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THE URBAN STREET FOODS TRADE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

by

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The Equity Policy Center's study of street foods began in September 1981 with funding from the United States Agency for International Development, Office of Women in Development. The project comprises country studies in Senegal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Each project has examined the street food trade in order to design interventions that would increase the income of the vendors and improve the nutritional quality of the food sold. In the Philippines and Indonesia, additional attention has been given to the nutritional contribution of street foods to household diet. In Bangladesh, the implementation of recommendations forms an integral part of the project. The Street Foods project is scheduled for completion in November 1984, at which time a report of the overall project and the results of the individual country studies will be available.

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INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, the sale of raw and processed foodstuffs by street vendors is a widespread phenomenon. Known commonly as street foods, these foodstuffs range from full meals to snacks. Acara, a fritter made of cow pea flour is a ubiquitous and popular breakfast food in West Africa; in Egypt it is eaten for lunch. Anticucho, a skewer of roasted beef heart, is consumed both as a snack and as part of a meal in much of Peru. Satay, a grilled skewer of chicken or other meat, is widely consumed in Indonesia and Malaysia. Full meals of rice and meat are sold on the street throughout much of the developing world.

The buying and selling of these products is a daily activity undertaken by many urban residents: it is a source of employment and income for many of the urban poor, and also contributes a significant share of daily food consumption for a very large part of urban populations. Not atypical is the evidence from Indonesia and the Philippines, respectively. In Bogor, a city of 200,000 in Indonesia, one in sixteen of the urban population is involved in some aspect of the street food trade; in Iloilo City in the Philippines, one in four people in the labor force derives an income from street foods. Furthermore, 22% of the urban household food budget is expended on street foods (Chapman 1983; