

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FSN FORUM DISCUSSION No. 35
**IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY
AMONG THE URBAN POOR**
FROM 27 APRIL TO 15 JUNE 2009

Summary available at:
http://km.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fsn/docs/SUMMARY_Food_Insecurity_Among_Urban_Poor.doc

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	GENERAL INFORMATION	2
II.	INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC.....	3
III.	LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS	4
	Contribution by Samir S Basta from France.....	4
	Contribution by Celine d'Cruz from Slum Dwellers International, India	4
	Contribution by Femke Hoekstra from RUAF Foundation, the Netherlands	4
	Contribution by James Garrett from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USA	5
	Contribution by Muhammad Shoaib Ahmedani from Pir Mehr Ali Shah-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR), Pakistan	5
	Contribution by Rachele Santini from the Agricultural Development Economics Division FAO, Italy	6
	Contribution by Francesca Gianfelici from FAO, Italy	6
	Contribution by Samwel Mbugua from Egerton University, Kenya	7
	Contribution by Samir Basta from France	7
	Contribution by Siddharth Agarwal from the Urban Health Resource Center, India	9
	Contribution by K.V. Peter from the World Noni Research Foundation, India	10
	Contribution by Anuradha Gopalakrishnan, from India	10
	Contribution by Luca Tasciotti from the Agricultural Development Economics Division, FAO, Italy	10
	Contribution by Edward Mutandwa from Rwanda.....	12
	Contributions from the discussion “Addressing Food Security of Slum Dwellers” held by the Food and Nutrition Community- Solution Exchange India, in 2006.....	12
	Contribution by Amita Joseph, from BCF India	12
	Contribution by Bansil L. Kaul	13
	Contribution by Tusharkanti Dey, Solution Exchange India.....	13

Contribution by Ravichandran, Solution Exchange India.....	13
Contribution by R P Sinha, Solution Exchange India.....	14
Contribution by D S K Rao Consultant, India	15
Contribution by Neelkanth Mishra from Oxfam, India	16
Contribution by Anshu Kumra Independent Consultant, India.....	16
Contribution by Kamrul Islam from Italy	18
Contribution by Rajni Modgil College of Home Science, India	18
Contribution by K V Peter World Noni Research Foundations, India.....	19
Contribution by Sara Granados-Ortiz FAO Latin America and the Caribbean.....	19
Contribution by Shubhada Kanani University of Baroda, India.....	20
Contribution by Martin Fowler from Uganda.....	20

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Duration:	from 27.04.2009 to 15.06.2009
Number of participants:	26
Number of Contributions:	28

II. INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

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).

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.

III. LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution by Samir S Basta from France

Dear Dr. Agarwal,

Appreciated your article regarding urban poor. For more, you may want to refer to information I published some thirty years ago in Ecology of Food and Nutrition, vol.6, pp.113-124, 1977, entitled, "**Health/Nutrition in Low Income Urban Areas of the Third World**".

With Best Regards,
Samir Sanad Basta D.Sc

Contribution by Celine d'Cruz from Slum Dwellers International, India

Dear Siddarth,

I work with SPARC in Bombay and with Slum Dwellers International (SDI) which is a network of slum dwellers in over 20 countries in Africa and Asia.

SDI works primarily on issues of land, housing and basic infrastructure. We have not really studied the issue of food insecurity but have encountered some reference to the subject by community leaders. For example when the price of rice went up, this was of great concern both in Srilanka and in India. We would like to learn and understand more about this subject and how to conduct this inquiry with slum dweller federations. It is a fairly recent subject both to SPARC and SDI. It would be good for us to have a better understanding of this subject instead of just joining the band wagon.

So at this point we at SPARC / SDI do not have much to share on this subject and would like to learn from the knowledge and experience of the group.

Celine

Celine d'Cruz
Slum Dweller's International
www.sdinet.org

Contribution by Femke Hoekstra from RUA Foundation, the Netherlands

Dear Dr Agarwal and others,

I received the below contributions on the interesting topic of urban food insecurity and I would like to refer to our website www.ruaf.org (Resource Centers on Urban Agriculture and Food Security) which contains many interesting publications and references on Urban Agriculture as a method to respond to the issue of urban food insecurity.

Best wishes,

Femke Hoekstra

Contribution by James Garrett from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USA

Dear all,

You may access our publications from the IFPRI's research program Urban Challenges to Food and Nutrition Security via the IFPRI webpage:

<http://www.ifpri.org/themes/mp14.htm>.

At the bottom of this page, you will see another link entitled Publications. This will give you a list of the publications from this program until approximately 2005. This was the last date of major activity.

The work on urban-rural linkages may also be of some interest.

