

Topic: Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation – V0 draft of the HLPE-FSN report #19

Background to this submission

Mothers First Contributed to the VO draft of the Inequalities work stream. In that work stream we unsuccessfully advocated for the inclusion of acute food insecurity which is extreme food insecurity and its associated nutritional outcomes in the final Inequalities Report. A link to our submission on this platform can be found here <https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/comment/11101>

Given that the mandate of the CFS and MyPOW is to reach the most food insecure and malnourished people we sought to understand why the inequalities report failed to achieve this central mandate.

Our findings are stark and show that the expertise and narrative of the CFS and the HLPE have traditionally centred around chronic hunger with its strong ties to the SOFI Report. This has created a blind spot within the CFS framework of achieving its vision to reach the most food-insecure and malnourished people in our world.

Our policy input paper for the Open-Ended Working Group on the Policy Convergence Process for the Inequalities Report details that under the framework of SOFI, the CFS is unable to fulfil its mandate of reaching the most food-insecure and malnourished people.

That input paper along with our recommendations can be found here.

https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2324/Inequalities/Inputs_on_priority_policy_areas/Policy_input_paper_for_the_Reducing_Inequality_Workstream_by_Mothers_First.pdf

Relevance of our findings to the peri-urban VO draft

Just as within the VO draft and the final Inequalities Report, this report focuses on chronic hunger and its associated nutritional outcome of stunting and being overweight. Our analysis of this report provides further evidence that the CFS framework cannot achieve its mandate of reaching the most severe food insecure and malnourished.

The report will focus on our analysis of the report using a keyword search of the document. We then provide an analysis of gaps beyond acute food insecurity that we feel are relevant and would be beneficial to the report.

This input paper will build on the previous submissions by taking a more in-depth look at the nutritional outcomes associated with acute malnutrition in women, adolescent girls and children. While it is generally accepted that acute malnutrition in children represented by child wasting is 30% lower for urban than rural, nonetheless as the report points out in its only reference to wasting stands at 8% which is considered a public health concern.

We will also explore the prevalence of maternal underweight and its impacts on maternal and child nutritional outcomes. Again while the prevalence of maternal malnutrition is lower in urban than rural it remains a significant challenge with a prevalence of 15%.

Note to the HLPE CC members and the writing teams

While we unreservedly acknowledge the wealth of experience and, in many cases a lifelong commitment to alleviating hunger and malnutrition. The writing team are experts in chronic

hunger, be it through fisheries, agricultures, science, economics and innovation. In this regard as a report based on the writing team's background, this is an excellent first draft.

The gaps we have identified however centre around acute food insecurity and their nutritional outcomes. which currently affects over 340 million people, equating to almost 1 in 3 people who are hungry in our world today.

Key Word Search

Key Word	Mentions in report	In title of reference list	Key word	Mentions in report	In title of reference list
Wasting	1	2	Stunting	13	7
Obesity	27	45	Anaemia	1	0
Maternal undernutrition	0	0	Social protection	6	0
Water and sanitation	4	0	Urban slums	4	4
Displaced populations	0	0	Migrants	1	4
Disabilities	0	0	Adolescent girls	0	0
Elderly	0	0	Indigenous populations	0	0
Pregnant and lactating women	1	0	refugees	3	2
SDG 2	1	0			

Analysis of keyword search

It is clear for the keyword search that the focus of the report from a food security and nutrition perspective focuses on chronic hunger.

Wasting

Wasting in children is only mentioned 1 time at that reference is only related to the prevalence of wasting in the urban setting. That prevalence, while lower than the rural population at 8%, remains a significant public health concern.

Globally, wasting affects more than 51 million children. Each year, more than 800,000 deaths are attributed to wasting. Moreover, approximately 13% of worldwide deaths among children under 5 years of age were attributed to wasting in 2015, representing 875,000 preventable child deaths.

Stunting

While stunting was comprehensive in its analysis, we recommend a similar analysis for wasting in children and maternal malnutrition is required

Obesity

Obesity was by far the most prominent nutritional outcome that was evaluated with 27 direct references and 45 direct references to it. Note, Obesity is not within the expertise of Mothers First therefore we have nothing to add here.

Anemia

was only mentioned on 1 occasion which from a gender perspective is exceedingly disappointing. According to the World Health Organization anaemia is estimated to affect half a billion women 15–49 years of age and 269 million children 6–59 months of age worldwide. The WHO has recognised iron deficiency anaemia (IDA) as the most common nutritional deficiency in the world, with 30% of the population being affected by this condition.

