stand up against injustice, on their request receive support by FIAN and likeminded organisations and individuals all over the world. This international attention serves as a protection shield as well as a means of encouragement and contributes to people's determination in claiming their rights against all odds and oppression.

What FIAN does, is to influence different actors at various levels. This improves the chance for the implementation of the right to adequate food, even when cases are complex and difficult to solve. In many cases this influence has made a significant impact - contributing to the advancement of a case or even towards its solution.

Yet, the fight goes on. Even when a court rules in favour of the people, drawbacks occur. The challenge consists to not content oneself with successes reached at a formal or legal levels, but to follow up and monitor the proper implementation of the right to adequate food, until the people can state: **"Having daily food and living in dignity was a dream, now it has become true"**.



## BRAZIL

### Peasants get land titles due to agrarian reform

50 peasant families of the community Lagoa Nova in the north eastern region of Brazil have been living for decades on the land of Hacienda Santana, formerly owned by the Santana Distillery and later leased by the Sanagro Corporation. Since 1991, the peasants were fighting for the regularisation of the land property title, as the land had been lying idle and was thus legally to be redistributed under agrarian reform regulations.

In 1994, Brazilian government expropriated the hacienda for agrarian reform purposes and some years later transferred the land to the National Agrarian Reform Institute INCRA. However, Sanagro Corporation has done everything in their power to hinder this expropriation process: besides appealing to the Supreme Court and thus causing the suspension of the land transfer, they exercised political pressure on judges, illegally invested into the expropriated area; and intimidated the peasant families.

FIAN intervened with a fact finding mission and presented the report with the findings to various authorities responsible

for this case, asking them that a favourable decision be taken towards the transfer of the lands and Sanagro immediately be banned from the area. In November 2006, the Supreme Court unanimously rejected the appeal of Sanagro and gave the property title to the land to the peasants of the Lagoa Nova community.

**“The state prosecutor wanted to know who this FIAN was who had produced the report. This was fundamental for us to obtain the land. FIAN strengthened our case by presenting documents to the authorities and by involving other organisations in the struggle. Since the year 2000, when FIAN came to the community FIAN has taken up this struggle as if it was its own.”, says Paulo Sérgio Bispo, peasant of the Lagoa Nova community.**

Despite this success, the land title had not been published as of 2007, and resources for infrastructure and agricultural production are not liberated yet. FIAN will closely monitor this process so that the peasants can begin producing food on their land as soon as possible.



## MEXICO

### Peasants' land rights against company interests

Conflicts over land possession and use have a long standing tradition in Mexico. Often it is difficult to trace back land registrations that were issued decades ago. The peasant families of the community San Isidro had been given 500 hectares of land by a presidential resolution in the 1930s, however, shortly after, half of the land was confiscated by a local leader. This part of land, that still legally belonged to the community, was in 1992 taken over by the company Nutrilite, negatively affecting some 300 families who used this land for food production.

The peasant families directly filed claims against the illegal land acquisition. As a consequence, the Secretary of Agrarian Reform asked Nutrilite to comply with the former presidential resolution and give back the lands to the peasants. Negotiations between the company and the community began in order to find a compromise, but Nutrilite did not comply with their promises to, for instance, provide water wells for the community. When the peasants continued filing complaints against the legality of the land acquisition, Nutrilite, supported by state authorities,

violently tried to make the families renounce their right to land, leading to the death of one peasant leader in 1999.

Alerted by the FIAN section in Mexico, FIAN began supporting the case, and, in 2006, launched an international Urgent Action directly addressed to the last level of jurisdiction, where the case had been pending for years. In May 2007, the court adjudicated in favour of the peasants, upholding their land rights.

**Sister Blanca Narro, member of FIAN Mexico who has been assisting the struggle of the community for years, states: "It is a big success. The major obstacle to regain the lands is overcome now".**



## INDIA

### Mid-day Meal for school children in Uttar Pradesh

In India, different social programmes aim to ensure the right to adequate food, recognised explicitly in the Constitution. One of these programmes, the Mid-day Meal Scheme, guarantees all children in government primary schools one cooked meal a day, fundamental for addressing the problem of class room hunger and malnutrition. Despite the importance attached to this scheme, Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand have failed to implement it.