Best

James Garrett

Note: Some relevant publications:

- Strengthening rapid assessments in urban areas: lessons from Bangladesh and Tanzania:

http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/articles/2002/garrett02_01.pdf

- Alternative food-security indicators: revisiting the frequency and severity of 'coping strategies:

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192\(99\)00051-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192(99)00051-2)

- Targeting urban malnutrition: a multi-city analysis of the spatial distribution of childhood nutritional status 2001:

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192\(00\)00029-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192(00)00029-4)

Contribution by Muhammad Shoaib Ahmedani from Pir Mehr Ali Shah-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR), Pakistan

Dear All,

This is really a great forum to discuss vital issue of food insecurity.

I think the phenomenon is very common in the developing countries as is evident from the article published by Dr Samir in his article "Health/Nutrition in Low Income Urban Areas of the Third World", published some 30 years back. In my humble opinion time has come to discuss the strategies to resolve this issue as the new threat of Water Insecurity is knocking at our doors. In this global world we can't conceal the facts. Every scholar knows that the problem may be addressed within a few years if we are really committed to address it. For example wheat is the staple food for Pakistan. The country needs approximately 21 million tons wheat to cater its peoples. Our average per hectare yield is 25 tons. On the other hand our counterpart Indian Punjab and Haryana states produce 50-55 Tons/hectare. The Climate, soil, peoples, culture and agriculture of both the Punjabs is approximately the same. If Pakistani side Punjab just follow the production Technology of Indian Punjab, which had been its counter part in recent past, Pakistan may have additional 18 million tons of wheat totaling 40 million tons on country basis against the requirement of 21 mt.

But who will bell the cat? We the third world countries need commitment, honesty, trueness and loyalty to nation, peoples and God. We should eliminate the system where technical experts and technological policies are made by those who often don't know ABC of the subject. Besides, we should recruit experts in all technical fields purely on merit. The time has come that we should quit nepotism and promote humanity. Otherwise be ready for water and food famines. I think love

for humanity, loyalty to nation, right man right job are the methods in broader term to resolve all issues pertaining to food insecurity, especially in the third world. Once peoples become true, every method will work.

Best Regards,

Muhammad Shoaib Ahmedani,
Deputy Director Quality Enhancement Cell,
PMAS-AAUR, Pakistan

**Contribution by Rachele Santini from the Agricultural Development Economics Division
FAO, Italy**

Dear Siddharth,

I've come across some books very relevant to your questions.

The first is the book "**Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India**" (2002), a joint work between the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and the World Food Programme. It can answer your first question on the state of urban food security in India. A description of the main findings can be found at <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2001/stories/20030117007307500.htm>

For further information you could contact the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation at hmrc@mssrf.res.in or Bal Paritosh Dash, World Food Programme, balparitosh.dash@wfp.org,

The second study that I'd like to refer you to is not on India, but can certainly provide comparative experiences and insights. It's a study led by IFPRI in Ghana, on **Accra's Urban Food and Nutrition**. The study examined the nature of urban poverty and how it relates to food insecurity and malnutrition in urban Accra, Ghana. The main goal was to determine how the strategies employed by the urban poor to secure their livelihoods affected households' food security, the care of children, and their resulting health and nutritional status. Many publications were produced and can be found at <http://www.ifpri.org/themes/MP14/ghana.htm>

Finally the book "**For Hunger-Proof cities – sustainable urban food systems**" can respond to your second question on dealing with urban food insecurity. It's available at http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9394-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Those studies are relevant but not very recent. I hope that FAO colleagues can point out some more recent works in the framework of the Food for the Cities initiative and share their insights.

Kind regards,

Rachele Santini

Contribution by Francesca Gianfelici from FAO, Italy

Dear Siddharth,

FAO has been working on methods/mechanisms used to address food insecurity among the urban poor at household and community-level, you may want to refer to some relevant work done in the last years at the following link: http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban_assessment_en.stm

In addition, something related to "Food and Nutrition Security in Urban Environments" can be found at http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban_security_en.stm

On "Participatory Urban Food and Nutrition Security Assessment Process" you can consult the publication available in electronic version in seven slum areas in Bhuj, India

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/ae590e/ae590e00.HTM>

Finally, the Food for the cities multi-disciplinary initiative web site can be helpful for finding further related information at the following link to its Nutrition and Livelihoods component, http://www.fao.org/fcit/nutrition_en.asp.

With kind regards,
Francesca Gianfelici

FAO-Food for Cities multi-disciplinary initiative

Contribution by Samwel Mbugua from Egerton University, Kenya

Colleagues,

There is also a recent publication with case studies on mainstreaming gender in urban agriculture and food security.

"Women feeding Cities: mainstreaming gender in urban agriculture and food security". Edited by Alice Hovorka, Henk De Zeeuw and Mary Njenga. Practical action publishers ISBN 978-1-85339-685-4.

Samwel Mbugua
Dept. of Human Nutrition
Egerton University.
Nakuru, Kenya.

