International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

UN OHCHR Research and Report on Human Rights and Climate Change
Questionnaire in relation to Human Rights Council Resolution 50/9

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Please identify and share examples of promising practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the full realisation of the right to food in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.

The adverse effects of climate change are heightening the need to build resilience within communities – from urban centres to rural settlements. This is both a challenge and an opportunity, as resilience building offers a chance to reduce inequalities and ensure that people not only survive climate emergencies, but thrive in spite of them.

Community building plays a central role in resilience building. Being able to jointly resist adversity and implement sustainable practices, such as circular economy models, require spaces that are accessible and welcoming to all.

Libraries have long been innovative spaces, community centres, and sanctuaries for people in need. Following natural and human-caused disasters, they have stepped up to serve as community rallying-points, temporary shelters, and distribution centres for humanitarian aid (including food aid). With the rising severity and frequency of disasters caused by the adverse effects of climate change, these spaces are increasingly valuable for strengthening the resilience of their communities.

However, this role goes beyond disaster response. Libraries have been actively countering food insecurity within their communities through direct food distribution, educational programming on gardening and food production, and access to information for the agriculture and food sector.

Through direct food distribution and partnering with existing programmes, libraries have been able to connect resources for those facing food insecurity with community members most in need.

This need notably increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and examples of libraries supporting community members, like this pop-up food bank at Toronto Public Library's Albion branch, are numerous. To support children facing food insecurity, libraries across the United States participate as Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sites (such as this example from Texas), helping to ensure out-of-school students still have access to meals.

Beyond this, there are examples of "library pantries" and food banks located within public libraries, where community members at need can access items. This example of a "Farm-2-Library" food distribution network helps reduce food waste by collecting excess produce from local farms and

distributing it through rural libraries. This programme is centred in communities where more than 60% of households report difficulty accessing fresh fruit and vegetables. Such distribution programmes could become increasingly relevant as climate-change related challenges, such as drought and flooding, strain access to fresh produce in larger areas than seen previously.

Libraries are spaces for lifelong education and empowerment. Resilience building in the face of the climate crisis brings with it the need to learn new skills. Many examples can be found of library programmes that focus on community gardening, such as the *One House, One Garden* project from Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. This project has transformed the library's open spaces into thriving vegetable gardens which have become a vital resource for the nourishment and well-being of its community members. This community suffers from some of the highest levels of food insecurity in South Africa, and the project has helped stock local soup kitchens, as well as 112 families, an elderly home with 70 residents, and an orphanage with 49 children.

Senegal's Lambaye Learning Center Library offers a similar programme. It's garden and a micro-gardening space help train young people and women from nearby villages in gardening, health, and environmental knowledge.

Urban gardening projects can also be found in Europe, such as at the Bad Oldesloe City Library, Germany. This library's "Harvest Your City" project provides instruction on gardening, seed exchanges, and local food sharing initiatives.

Access to ICT, skills, and support also plays a role in achieving better outcomes for farmers and food producers. This example from Edenville, a small rural farming community in the Free State Province, South Africa, details how the local library helped farmers increase production and gain economic benefits. The library teamed up with the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) to design and deliver a computer literacy training programme for farmers, which enabled them to communicate with stakeholders, compile reports, and maintain other correspondence necessary for supporting their business.

Panguipulli Public Library No. 296 in rural Chile connects isolated farming communities with ICT equipment, including internet, radio, and mobile phones, in order to increase information flow, notably access to information on modern farming methods. Similarly, the Busongora Rural Information Centre (BRIC), a library in Uganda, has partnered with the Rwenzori Information Network (RIC-NET) to support farmers through increasing their access to information. In this region, farmers are facing worsening challenges with insects and pests, and the library has helped equip volunteers to act as information facilitators on managing these challenges. They further provide free ICT access and training to farmers and their families.

In another example, Romanian public libraries have taken an active role in helping farmers access opportunities for state agricultural subsidies. A collaboration between the libraries and the relevant government agency aided beneficiaries by making the process for completing financing applications quicker and easier.

These examples illuminate the importance of action taken at the community level to reinforce community bonds and build collective resilience. Libraries provide programmes, equipment, information resources, qualified staff, and community spaces that enable this action to be effective and inclusive. However, as resources continue to become strained, the ongoing support for libraries in fulfilling this role is not always guaranteed.

 In the context of the climate crisis, this action, put in place and supported before disaster strikes, is necessary for responding to and overcoming the adverse effects of climate change. Policymakers at the local and national levels are encouraged to recognise the role that libraries play in upholding a number of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms for their citizens. Among these, access to information, education, and cultural life of the community all intersect with matters of food security.

Supporting libraries in continuing their work at the heart of their communities plays a role in building resilience and ensuring communities not only survive, but thrive, in the face of challenges to come.

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