In 2002, the Indian FIAN section in Uttar Pradesh, in co-operation with the FIAN section in Norway, began a campaign for the implementation of this programme. After intensive case work, various Fact Finding Missions, and workshops with communities and teachers, FIAN also addressed the Supreme Court, urging it to consider ways of holding federal states accountable for their failure to provide school meals. In September 2003, due to the continuous pressure of the people, FIAN and Supreme Court directions, the government of Uttar Pradesh started the Mid-day Meal Scheme in 16 districts.

Not satisfied with this success, FIAN continued to call for the total implementation of the scheme in all districts. Finally, the Supreme Court directed the states to implement the programme in all primary schools. In October 2004, the state of Uttar Pradesh started the Mid-day Meal Scheme all over the state. As a result 17,000,000 children now directly benefit from this scheme.

What is more, steps towards enhancing the quality of the meals have been taken, when in June 2006 the Government of India decided to increase the amount of money spent per meal and child. Still, the amount is low and further dialogue with the Indian governments will hopefully lead to further steps to fully guarantee the right to adequate food for the children - those, who most need it.



## SOUTH AFRICA

### Community gets back land lost during the apartheid regime

The Madimbo Corridor, a highly fertile land on the banks of the river Limpopo in South Africa, was once inhabited by the Gumbu-Mutale, a community of 1200 people. During apartheid the Gumbu-Mutale were forcibly evicted from the Madimbo Corridor. The Gumbu-Mutale found shelter on stony, dry land which was unsuitable for agriculture or cattle rearing. There was no possibility of employment in the area and, with no additional means of income to buy food, the Gumbu-Mutale communities suffered from severe hunger and malnutrition. The original land of the Gumbu-Mutale, was allegedly used by the South African army for training purposes. However, several investigations and reports stated that the majority of the land was not in use.

In 1994, after the first democratic elections in South Africa, the ANC-led government made a commitment to redistribute the land through a large agrarian reform programme. Although the Minister for Land personally promised to settle all claims by 2000, by 2002, the Gumbu-Mutale had yet to be restored to their original land.

A fact finding mission, carried out by FIAN and the international peasant coalition La Via Campesina, visited the area in 2002 and addressed the respective states authorities. In 2003, when the case was about to be brought before the court, FIAN launched an urgent action asking that the Gumbu-Mutale be given back their land. The action was taken in order to speed up a process which could have taken years, resulting in increased hunger and malnutrition.

In August 2004, the Madimbo Corridor Settlement Agreement was signed, and the Madimbo Corridor was restored to the Gumbu-Mutale community.



## INDIA

### Successful fight for right to water

Residents of the Jai Bheem Nagar slum, situated on the Kali Ganga river of Meerut, a city in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh, have been forced to consume heavily contaminated water. The water of the river and groundwater, both polluted by hazardous chemical effluents and containing heavy metals, when consumed, has led to serious ailments among the people, such as cancer, skin allergies, recurrent water borne infections, and even death. Provision of municipal water had been denied to the 10,000, mostly Dalit, people of Jai Bheem Nagar. Women and children have had to cover journeys of more than two kilometres to fetch safe drinking water.

In 2005, the slum dwellers received support by the Janhit Foundation, an environment organization, who alerted the authorities and filed a litigation. In summer 2006, FIAN was asked to join in the support. Reacting to the pressure created by an international Urgent Action and the continuous struggle of the slum dwellers, the Municipal Corporation of Meerut finally informed that a project worth 20 million Rupees (360,000 Euro) was submitted for

approval to the state government in order to provide drinking water to Jai Bheem Nagar. Preparatory construction works for an overhead water tank and pipelines commenced after that.

**Mr. Anil Rana, director of the Janhit Foundation, expressed his thanks regarding the success: “It is my earnest duty to thank FIAN who came forward and undertook their responsibility to contact the concerned officials of the government agencies and it is because of their efforts that the genuine demand of the community of Jai Bheem Nagar, which was not being fulfilled for one and half decade, is met within a short span of one year.”**

As of July 2007, however, a new government came to power in Uttar Pradesh, and work has come to a halt. In the light of this drawback, FIAN will bring international pressure upon the new government to make sure that the project will continue and the people can enjoy one of their most basic rights - having clean drinking water.