Contribution by Samir Basta from France

I would also add (to the below summary of relevant recommendations and lesson learned) that in the Evaluation /monitoring of the project/program, it is important to question the target population about their reactions and opinions. If health/nutrition objectives are to be realized it is also important to periodically question a sample of the target group as to their knowledge and understanding of the objectives to be reached i.e. to monitor behavioural/attitude/knowledge changes...

Samir Basta

Lessons learned

from the paper "Health Programmes directed to Urban Squatter Populations", Samir S. Basta, in "Urban Planning Practice in Developing Countries", Pergamon Press, 1982

1. "Software" programmes such as the development of health care service are much more dependent upon the upgrading of human resources which cannot be done simply by pouring in financial resources.

2. Even if programmes are designed by local authorities themselves with the best of intentions, the planner is well advised to make a thorough inventory of existing manpower and administrative capabilities.
3. Even if the community in question seems geared to accept a preventive or educational programme, out-reach services such as “barefoot doctors” cannot be effective unless the medical hierarchy is ready to accept them and to allow them to practice their assigned role.
4. A multiplicity of agencies is to be avoided even if in the existing situation one agency is unwilling to take most of the burden. If it is the case, drop the programme or simplify it to the point where one or two main agencies can handle it.
5. A realistic perspective regarding local difficulties by the foreign planner or funding agency is important from the beginning. One must plan a framework that is simple and robust enough to accept local management capabilities. Supervision, monitoring and proper evaluation to see that benefits are accruing to the target population, or to help local agencies plan corrective action, are of course also an essential ingredient to the framework.

The key lesson to the planner who is attempting to implant new style “people-oriented” health/nutrition projects is to study well the existing referral systems and hierarchical chains of command. Then convince the administrators and obtain their full support.

Recommendations by the paper “Nutrition and Health in Low Income Urban Areas of the Third World”

Samir S. Basta, Ecology of Food and Nutrition Vol. 6

First, before taking solutions, the great intra-urban disparities and their origins and location must be acknowledged. The problems must be faced. Representative data must be collected and published and acceptable surveys and programs undertaken.

Secondly, some work undertaken by international organizations and a few Governments show that solutions should not require large subsidies. Programs based on community participation and self-help range from typical “sites and services” components in which families are encouraged to build their own homes using simple credit mechanisms to purchase their land and materials, to upgrading slums where families pay for the recurrent costs involved in maintaining and building infrastructure for community health workers and nutrition programs. When the potential gain to city revenues from an efficient taxation system and the saving obtained in avoiding artificially high standards are considered (e.g. though not building a water-borne sewerage system in cities like Jakarta in which this is prohibitively expensive and where large-scale construction of pit latrines is a viable alternative), then a solution is possible that will enable countless millions to achieve an adequate state of health. The use of community self-help programs financed by the people are therefore essential. However the Government must provide security of tenure, and basic credit institutions.

The solutions to the health problems of squatters and slum dwellers will not be met by merely providing more hospitals or clinics. The plight of urban squatters and migrants is basically a human problem that can and will have to be met by human resources and community productivity and involvement. The high prevalence of communicable and nutrition diseases in these dense settlements is, of course, amenable to the classic concepts of better nutrition, preventive medicine and improvements in the sanitary environment. But unless the links are forged with better education for women, children and men, the treatment and cure will take a very long time. Further, unlike the differing rural situation, when it comes to describing the nutrition and health situation, one reaches the conclusion that a remarkable uniformity exists in nearly all the capital cities of the developing world, making the work of the international health/urban planner relatively easier, unlike his rural counterpart. The only possible exceptions are some of the African cities south of the Sahara in which the rural type existence still predominates.

Contribution by Siddharth Agarwal from the Urban Health Resource Center, India

Dear all,

According to me, the following should be done in order to improve urban food insecurity in India. I look forward to your comments on these ideas.

1. Municipalities can play a pivotal role in locating vulnerable slum pockets through mapping and implementation of food security schemes. Mapping of existing fair price shops and Anganwadis will help in ensuring equitable spatial distribution of such facilities. Municipalities can allocate locations for setting up new fair price shops in vulnerable slums devoid of these facilities. Alternatively mobile fair price shops can be explored.

2. Formation of city-level monitoring and review committees to ensure optimal functioning of programs.

3. Formation of ward coordination committees, involving all stakeholders (elected representatives, civil society, with special preference to genuine representatives of slum poor including women). Similar role can also be performed by Area Sabhas (part of urban reforms mandated under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission). These teams/committees can undertake the following tasks:

a. Ensure identification and inclusion of most vulnerable groups as beneficiaries.

b. Assist the poor in accessing their entitlements.

4. Advocate for locally/ culturally compatible food grains to be included in the existing list of food grains available with fair price shops.

