

FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 35  
**IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY  
AMONG THE URBAN POOR**  
FROM 27 APRIL TO 31 MAY 2009

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Dear Friends,

*Greetings from the Urban Health Resource Center, India!*

We are a non-profit organization working towards addressing health concerns of the poor living in underserved slum settlements in India. Presently, we implement two city-level demonstration programs and provide technical assistance to the national government and selected state governments ([www.uhrc.in](http://www.uhrc.in)).

While urban areas are recognized as centers for economic development, forum members would agree that opulence co-exists with deprivation in the urban set-up. For example, in India one-quarter of the urban population resides in extreme poverty, in slums and squatters. Furthermore, while urban poor food insecurity remains a visible daily reality, not only it is **scarcely documented, evidence-based program experiences to simply identify it and address it are also limited**.

You all would agree that the dynamics of urban food insecurity are multi-factoral and largely differ from rural populace. Unlike in rural areas, urban poor economy is cash-based which makes an impoverished urban poor family more vulnerable to food insecurity when they have no cash in hand. Poor environmental conditions cramped, low-quality housing with limited sanitation in urban slums results in frequent episodes of morbidity, putting families especially women and children in a vicious cycle of malnutrition. Furthermore, as many of the urban poor live in temporary settlements and slums not included in the official government slum lists they are often excluded from basic government services and they constantly struggle for housing, livelihood and health care.

As the scale of urban poverty is rapidly increasing world-wide, the challenges to address its concerns will increase multifold. Improving food security for urban poor is not only important from a humanistic point of view but it also pertinent considering that this population contributes significantly to our GDP in the form of the informal sector workforce to improve the urban food security scenario.

In this context, it would be very helpful if Forum's members could share **insights and program experiences** (particularly from India and developing countries) on-

**a) How food insecurity among urban poor was identified and what were the survey results?**

**b) What methods/mechanisms were used to address food insecurity among the urban poor at household and community-level and what were some of the best practices and lessons learnt?**

It would be appreciated if **relevant reports, presentations and links** are also shared.

Many thanks in advance for your advice.

On behalf of the Urban Health Resource Center Team,

Dr. Siddharth Agarwal.