Maternal undernutrition

Undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and anaemia amplify gender inequalities by lowering learning potential, wages and life opportunities for adolescent girls and women, weakening their immunity to infections, and increasing their risk of life-threatening complications during pregnancy and childbirth.

According to Unicef maternal undernutrition is a “Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women”

[https://www.unicef.org/media/135791/file/Executive%20summary%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/135791/file/Executive%20summary%20(English).pdf)

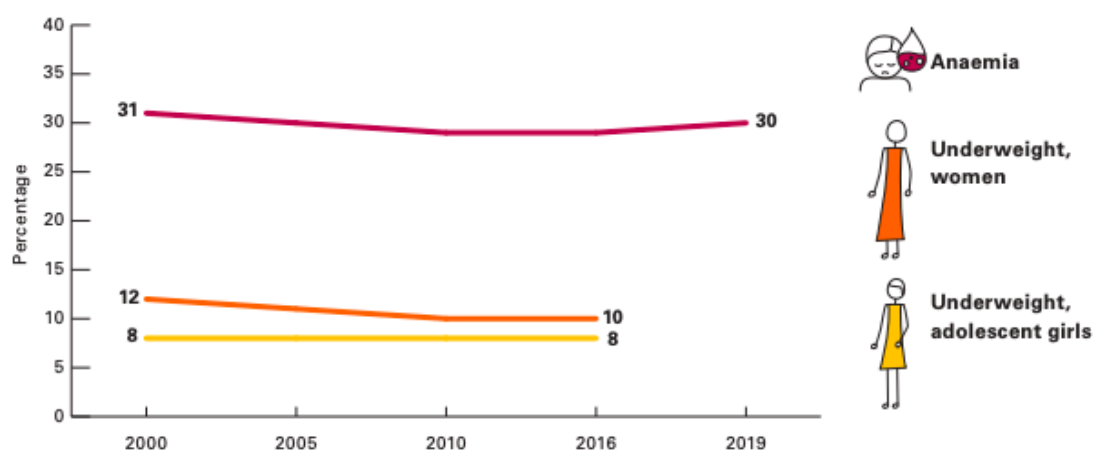


FIGURE 1: Trends in the prevalence of underweight in adolescent girls aged 10–19 years and women aged 20–49 years and anaemia in adolescent girls and women aged 15–49 years

Source: UNICEF analysis of data from NCD-RisC on underweight and Global Health Observatory on anaemia

Housing water and sanitation

According to UNDRR 90% of people in urban areas in low-income countries live in unsafe, exposed housing. In 2021 a joint analysis between WHO and Unicef found that “Africa has the lowest level of infrastructure provision, with half of the urban population without access to safely managed water, and 77 per cent without access to sanitation”

The projections for urban growth are cause for significant concern on a human and well being level. 90% of the expected 2.3 billion urban population growth by 2050 is expected in Asia and Africa.

Employment

The informal nature of employment in urban areas also deprives a large percentage of workers from formal social safety nets and insurance. Globally, an average of 50 per cent of the urban workforce is engaged in the informal sector, with no or limited access to social protection. This figure rises to a staggering 87 per cent in South Asia.²⁷ Source: World Bank JOIN/I2D2 database

Displacement

The urbanisation of displacement. Displaced populations are increasingly concentrated in cities, with 60 per cent of the 26 million refugees, and two out of three internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in urban areas. What's more, a significant percentage of the forcibly displaced gravitate to informal settlements,³⁶ enjoying limited livelihood opportunities and access to services in a similar way as other vulnerable urban populations, in addition to their own barriers based on status such as lack of government-issued identity, stigma and discrimination, among others.

Indigenous peoples

In Latin America for example Indigenous peoples make up more than half of urban dwellers at 52.2 per cent (ILO 2019) where they often end up residentially segregated with limited access to quality services.

Gender

The differential experience of poor urban women and girls: In 2020, moderate or severe food insecurity was more prevalent in women than in men globally by 10 percentage points, increasing dramatically by 4 percentage points since 2019.²⁸ In cities, women's ability to meet their food and essential needs is affected by discrimination in accessing housing, exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, conflicts between traditional gender roles and out-of-home employment, and overall, their less secure jobs (compared to their male counterparts). 75 per cent of women are involved.

Violence and conflict.

According to the World Food Program, 50 million worldwide are estimated to be affected by armed conflict in urban areas while 96% of urban growth is expected to take place in fragile countries.¹⁰ High population density, and the lack of adequate housing, health and WASH infrastructure, increase both the incidence and negative impacts of health crises.