1. Slum-level SHGs and community groups to be encouraged and trained to establish and manage fair price shops, and assist and aid the ICDS workers to promote appropriate dietary practices at household and community-level. Various non-government initiatives such as by Apnalaya and Mahila Milan (in Mumbai), Institute of Health Management and Uplift India Association (in Pune), SEWA and Counterpart International, India (in Ahmedabad) and Urban Health Resource Centre (in Indore and Agra) have demonstrated the potential of slum-level SHGs in taking lead in generating awareness/demand for healthy behaviours and services, linking their communities with service providers, maintaining drug funds, improving outreach services and entitlements, referral, generating resources to meet expenditure in health emergencies through health funds collectives.

6. Work Security for Food and Nutrition Security: If people do not have work and income security, then food security remains an unfulfilled dream. Similarly without proper nutrition, families cannot work and earn. Their productivity and health is adversely affected. Hence urban poor need skill upgradation, training, linkage with potential employers and employment schemes. Promoting resource-based livelihoods in urban poor communities is often suggested and but needs to be proactively experimented.

There is also a need to advocate and technically support programs working with urban poor in India to assess and report urban poor food and nutrition insecurity using simple, rapid and low cost tools adapted to context such as US household food insecurity short-form questionnaires. This would bring forth heightened focus on this issue.

Regards,
Siddharth Agarwal

Contribution by K.V. Peter from the World Noni Research Foundation, India

The whole problem of migration has to be looked at comprehensively. Why people migrate? Adequate rural job opportunities could stem the problem of migration and creation of slum. Man needs any productive avocation to engage, earn enough to purchase basic elements to fulfil his needs and to insure him from present and future calamities.

Generation of employment is thus the core issue. Let us create an atmosphere for farm-based and rural and peri-urban production units. Rural farm wage in China is equivalent of Rs 40 sufficient to meet basic needs of these people. Let us create a healthy and contented rural and peri-urban work force.

Distribution of charity may not be the solution - though interim support to distressed people is essential to prevent endemic hunger and malnutrition. The state has to ensure that nobody dies of hunger.

Gandhiji said 'Poor see God in bread', "There is no illness worse than hunger and poverty" and "Poverty is worse than terrorism and in fact terrorism stems from inaccessibility to food." A responsible civil society will feed the hungry, cloth the naked and shelter the unprotected.

Prof KV Peter Ph D
Director, World Noni Research Foundation,

Contribution by Anuradha Gopalakrishnan, from India

Friends,

It is very much important to address the food and nutrition security of the urban poor, which is usually neglected. Among the urban poor, the slum population are the worst affected. Among the slums, the notified is the one which often gets attention through implementation of the government schemes, etc, but around 50% of the slums in India are unnotified or undeclared slums, which does be completely neglected for any development or implementation of schemes. Regarding the distribution of food grains through Public Distribution System in India, these people who are settled in slums are migrants and it is very difficult to have access to ration cards as they don't have a permanent address proof. Hence these issues should also be taken care of while addressing the food security of the urban poor.

Regards

Radha
Research Scholar

Contribution by Luca Tasciotti from the Agricultural Development Economics Division, FAO, Italy

Dear All,

I have been reading all your comment with great interest and I would like to add something to the discussion.

Alberto Zezza and I are working on a research which studies the **link between urban agriculture (UA)** and **dietary diversity** and we are trying to measure the impact of UA on nutrition. We study UA in a sample composed by 15 countries located in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Central and South America; data used come from the Living Standards Measurement Surveys (LSMS) (the paper is available at

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/aj304e/aj304e.pdf> ; and as a shorter version at <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/aj306e/aj306e.pdf>)

Put in this way, this intervention aims to give you a partial answer to the question b) of the topic (What methods/mechanism were used to address food insecurity among urban poor at household and community-level and what were some of the best practises and lesson learnt?).

First of all, by UA we mean the production of crop and livestock within cities and towns' boundaries as a complements to rural agriculture and as a way to increase the efficiency of the national food system. UA takes place especially in vacant and under utilized areas, such as areas not suited for buildings because close to streams or to airports, public or private lands which are not used at the moment, such as land waiting for construction, community lands and household areas.

According to estimates made by the United Nations Development Programme in 1996, 200 million people are employed in urban farming and related enterprises, contributing to the food supply of 800 million urban dwellers. The participation rates for the poor can be extremely high; we estimated that over 50 percent of the urban poor population is engaged in UA.

Looking at the impact of UA, we see that UA could have a positive impact on household's food security through two main patterns: i) being a source of income, and ii) providing a direct access to food. Regarding ii), households engaged in agriculture have access to a wider variety of foods which are inaccessible to those households not employed in agriculture, such as vegetables and products having animal origin (milk, eggs, meat). The latter mechanism might be particularly relevant being urban food markets, especially in the poorer neighbourhoods, particularly inefficient. Under such conditions direct access to food may allow households to consume greater amounts of food and a more diversified diet which might result in richer valuable micronutrients.

