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ADAPTING TO AN URBAN WORLD

Tailoring food security and livelihood assessments for urban settings

By 2008, for the first time in history more people lived in cities than in rural areas.

Today the world's urban population stands at about 3.9 billion, but it is expected to surpass six billion within 30 years. Close to 90 percent of the increase will be concentrated in developing countries in Asia and Africa, particularly India, China and Nigeria¹.

Estimates vary but it is likely that more than one billion people live in urban slums, the fastest growing human habitat.

Urbanization can be seen as an indicator of economic progress, but unplanned urban expansion raises many challenges. Many urban residents struggle to pay the high cost of city living (rents and food) or to afford sufficient food to meet their minimum nutritional requirements. Unhygienic, crowded living environments with poor access to

basic services, lack of security of tenure, unemployment, violence, public health risks and poor sanitation may further undermine their food security. These underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity are often exacerbated by an increasing number of climate change related disasters, and by international and domestic hikes in the cost of food and fuel. Due to a high dependency on markets for food, urban populations are particularly vulnerable to food price fluctuation.

The urban poor may have a less diverse range of coping strategies to employ in the face of food insecurity than do their counterparts in rural areas: for example they cannot access land to grow their food and inter-generational support networks tend to be weaker.

Managing urban areas is one of the major development challenges of the 21st century.

This challenge includes ensuring access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary needs and food preferences of all urban residents at all times to allow them to lead active and healthy lives.

However, food security assessment tools specifically designed and tested for urban settings are limited because the humanitarian community has traditionally focused on assisting people in rural areas. The characteristics of vulnerability in urban settings are generally more complex and require a different approach to identification and targeting. More subtle vulnerability assessment and targeting tools are needed to take into account this complex dynamic. This work is urgent as urbanisation gathers pace.

¹The 2014 revision of the World Urbanization Prospects by UN DESA's Population Division

Adapting to an Urban World project objectives

The Adapting to an Urban World overall objective is to strengthen food security analysis to support humanitarian programmes for urban settings. The project will combine qualitative and quantitative methods to gain an in depth understanding of the complexity of the factors. It will be implemented over a two-year period from approximately September 2014 - December 2016. It will develop assessment tools that can establish:

- 1 Clear criteria for identification of vulnerable neighbourhoods
- 2 How to take into account differences in food consumption within the household and how to account for more complex food consumption patterns (including street food and other food eaten outside the home)
- 3 How to capture the diversity of earnings within one household and within geographic areas
- 4 How to identify coping strategies more typically used in urban areas.

These tools will be designed and tested in six or more different urban contexts facing food insecurity, including areas affected by conflict, natural hazards, migration, rising food prices, poverty and in slum dwellings.

The Global Food Security Cluster and WFP VAM will co manage the project with a steering committee consisting of World Vision, UNHCR, Oxfam, Samaritan's Purse, IFRC, World Animal Protection and ALNAP providing advice and guidance on planning and implementation.



PHOTO BY RESIDENT OF MUKURU SLUM, NARIOBI, KENYA

Work accomplished so far

Desk review

Phase I of Adapting to an Urban World included an updated desk review carried out in 2014, which built upon WFP/Oxfam's 2010 review of approaches, methods and tools used by humanitarian agencies to measure livelihoods, food insecurity and vulnerability in urban contexts. The results of the desk review will inform the design of the country case studies by highlighting the methodological gaps and recommended solutions when assessing urban food security needs.

Harare, Zimbabwe, November 2014

Harare was chosen for the first Adapting to an Urban World project pilot following input from partners of the steering committee. With a population of over 2million, nearly half of whom live in urban areas, the city has high unemployment, poor water, sanitation, housing, waste disposal and health services. The main objectives of this study were to contribute to the understanding of how to assess food security in urban areas and to test existing tools so as to inform future urban food security assessments.

The data collection exercise consisted of an exploratory part using qualitative methods and another testing an existing data collection tool and its suitability for urban areas.

It concluded that in order to collect accurate data in urban areas the following need attention:

- Define the criteria for including areas in the sampling frame so that the most vulnerable areas are assessed.
- Find out what is consumed outside the house and how often, so that this can be accounted for in the food consumption measure.
- Include a market and urban agriculture component.
- In household expenditure module include all expenses and assets.
- Ensure that the shocks and coping strategies are appropriate to urban areas, especially the livelihood related coping strategies.
- Categorise and define different income activities to distinguish which income earners are more vulnerable to food insecurity.
- Include information on nutrition (especially for children under five, pregnant and lactating women and TB & HIV/ AIDS patients), water and sanitation, migration and access to social services such as health care, education, transport and refuse collection.
- Include questions on poverty levels of an area, whether there are differences between poor areas, whether access to services varies by subgroup, whether specific programmes are reaching the poorest, and how to design effective poverty reduction programmes.