Policy Recommendations

1 Our overarching recommendation for this report and the wider CFS is the need to broaden its framework of understanding to include acute food insecurity. This recommendation is contained within our input document for the Open-ended working group on Inequities Working Group referenced at the beginning of this report.

https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs2324/Inequalities/Inputs_on_priority_policy_areas/Policy_input_paper_for_the_Reducing_Inequality_Workstream_by_Mothers_First.pdf

2 We recommend that Humanitarian Response Plans need to be fully funded. This is detailed extensively within our VO draft submission for the inequalities report also referenced at the beginning of this report. <https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/comment/11101>

3 For this report we recommend the integration of the Global Action Plan on Wasting (GAP) developed by Unicef and UN Agencies.

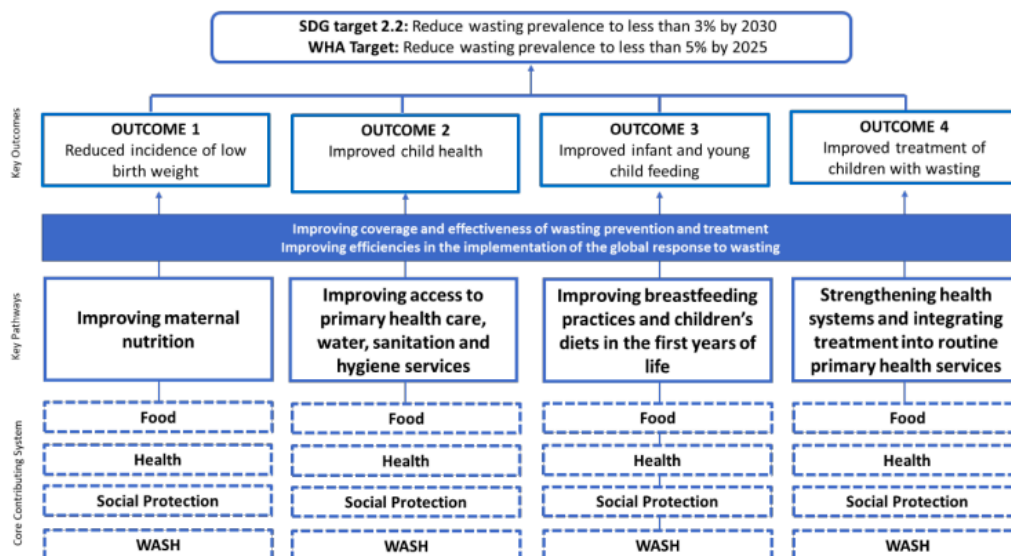
<https://www.unicef.org/media/96991/file/Global-Action-Plan-on-Child-Wasting.pdf>

Below is a short excerpt from the Global Action Plan on Wasting

“In approaching both prevention and treatment efforts, the Framework recognizes that engaging and empowering communities is and must remain at the heart of our collective efforts. The Framework is designed to be relevant for all populations, including people affected by humanitarian situations due to conflict or natural disasters (e.g. internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers and refugees), migrants, prisoners or people being held in detention, stateless persons, indigenous populations, people living with disabilities, the rural and urban poor and other marginalized groups, as well as specific demographic groups, such as pregnant and lactating women, children under two years of age, adolescent girls and the elderly. The success of our collective efforts on child wasting will depend on our ability to understand and respond to their nutritional vulnerabilities.”

THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The objective of the GAP is to reduce wasting prevalence to less than 5% by the year 2025 and further reduce wasting prevalence to less than 3% by the year 2030.



Conclusion

For most the furthest behind is a term that has been diluted to the point where its relevance no longer has an entry point in advocacy. As we enter the 9th year of the Sustainable Development Goals it remains the driving force behind Mothers First advocacy.

Mothers First stumbled into advocacy in 2015 when the realities of our work emotionally brought me as the founder of the organisation to my knees. I could neither move forward or look back but neither could I turn away. Within weeks I heard a speech from Micheal D Higgins the president of my country of Ireland at the World Humanitarian Summit. It was at this point the journey direction changed.

The CFS is a unique multi-stakeholder platform. To achieve its mandate of reaching the most food insecure and malnourished people will bring meaning to the very definition of the furthest behind by opening its doors to them and those of us who speak on their behalf.

In opening its doors to acute food insecurity it will strengthen its relevance to low and middle-income countries. It will allow space for policy discussions to centre on human rights and the role international obligation needs to play to achieve the right to food for all.