For all the countries in our sample, we built two indicators of dietary diversity. The first one, 'food group index', represents a categorical measure which assumes value from one to 13. This index is based on 13 groups sub division of food. The second indicator of dietary diversity, 'food count', simply counts how many foods are consumed by the household.

The relationship between participation in UA and 'food group index' is proved to be positive in 12 out of 15 countries.

The relationship between participation in UA and 'food count' is proved to be positive in 13 out of 15 countries. In absolute value, the number of food increases the most in Panama, 5.4, Albania, 4, and Guatemala, 3. Taking into consideration the average number of foods consumed by a household, UA increases the spectrum of food available to the household by 11 per cent in Panama, by 36 per cent in Albania and by 6 per cent in Guatemala. In other words, urban agriculture guarantees greater food diversity to the household engaged in the agricultural activity. It appears from our results that, in the majority of the countries we are considering, being engaged in urban agriculture does increase the dietary diversity of urban households, after controlling for economic welfare and a set of household characteristics. The number of food groups and the number of foods also increases.

We conclude our analysis saying that **with the increase in urban poverty and food insecurity shifting from rural to urban areas, urban agriculture may play a not negligible role in addressing urban food insecurity problems.**

Regards,

Luca

Contribution by Edward Mutandwa from Rwanda

Dear all,

I would like to contribute to this interesting debate on how urban agriculture can act as a conduit for enhancing food security, nutrition security and household incomes. In particular, I present observations from a study done in Zimbabwe's Bindura town published in Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, Spring 2006:

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)

Abstract

Macro-economic volatility characterizing most developing nations in Africa has resulted in transitory and chronic food insecurity among urban households. Urban agriculture is emerging as one of the alternative coping strategies for urban households especially against the backdrop of land and agrarian reforms sweeping the region. Thus the main objective of this study was to determine the contribution of the urban maize sub sector to household staple requirements in Bindura town of Zimbabwe.

A multi stage sampling approach was developed to select 50 households from high and low-density areas of the town. Data for this research was elicited using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews with stakeholders such as the local council and government departments.

The results of the study revealed that urban agriculture contributed about 57% of the households' yearly maize requirements. In addition, the gross margin was Z\$ 356,313 per hectare on an average land holding of 1.1 hectares. Despite the pre-eminence of this activity, most urban farmers were not aware of the by laws regulating the use of urban land. Extensive land degradation is largely attributed to institutional failure. There is need to align urban agriculture with the broader needs of agriculture through effective stakeholder involvement from implementing agencies to policy makers. It is also expedient to craft national environmental programs to promote long-term environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Urban Agriculture, Livelihoods, Environment, Urban poor, Zimbabwe

I look forward to contributions from members

Warm regards,
Edward Mutandwa

Contributions from the discussion “Addressing Food Security of Slum Dwellers” held by the Food and Nutrition Community- Solution Exchange India, in 2006. **Contribution by Amita Joseph, from BCF India**

We think that the urban homeless are the most vulnerable. Business Community Foundation (BCF) tried a modest effort in reaching out - where over a 30 day period we were able to serve one Khichdi meal to about 16,000 people with public donations. Please look at our website <http://www.bcfindia.org/introduction.html>

The people who have been doing this consistently and wonderfully is The Bhai Dayal Chand Trust - a number of families who have come together and put in ten percent of their income into cooking a meal served to about 10,000 persons for over five to six years. No publicity, no NGO, no plea for funding - just quietly doing seva. In addition last winter they buried all the unclaimed bodies with full rites and dignity.

One of the finest examples that is keeping the most vulnerable alive in a city - the people who serve the city and subsidise our lives!!!!

Contribution by Bansi L. Kaul

The example set by BCF is worth emulating by others who can afford. It is indeed the moral responsibility of the "haves" to look after the "have nots" in a civil society. Having said so, I feel, however, that feeding the poor is not a solution in the long term. It is bounden duty of all of us and the Govt. to seek solution to the problem of hunger on a permanent basis. Our people must be able to earn own living and feed their families. For that we have to create job opportunities both in the rural and urban areas. This is indeed a Herculean task and the industrialists and business community must come forward in a big way.

Also, coarse grain usage in the SAT areas needs encouragement and restriction in supply of wheat and rice can help in this direction. Public Distribution System (PDS) should come to the rescue only if there is shortage of coarse grains due to drought conditions. Dry land farming is the main source of food in major parts of the country due to non-availability of irrigation facilities and we can not afford to ignore this sector.

We have to create conditions where our masses both rural and urban feel a part of the process of development and contentment.

Contribution by Tusharkanti Dey, Solution Exchange India

I think the difference lies in our attitude. In stead of looking this ever burgeoning urban population as a great liability to great enormous human resources would help us to address the problem from a different angle. Some of the solutions may be

1. Making arrangements for skill augmentation/up gradation to this vast number of unskilled/semiskilled urban slum dwellers.
2. Guarantying minimum wage days program for them like their village brethren.
3. Taking program for self enlightenment and emancipation for the urban slum dwellers
4. Introducing a health program catering their special needs.
5. Creating job markets for them.

There are many organisations who are working in these areas. We can share their experiences. Notable amongst them in Calcutta and surrounding areas are Child in Need Institute (CINI) and West Bengal Voluntary Health Organisation.

Tusharkanti Dey

All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Calcutta

Contribution by Ravichandran, Solution Exchange India

Public Distribution System (PDS) can me more effective if we have a better "Supply Chain Management", It may sound crazy - but I think we are having enough surplus and we just don't know who needs it? And how to preserve the food for the needy?

Some of our food wastage's are more than the consumption volume of some developed countries. Either we are not able to preserve or we don't know who needs it?

For example, if you ask a milk man who is spilling away his milk, why he can't store his milk and sell it the next day? His reply may be that the cost of storage is much higher than the profit he gets by selling the milk.

Some of the infrastructure programs by Govt are doing wonders: such as the Golden Quadilateral project. It has improved the supply of eggs from Namakal to Northern India!!

When I was flying to New York - I saw an article of an organization which helps the poor over there (Providing Food). Their Job is to collect the surplus and distribute to needy.

We need a better Supply Chain Management System in place to make our PDS more effective.

Contribution by R P Sinha, Solution Exchange India

Dear Siddharth Aggarwal,

Thank you for bringing forth this important topic and for your pioneering work for urban health and development issues.

Some points from my experience for your kind consideration.

I am not aware of any pan India study that has been done on urban food insecurity. I look forward to it from you and the discussants.

In my years with the Government, UNICEF, USAID-MOST and FXB International, in different capacities, I have had the privilege to be part of the health and nutrition surveys and studies among slum dwellers, by leading institutions such as the ICMR, NIN, Medical colleges and different organisations. The levels of anaemia, VAD, Iodine Deficiency, in these population sub groups, if are taken to be representative of the malnutrition levels and food insecurity among the urban population, then the conclusions drawn are - the situation is no better than the rural areas in many cases worse in respect to food insecurity.

From this supposition, if food insecurity is deduced from the malnutrition levels, the situation is indeed grave. Warranting urgent attention.

The women and children are the most vulnerable. This also has social, economic, administrative, legal implications apart from seriously compromising the rights and obligations given under the constitution and International agreements.

The urban migration that is snowballing of recently further adds urgency to the urban food and nutrition issues.

The urban situation is further alarming in the sense that at the economically poorer levels of workers, daily workers, construction workers, and other migratory workers, need to earn and pay for the food daily.

There is hardly any savings, being unfortunately anonymous or faceless to the system, and being virtually singular in existence, they have little support from the urban community. In the rural areas, this is better in the sense that community recognition and response do occur in many instances. The rural bias of the policies that has been practiced earlier is another issue that calls for revisiting. Having mostly cut off their rural roots due to the urban migration there is little to fall back upon in hard times.

In some cities, the red card system has been introduced but it has reached a small fraction of the needy due to many reasons, in spite of the best intentions. The public private initiatives have shown good results in many parts of the country.

ICDS IV - Universalisation of ICDS with the focus on impact is an ambitious program and along the urban mission bearing the name of our first PM, are in the forefront to meet the challenge. There are many CSR initiatives by companies. The PDS system needs to be stream lined. The different efforts by religious and social leaders, philanthropies need to be synergised to enable better service delivery.

The near unanimous opinion of the development stakeholders is to strengthen the Public private partnerships with increased community involvement in the form of from needs assessment, planning to service delivery and its monitoring. Understandably, the action has to be local under an overall umbrella of National policy with better monitoring and evaluation.

R P Sinha
Independent Consultant
New Delhi

Contribution by D S K Rao Consultant, India

Dear all,

Food Insecurity among the Urban Poor' is a unfortunate reality of the current times arising mostly due to the following reasons:

- Urban Migration by Rural Agrarian masses due to poor Agricultural practices and the economicviability
- Climate Change and it's impact on Rural Poor
- Forced Migration for Political purposes
- Lack of Jobs and Development in Rural Areas

It is observed that these poor people have a pattern of urban settlement from sleeping and dwelling in Public places like Bus stands, Railway Station, Public Parks and below flyovers in the initial stages to some slums in 2-3 years with the tacit support of some politician or contractor. This initial period of migration is the most painful for these poor people when many of them starve, get exploited and live a miserable life.

Charity is a quick fix temporary solution to this problem and there is a need for root cause analysis (RCA) and a permanent solution, which can come

- Micro Planning at Rural Community Level
- Increase Rural Incomes by devising productive vocations to the Rural Communities
- Deploy Best Practices to the current vocations of the Rural Communities
- Train and Deploy the Manpower of the Rural Communities to make the Rural Community operate as a set of Enterprises

With an Integrated Information System at the Rural Community level in place and a facility to provide Best Practices to the Rural Masses remotely, which further can be upward integrated for Accountability and Monitoring, the problem can be addressed to a large extent.

