

SUMMARY OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 35
IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY AMONG THE URBAN POOR

From 27 April to 15 June 2009

Proceedings available at:

http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/PROCEEDINGS_Food_Insecurity_Among_Urban_Poor.doc

This summary was originally prepared by the Team of Solution Exchange India where the topic was cross-posted.

I. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Millions of people worldwide suffer from hunger and under-nutrition. A major factor contributing to this international problem is food insecurity. This condition exists when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life. The discussion debated on the various factors contributing to food insecurity, assessment methods and mechanisms to address its impact on health, social, psychological, and behavioral consequences.

Currently Food Insecurity among the urban poor is rising mostly due to migration by rural agrarian people to urban areas. The phenomenon is very common in the developing countries where the migration happens for better wages and prosperous life. The situation for the migrants is alarming as they end up becoming economically poorer daily workers who earn and pay for the food daily with no scope for savings.

Among the urban poor, the slum populations are the worst affected under sheer lack of space and minimum facilities for living. The notified slums get the privilege of the government schemes and programmes. However, the underlying fact is that around 50% of the slums in India are not notified, and thus are devoid of any development schemes. It is very difficult for these people settled in slums to have access the Public Distribution System (PDS). They have to buy their food from common market at competitive prices.

The discussion shared various methodologies used to evaluate and assess food insecurity.

Food insecurity examined in a sample of poor urban households living in the slums of Delhi by investigating the inter-relationships between direct and indirect indicators of food security. It looked into the essential dimensions of food and health status in light of food availability, access and food absorption.

The factors that could possibly be associated to the food insecurity status of the sample households and individual members are:

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Type of housing | • Nature of employment (casual/regular) | • Gender bias |
| • Access to piped water supply | • Income level | • Household size |
| • Access to private toilets | • Dependency burden | • Educational level/skill |
| • Access to electricity | • Expenditure on food | • Access to facilities like Health care, PDS, Education, Transport, Credit etc. |
| • Waste disposal facility | • Expenditure on transport | |
| • Employment (Un/under employment) | • Debt burden | |
| | • Intra-familial food distribution | |

Results of the study were poor infrastructure, low educational levels, poor economic status, high dependency ratio, no savings or insurance, lack of PDS, poor food and nutrition adequacy.

The study to determine contribution of urban maize sub sector to household staple requirements in Zimbabwe aimed to select 50 households from high and low-density areas of the town. Data elicited using structured questionnaires and interviews with stakeholders. The results revealed that urban agriculture contributed about 57% of the households' yearly maize requirements.

The research study on links between urban agriculture (UA) and dietary diversity tried to measure the impact of UA on nutrition. Two indicators of dietary diversity were built - 'food group index' based on 13 sub division of food and dietary diversity as 'food count', on how many foods are consumed by the household. Urban agriculture guarantees greater food and dietary diversity to the household engaged in the agricultural activity.

In the urban agriculture projects of FAO in Latin America a participative methodology for identifying the real consumption of some groups of food as vegetables and fruits, cereals, tubers and roots is included. It has developed an exercise of systematization of 5 projects remarking the impacts of interventions on food security among urban poor. FAO has been working on methods/mechanisms used to address food insecurity among the urban poor at household and community-level.

A research monograph in Gujarat compiled studies on infant and young child feeding practices in slum families. The monograph includes the direct observation method and interviews.

The discussion advised on referring to various documentations. The Resource Centers on Urban Agriculture and Food Security website contains publications and references on Urban Agriculture as a method to respond to urban food insecurity. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) research program on Urban Challenges to Food and Nutrition Security looks into urban-rural linkages. Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India provides the state of urban food security in India. The study led by IFPRI in Ghana, on Accra's Urban Food and Nutrition examined the nature of urban poverty and its relation to food insecurity and malnutrition.

The successful strategy in Colombia helped 20 families become farmers and sell fruits and vegetables to their neighbours thus earning a decent livelihood along with ensuring food and nutrition security.

