

African Food Security Urban Network



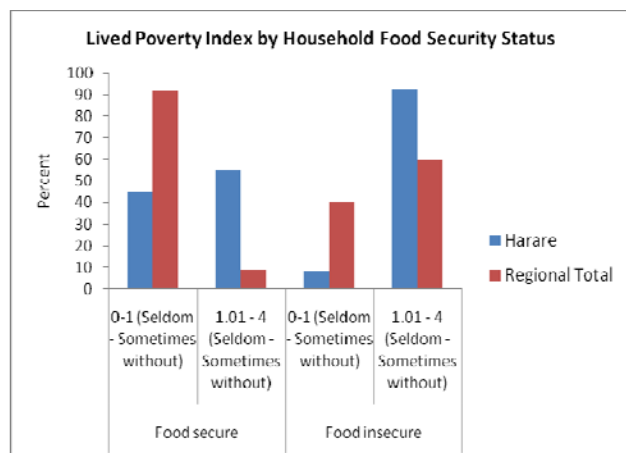
AFSUN Policy Brief HARARE

Overview of the Study

The Urban Food Security Baseline Survey was carried out Harare during October and November 2008 in the two suburbs of Mabvuku and Dvivarasekwa. The CSO (2004) Provincial Profile for Harare was used as a sampling framework to select households to be included in the survey from both suburbs, which are representative of lower income areas in the city. With the sample selection divided between the two suburbs, the survey collected data from 462 households and 2,572 individuals. The average household size was 5.6 persons and the majority live in nuclear (37%) or extended (35%) families. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that 23% of households interviewed were female centred, compared with eight percent that were male centred.

Key Findings

Levels of Food Insecurity and Income: At 95%, almost all households sampled were food insecure, and a further 92% experienced months of food shortages during the previous year. These findings mirror the fact that the survey was undertaken in perhaps one of the worst periods of economic decline in the history of Zimbabwe. During this time, unemployment was high (62%), reflecting the low-income status of the respondents. Indeed, some respondents had gone for more than five years without earning any form of income. Even where households had an income, about 60% earned ZAR500 or less per month. Using the Lived Poverty Index, the figure below demonstrates that poverty levels are significantly higher for Harare than for the region as a whole.



While food secure and insecure households had about the same proportion of wage earners, food secure households had higher levels of remittances (16% compared to 11%). Informal businesses were of equal importance to both food secure and insecure households (28%). Although few households reported urban agriculture as a source of income (1.4%) or as a strategy in addition to the household's main source of income (15%), it is noteworthy that income from urban agriculture was greater (median ZAR450) than for waged labour (median ZAR400).

Migration and Food Insecurity: Interestingly, despite the extreme economic hardships, most people had not moved or migrated in search of better conditions. Cross-border trading was the main form of movement. Families also received some form of remittances either from the rural areas (mainly in form of food stuffs) or from relatives working outside the country (in cash).

Health and Food Insecurity: Despite the prevailing economic hardships and the low average household dietary diversity (4.7), 83% of respondents showed high resilience and reported being in good health. The most important health problems reported include chronic diarrhoea, hypertension and stroke, as well as asthma. The diarrhoea might also reflect the cholera epidemic that swept through the country which was just beginning at the time the survey was done.

Policy Issues

Economic Recovery: Given the importance of wages for households as a means of meeting food needs, the stabilisation and growth of the economy will play an important role in improving food security (and health) for households in Harare.

Urban Agriculture: Policy should bring urban agriculture within the domain of urban land use, as a pro-poor strategy. This is crucial within the current context of limited employment opportunities that exist.

Project Support

AFSUN's first funded project is *Urban Food Security and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa* and is supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) under its University Partners in Cooperation and Development (UPCD) Tier One Program. The project is being implemented in the cities of Blantyre, Cape Town, Durban Metro, Gaborone, Harare, Johannesburg, Lusaka, Maputo, Maseru, Manzini and Windhoek.

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