The document on Community ERP available at <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/food/cr/res29050901.doc> can provide further details.

D S K Rao
Consultant
Hyderabad

Contribution by Neelkanth Mishra from Oxfam, India

Dear Members,

UNDP has come up with India Urban Poverty Report using human development framework provides analysis based on data collected on food security, access to health care, especially childcare, etc. This report will be extremely useful for this purpose

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

Solution exchange has covered related issue in earlier discussion. I think responses from earlier discussion will also be useful [http://www.solutionexchange-](http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/en/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=239&Itemid=78)

[un.net.in/en/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=239&Itemid=78](http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/en/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=239&Itemid=78)

Neelkanth Mishra
Oxfam India
Lucknow

Contribution by Anshu Kumra Independent Consultant, India

Dear all,

Food security is a major global concern today. Improving food security at the household level is an issue of great importance for a developing country like India where millions of poor suffer from persistent hunger and malnutrition. I attempted to examine food insecurity 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.

The aim of this study was to look at all the essential dimensions of food and health status. So, to situate the problem in the perspective of food insecurity, all the indicators (benchmark and alternative) from the study were discussed in the light of food availability, access and food absorption as suggested in Food Insecurity Atlas of Urban India, MSSRF and WFP, October 2002.

Information was gathered on the demographic profile of the households, access to PDS, dietary intake, anthropometry, household asset profile, type of salt used, maternal and reproductive health, morbidity status of the household members, selected lifestyle behaviour, microbial load of water used for drinking purposes and coping mechanisms adopted by the poor households i.e. how households adapt to the threat of food shortages.

Food availability included information on markets, food prices, remittances and public distribution system. Food access covered information regarding food and nutrient intake at household and individual level, employment, income, expenditure pattern of the households and also on literacy levels, housing and asset profile of the families. Food absorption encompassed information on water supply, toilets, drainage and health care facilities, immunization, morbidity, selected life-style indicators and nutritional profile of the vulnerable groups. Most of the variables chosen described the deprivation aspects of these people.

Impact of independent variables on household food consumption, food and nutrient adequacy and anthropometry of the vulnerable members of the households was analysed.

The factors that could possibly be associated to the food insecurity status of the sample households and individual members have been listed below.

1. Type of housing
2. Access to piped water supply
3. Access to private toilets

4. Access to electricity
5. Waste disposal facility
6. Employment (Un/under employment)
7. Nature of employment (casual/regular)
8. Income level
9. Dependency burden
10. Educational level/ skill
11. Expenditure on food
12. Expenditure on transport
13. Debt burden
14. Intra-familial food distribution
15. Gender bias
16. Household size
17. Access to facilities like :
 - Health care
 - Child care
 - PDS
 - Education
 - Transport
 - Credit

It was evident from the results of the study that the sample households in the colonies had poor infrastructure, low educational levels, poor economic status, high dependency ratio, no savings or insurance to fall upon, poor up take from PDS, poor food and nutrition adequacy and poor nutritional status of the vulnerable members i.e. adult females, adolescent girls and 0-5 year old children. The study revealed that poor households coped with financial shortfalls in a variety of ways by selling household items, pledging assets, buying food items in exchange of scrap, borrowing food or money from neighbour or relative, pledging assets, purchasing food on credit, missing a meal or cutting meal size, avoiding going to the doctor, withdrawing children from school, sending member/s to village or to some relative. Negative measures like stealing and prostitution were also reported.

The findings of this in-depth study offered a number of lessons for choosing and using a people-friendly approach while formulating developmental policies in the country. The study suggested that

- Households in the urban slums are food and nutrition insecure.
- Their food consumption is much lower than the recommended levels.
- Within the household, adult females, adolescent girls and preschoolers get much less than their due share because of unequal intrafamilial food distribution.
- There is deficit in their heights and weights as compared to the reference data.
- These households hardly benefit from the public distribution system.
- They live on day-to-day basis because of poor educational and income levels.
- Livelihood plans must be integral to the slum improvement plans.
- Arrangements should be made for providing health services, transport and education.
- Planning of wholesale and retail markets is essential.
- Credit facilities should be given to reduce economic stress.
- The problem of food security is multi dimensional. So, the city planners must realize that a comprehensive package covering all aspects like health, nutrition, education and employment is the least that should be offered to the people living in the slums. This will enhance their social and economic security and hence the food security.

Anshu Kumra
Independent Consultant
New Delhi

Contribution by Kamrul Islam from Italy

Prospects of Community shop in increasing food security of urban poor.