Other mechanisms for addressing food insecurity could include:

- Learning from cross country production technologies to improve production systems
- Streamlining the PDS system and effective implementation of universalization of ICDS IV
- Strengthen the public private partnerships with increased community involvement for needs assessment, planning to service delivery and its monitoring
- Use of community self-help programs financed by the people rather than charity
- Software programmes such as the development of health care to focus on upgrading human resources
- Programme planning to make a thorough inventory of existing manpower and administrative capabilities and avoiding multiplicity of agencies and consideration of intra-urban disparities and their origins
- Creating farm-based peri-urban production units
- Formation of urban poor community shops as relief from formal market prices
- Increase Rural Incomes by devising productive vocations to the Rural Communities
- Integrated Information System at the Rural Community level to provide best practices to the rural masses

The problem of food security is multi dimensional. The city planners must realize that a comprehensive package covering all aspects like health, nutrition, education and employment is the least to be secured for the people living in the slums. This will enhance their social and economic security and ultimately the food and nutrition security.

II. COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES

- **Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Central and South America**

Urban Agriculture Enhances Food Security from Luca Tasciotti, Agricultural Development Economics Division, FAO, Rome)

The study measured the impact of Urban Agriculture (UA) on nutrition. It used data from the Living Standards Measurement Surveys that revealed UA could have a positive impact on household's food security. The two main patterns brought out as being a source of income, and providing direct access to food. Direct access to food allows households to consume greater amounts of food and a more diversified diet resulting in richer valuable micronutrients. Read more

- **Colombia**

Better Food Security as Farmers (from Sara Granados-Ortiz, Group of Urban Agriculture, FAO Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile)

20 families became farmers and began selling fruits and vegetables to their neighbours. Today, the Farmers' Organization of San Vicente has a garden of 80 m². The organization sells 25 kg of vegetables per week to a school restaurant produced in an area of 40m². The rest of the garden is dedicated to the production of self consumption.

III. REFERENCES

Bibliography

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Alternative food-security indicators: revisiting the frequency and severity of 'coping strategies'
http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VCB-3WS615X-5&_user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&_view=c&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=a46d4daf9bcb8843fdae6227255f3762

Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India
<http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2001/stories/20030117007307500.htm>

Accra Urban Food and Nutrition Study
<http://www.ifpri.org/themes/MP14/ghana.htm>

For Hunger - Proof Cities Sustainable Urban Food Systems
http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9394-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Participatory Urban Food and Nutrition Security Assessment Process
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/007/ae590e/ae590e00.pdf>

Women Feeding Cities - Mainstreaming Gender in Urban Agriculture and Food
<http://www.cityfarmer.info/women-feeding-cities-mainstreaming-gender-in-urban-agriculture-and-food-security-forthcoming-book/>

Rural Household Access to Assets and Agrarian Institutions: A Cross Country Comparison
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/aj303e/aj303e.pdf>

The Role of Maize Sub Sector as a Food Security Safety Net for Urban Households in Bindura Town of Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/Spring2006PDF/ARC_The%20Role%20of%20Maize%20Sub%20Sector%20as%20a%20Food%20Security%20Safety%20Net%20for%20Urban%20Households.pdf

India: Urban Poverty Report 2009
http://www.undp.org.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=540&Itemid=646

Design of Integrated Community Information System for sustainable and inclusive growth and it's implementation thru customization of 'Web Based Open Source ERP'
<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/food/cr/res29050901.doc>

Are Recommended Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Practices being followed In Our Region? - Assessment Methods and Research <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/food/cr/res29050901.pdf>

State of Food Insecurity in the World
http://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/index_en.htm

Recommended Contacts and Experts

Bal Paritosh Dash, World Food Programme (WFP), New Delhi / India

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Slum Development International (SDI) Mumbai Regional Hub: Society For Promotion Of Area Resource Centre (SPARC) / India
<http://www.sdinet.co.za/country/india>

Resource Centres on Urban Agriculture and Food Security (RUAF), AB Leusden / The Netherlands
<http://www.ruaf.org/node/449>

The M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), Chennai /India
<http://www.mssrf.org/>

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

Urban Challenges to Food and Nutrition Security, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC / USA
<http://www.ifpri.org/themes/mp14.htm>

Food and Nutrition Security in Urban Environments, Nutrition and Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome / Italy
http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban_en.stm

Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping
http://www.fivims.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=1

Related Consolidated Replies (Solution Exchange)

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