## GUATEMALA

### Landless peasants win upper hand over President's family

After 12 years of struggle, the men and women who worked on the Maria de Lourdes coffee plantation in Génova, Department of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, finally reaped the rewards of their fight for a just compensation for their illegal dismissal and unpaid salaries. Their victory has great symbolic significance as the plantation in question belonged to the family of Oscar Berger, the then President of Guatemala.

47 peasant families were illegally dismissed in 1992 when they created a trade union to defend their labour rights. The peasants took their struggle to the courts and the law sided with them. Yet, the decision was never implemented due to a weak rule of law and the adverse power of the President's family. The decade-long struggle for the survival of the families culminated when, in order to draw attention to their situation, the families occupied the landowner's residence from which they were violently evicted in January 2003.

In their search for support, the peasants got to know of FIAN, which has been working for years with peasants organisations and trade unions in Guatemala. When requested, FIAN intervened into the case by protest letter campaigns, visits to the country and meetings with the involved authorities, all in close cooperation with national organisations. As a result to the joint persistence, an agreement was reached in September 2004: The landowner paid the peasant workers 55 percent of the retained salaries accrued since their illegal dismissal. Furthermore, he paid for the land where the peasants are living since October 2004, calling their new property "Paradise".

**"We thank FIAN with all our heart for your help, because it had a decisive influence on helping to solve our case.", says a member of the Maria de Lourdes plantation.**



## MEXICO

### Workers reclaim jobs from German Tyre multinational

In 2001, the German multinational firm Continental decided to illegally close down the Euzkadi factory in Mexico after longstanding conflicts with the Euzkadi trade union, which consequently held a three year strike at the site of the factory and took Continental to court in order to prove the illegality of the factory's closure and dismissal of workers.

FIAN launched international lobby actions, specifically towards the German government because of its obligation to ensure that German companies conduct their business abroad in coherence with human rights standards. Certainly the highlight of support action was when FIAN organised for a delegation of workers to travel from Mexico to Germany to attend the Continental shareholders' assembly, where representatives of the trade union together with FIAN informed the surprised audience on the Mexican workers situation and Continental's disreputable proceeding in this conflict.

In January 2005, the joint effort bore its fruits: in the presence of Mexican President Vicente Fox, the conflict was settled and the workers achieved the fulfilment

of their most important demands: the factory has been reopened and their jobs reinstated. The workers also received, in total, a 50 percent share in the tyre factory.

The trade union has stated that they found in FIAN one of their most important international supporters. For their joint commitment, FIAN, together with the Euzkadi trade union and another involved organisation, Germanwatch, received the "Positive Award" of the "Public Eye on Davos" Initiative, given every year to campaigns which have led to a positive change in the policies and conduct of a company.

**Jesús Torres Nuños, president of the workers cooperative of Euzkadi, stressed the importance of the international solidarity:** "In this globalised world which is being steered by the influence of transnational companies, we depend on globalising our struggle. This was the key to our success: to count on allies and friends, who fought with us in Mexico and in Germany against Continental at shareholder meetings, in the media and with parliamentarians."



## INDIA

### People threatened by starvation receive support

Deaths due to starvation have been widely reported from the Varanasi district in the Indian State Uttar Pradesh. In Shankapur village, 400 weaver families, due to the decline of the weaving industries, had lost their jobs. Finding neither alternative sources of income nor being indentified as eligible beneficiaries of state social programmes, the families suffered severe hunger and malnutrition and were forced to beg. Some of them died due to starvation.

FIAN intervened in 2005 and organized various actions to address the situation of starvation, among them an international campaign on World Food Day in October 2005 including demonstrations and public hearings which highlighted the fate of two weaver families who could no longer feed their families and had lost family members due to starvation deaths.

The campaign, together with the support of various Indian organisations, finally pressured the Indian authorities to fulfil their obligations under the right to food towards the two weaver families. Mrs Devi, who had lost her husband and was left with three children

and no source of income, was finally taken into consideration for social programme benefits, among them the “Red Card” to obtain government subsidised food grains, and was mediated an employment. Mr. Vishambar, a former weaver whose wife and two children died due to starvation, also received the “Red Card”. The government also promised to take necessary steps to address and improve the living conditions of the weavers.