Dear Friends,

It is obvious that urban poor suffer from mal nutrition. The reasons are manifold net like structure that can not be broken within a short time. As urban poor are suffering, I am proposing a short term measure that will improve the food security within the poor.

The idea behind this proposal is that urban poor have to buy their food from common market at competitive price of rich people. For example, in Bangladesh our staple food is rice. So urban poor have to buy rice from a urban market that is equal for all. The fact is that the price of rice is very low at farm level at certain season. Before a quantity of rice become available at urban market it handed over many times and the price increased at every step. Within this consideration, the food security among the urban poor can be increased by adopting the following measures:

1. Formation of a urban poor community group
2. Involvement of an organization
3. Formation of community shop
4. Provision for 80% share among the community and 20% for the organization.
5. Establishment of a rural (farmers) community
6. Provision for rural community share at urban community shop
7. Buying food directly from the rural community
8. Selling food among the urban poor at low profit.

Provision to sell food among the urban poor from community shop at credit when necessary without any interest but with some restriction that will decide by the urban poor community themselves.

This is a basic idea and your idea can make it actual to increase food security among urban poor.

Thank you.

Best regards,

Md. Kamrul Islam
Research Doctorate student
Universita degli Studi di Napoli "Parthenope"
Italy

Contribution by Rajni Modgil College of Home Science, India

Yes food insecurity among urban poor population is increasing reasons can be migration from villages. Unemployment is one of the reasons along with climatic changes. This can also be due to education that prepares students for white collared jobs. Need of the hour is to start/ vocational

courses so that self employment can be done so migration towards city will be less this will help improving the economic status there by increasing nutritional status.

Rajni Modgil
College of Home Science
Himachal Pradesh
India

Contribution by K V Peter World Noni Research Foundations, India

Today's urban poor is a galaxy of people mostly migrants from villages with in a state and outside the state and even illegal migrants from Bangladesh and Srilanka. The migrants have come for better wages and a better life to their dear ones at home. The present slums are unable to accommodate them due to sheer lack of space and minimum facilities for living. Language is becoming a barrier for migrant from Bihar to Pudugudi in Chennai, who came for building construction and now ending as a slumdog. The role of Government can be accelerated by responsible NGOs with participation of people living in urban slums. Private-public-partnership mode of development will be one of the answers. I also visited hospitals run by sisters for the urban poor. These model facilities can be embellished to provide decent living structures to the urban poor. Ultimately, what is needed is keeping the urban poor to earn for their living by providing suitable jobs. They do not want charity, they want jobs.

K V Peter
World Noni Research Foundations
Chennai
India

Contribution by Sara Granados-Ortiz FAO Latin America and the Caribbean, Chile

Dear Siddharth and All,

In the urban agriculture projects of FAO in Latin America is included a participative methodology for identify the real consumption of some groups of food as vegetables and fruits, cereals, tubers and roots. The information obtained is added to the base line for monitoring and systematization.

Recently the group of urban agriculture has been developed an exercise of systematization of 5 projects remarking the impacts of our interventions on food security among urban poor.

Please see the complete process in this link:
<http://www.rlc.fao.org/es/agricultura/aup/sistema.htm>

Also I want to contribute the forum with an example about ways to address food insecurity among the urban poor.

Community organizations of farmers supported under FAO projects and local initiatives are a good strategy, where the urban poor can start a business experience and income. The exercise is not easy and takes hard work and monitor. However, successful initiatives have been identified as a popular slum in Bogota, Colombia, where 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 kl 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 auto consumption. Its goal is to expand, to invite new partners and increase production to get new customers.

Best regards,

Sara Granados-Ortiz
Group of Urban Agriculture
FAO Latin America and the Caribbean

Contribution by Shubhada Kanani University of Baroda, India

Dear Siddharth,

Regarding your query on how problems of food insecurity in urban poor were identified, the methods and survey results, I am sharing the research monograph <http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/food/cr/res29050901.pdf>, I wrote with colleagues in which we compiled studies carried out in our department over the last few years among the urban poor (including some urban-rural comparisons). The study was on infant and young child feeding practices in slum families. The monograph also includes a section on methods used including the direct observation method and interviews.

As we can see, the scenario is as dismal as in rural poor; and there are a lot of variations in adoption of various IYCF practices; but the message is - child feeding is as much a challenge in urban poor communities as in the rural areas.

Shubhada Kanani
The M S University of Baroda
Vadodara

Contribution by Martin Fowler from Uganda

You may like to include this news item link which provides some interesting points on food quality and food security amongst urban dwellers?

Yours,

Martin Fowler

GLOBAL: Urban poor and hungry burgeoning unnoticed
JOHANNESBURG, 13 July (IRIN) - The number of poor and food-insecure people in developing countries is increasing more quickly in urban areas than in rural areas, and could be dropping off the policy radar, says new research by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).
Click on the link below for the full report

[Http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=85265](http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=85265)