These findings will be used to inform the Government of Zimbabwe's 2015 urban assessment and to produce a model applicable in other southern African countries.

Jordan and Lebanon, April 2015

This case study focused on Syrian refugees living in the urban areas of Jordan and Lebanon. The methodology included a desk review of urban food security assessments and analyses conducted in the countries and interviews with key stakeholders in the region to identify the main challenges, gaps and solutions in conducting urban food security and vulnerability assessments. The case study demonstrated that humanitarian actors in the region have developed a number of innovative vulnerability analysis methodologies, though many specific indicators (such as coping strategies, measuring food consumption, measuring expenditure) are still proving challenging to apply within the urban contexts.

Antananarivo, Tulear and Tamatave, Madagascar, ongoing 2015

This assessment was initially planned to inform the design of a WFP school feeding programme. WFP and the gFSC have seized this as an opportunity to collaborate with the Adapting to an Urban World project, and to learn about how to improve urban assessment methods. The exercise included some initial qualitative data collection, used to inform the design of the household survey tool, and to better understand the composition of commonly consumed street foods. The assessment will test the adapted tools and methods and document the strengths and weaknesses of the new approaches.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Define vulnerable urban areas	The starting point for any assessment is the selection of the location in which to implement a survey and subsequent programme. Defining clear criteria to identify the most vulnerable and food insecure areas within the urban context is one of the key challenges.
Household income	It is very challenging to gather comprehensive data on the income of a household because urban jobs and incomes differ so much: they can be daily, weekly, temporary, numerous, diverse and fluid (Creti, 2010). To develop a tool for a comprehensive analysis of household income in urban contexts we recommend, for instance, supporting research that will specifically seek alternative ways to account for a comprehensive list of the sources of income and associated income, while also ensuring time and cost efficiency.
Household expenditure	The challenge is to comprehensively capture the number of food items and how much households spend on them, particularly in slums and poor neighborhoods. Typical indicators are more complicated to use in these settings. For example the food Expenditure Share and its established thresholds are questioned in urban contexts, where non-food expenditure, such as rent and heating, is relatively high.
Food consumption	Urban households are likely to eat a more diverse range of foods than rural, but the quality of their diet may be limited, so the standard Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicator may not adequately reflect food insecurity in an urban setting. WFP VAM is carrying out some innovative work to examine nutrient adequacy within a household, which is likely to be particularly valuable in urban areas. This FCS-N (i.e. N for nutrition) analysis will be applied and further tested in the proposed pilot country assessments. This should help identify households that are not adequately meeting their nutritional needs. The FCS is typically focused on foods prepared or consumed at home, while urban households more frequently consume food outside. The project is working to establish methods to measure the consumption of these foods, and their implication on household level food insecurity.
Coping strategies	Many coping strategies typically included within urban assessments are more appropriate for rural contexts. Urban-specific coping strategies and severity weights must be developed in order to properly measure how urban households adapt.
Sampling	The heterogeneity of urban contexts makes sampling a complicated exercise. Representative samples that include wealthy areas are a waste of resources, so this issue is closely linked to the identification and understanding of vulnerable areas. Innovative efforts are underway to develop sampling techniques for urban areas, including the use of GIS software, population density maps, snowball samples and key informants. Combining these techniques is proving to be effective in various urban settings.

Next Phases

Phase II and III of the project will include 4-5 additional case studies from Asia, Latin America and Africa to explore different aspects of urban food insecurity. The capacity and existing urban initiatives of national partners and governments will determine the locations of these assessments.

As with the first three assessments, these case studies will aim to identify the most common methodological challenges when assessing urban food security. They will pilot test various approaches for sampling, data collection, data analysis and targeting methods, again combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the complexity of factors impacting food security measurement.

In particular the process for each case study will include the following activities:

Activity

Secondary data review

Mapping/zoning exercise

Household and market survey and qualitative analysis

Lessons learned

Outputs

- Overview of food insecurity situation and determinants
- Description of the indicators, methods and tools to assess food insecurity, highlighting solutions, challenges and gaps

- Stratification of the areas based on common demographic and socio-economic or other relevant indicators
- Description of the main livelihoods of the households
- Description of the sampling strategy

- Description of food security and key determinants in the area assessed
- Validated indicators, methods and tools
- Analysis of potentials for market based response and cash transfer programming

- Recommendations to overcome specific gaps and challenges in assessing food security needs in urban settings
- Guidance on the collaboration mechanisms for food security programmes between gFSC partners and urban administrations as well as communities.

Steering Committee: advises on planning and implementation



ALNAP
Active Learning Network for
Accountability and Performance
in Humanitarian Action



Global Food Security Cluster & WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping: co manage the project in terms of coordination and technical guidance