Despite this success and the acknowledgements made, the struggle of the weavers and their families is far from over. The effective implementation of the existing social programmes and the government’s promises have to be closely monitored.



## GET INVOLVED

**We all have human rights - but we have to fight for their realization**

All these successes would not have been possible without the participation of activists, members and supporters of FIAN and other like-minded organisations worldwide. All over the world people are getting organized to struggle for their rights. FIAN International's network consists of individuals and groups from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, who join their efforts in making the right to food a reality. FIAN sections from Europe, Brazil, Ghana and India together with the Hungarian rural development foundation Gaia Alapítvány and other counterparts join efforts in the campaign Face It Act Now - Fighting hunger with human rights.

You too can become part of this global network. Give your contribution to manifest against violations of the right to adequate food and related human rights.

- ➔ Sign FIAN urgent action letter campaigns to directly support people whose right to food is being violated!
- ➔ Sign the Face-It-Act-Now call for action
- ➔ Hunger has a face, the struggle against it too! Upload your picture to [www.fact-it-act-now.org](http://www.fact-it-act-now.org) to show your support
- ➔ Join FIAN!
- ➔ Donate to FIAN's work!

**More information at**  
[www.face-it-act-now.org](http://www.face-it-act-now.org)  
and [www.fian.org](http://www.fian.org)



FIAN International was founded in 1986 and was the first international human rights organisation to campaign for the realization of the right to food. FIAN is a grassroots oriented not-for-profit organization independent of any government, political ideology or religion. It has consultative status with the United Nations. FIAN's work is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in particular.

FIAN's vision is a world free from hunger, in which every person can fully enjoy their human rights in dignity, particularly the right to adequate food.

#### Contact

FIAN International Secretariat  
P.O. Box 10 22 43  
D-69012 Heidelberg  
+49 6221 65300 30 <sup>TEL</sup>  
+49 6221 830545 <sup>FAX</sup>  
Willy-Brandt-Platz 5  
Germany

#### Bank Account

Postgiro Frankfurt  
BLZ: 500 100 60  
CCP-No.: 201 080-601  
Swift-Code: PBNKDEFF  
Vereins-Reg. Nr.: 1518,  
Amtsgericht Heidelberg

## Contacts

**FIAN Austria**  
Laudongasse 40,  
A-1080 Wien  
+ 43 1 40 55 515 <sup>TEL</sup>  
+ 43 1 40 55 519 <sup>FAX</sup>  
fian-oe@oneworld.at

**FIAN Belgium**  
Rue van Elewijck 35,  
B-1050 Brussel,  
+ 32 2 64 08 417 <sup>TEL | FAX</sup>  
info@fian.be

**FIAN France**  
15 Rue Georges Jacquet,  
F-38000 Grenoble  
+ 33 4 38 21 05 08 <sup>TEL</sup>  
+ 33 4 76484985 <sup>FAX</sup>  
fianfrance@no-log.org

**FIAN Germany**  
Düppelstraße 9-11,  
D-50679 Köln  
+ 49 221 70 200 72 <sup>TEL</sup>  
+ 49 221 70 200 32 <sup>FAX</sup>  
fian@fian.de

**FIAN Netherlands**  
Postbus 14656  
NL-1001 LD Amsterdam  
fian.nederland@gmail.com

**FIAN Norway**  
Stortata 11,  
N-0155 Oslo  
+ 47 23 010315 <sup>TEL | FAX</sup>  
post@fian.no

**FIAN Sweden**  
Tegelviksgatan 40,  
11641 Stockholm  
+ 46 8 6439347 <sup>TEL | FAX</sup>  
info@fian-sverige.org

**FIAN Switzerland**  
c/o COTMEC  
Bd du Pont-d'Arve 16,  
CH-1205 Genève  
+ 41 22 321 58 44 <sup>TEL</sup>  
fian-ch@bluewin.ch

**GAIA Alapítvány**  
2193 Galgahévíz,  
Fő út 83  
Hungary  
+ 36 28 591 610 <sup>TEL</sup>  
gaia@zpok.hu



