

African Food Security Urban Network



AFSUN Policy Brief MSUNDUZI

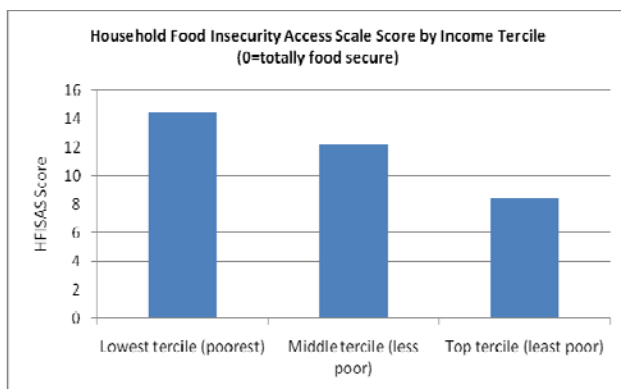
Overview of the Study

The Community Survey of 2007 by Statistics South Africa portrays Msunduzi and its surrounding hinterland as modestly populated with the lowest average annual growth rate between 2001-2007 of the top eight cities in South Africa. With a population of fewer than one million and a growth rate of less than one percent - compared with over three percent for Ethekweni, Ekurhuleni, Cape Town and Johannesburg - the immediate consideration is that it is of less importance than the other cities with apparently more dire development imperatives. However, the findings of the Urban Food Security Baseline Survey (August 2008) which sampled 556 households and 2871 individuals in vulnerable communities within Msunduzi, shows that the city's poor face some of the most pressing poverty and food security challenges in SADC.

Key Findings

Levels of Food Insecurity: The findings of the survey are cause for considerable alarm. Over 70% of households indicate that their food security situation has deteriorated compared with 2007. To underscore the seriousness of the situation, 92% of households were found to be food insecure at the time of the survey. In addition, the dietary diversity of the sample population was poor, with a median score of five. Removing sugar and non-nutritive beverages reduces the number of different food types typically consumed to only three, which is insufficient for a healthy life.

Income and Food Insecurity: The data show that income poverty and food insecurity are directly related. The figure below illustrates that as household income decreases, levels of food insecurity increase.



Of those in the economically active age cohort, 33% are in formal employment, the other two thirds in informal employment. But most importantly, 68% percent of the employable group is unemployed. Furthermore, less than 50% of households have incomes that come from the 'traditional' family unit, namely a male and female partnership. Most incomes come from pensions, child grants and child labour. There is a worrying lack of alternative employment strategies.

Environment, Health and Food Insecurity: Within the Msunduzi context, environmental health concerns are significant because of poor waste management as well as poor catchment management and contamination of water and air. The survey findings show that tuberculosis, often associated with HIV/AIDS is prevalent, particularly among people 15 years and older, and that the highest levels of illness and death occur in food insecure households.

Policy Issues

Three strategic policy issues are identified:

- Msunduzi has its own dynamics and the nature of food insecurity is both a rural and an urban scourge. Nevertheless the overarching food insecurity issues range over the city state and strategies to address food insecurity must encompass an integrated approach that brings Ethekweni and Msunduzi policy-makers together.
- Such a broader framework requires new memoranda of understanding between political entities and a related integrated data capturing, quality assurance and sharing mechanisms than do not exist at present. The concept of urban observatories, as already established in Cape Town and Johannesburg, should provide a means for information sharing for policy purposes at the level of the city region.
- Public private partnerships, already visible in the city region, need to be more rigorously coordinated for the benefit of improved responses to inadequate service delivery and drastically reducing urban poverty that is the root causes of food insecurity.

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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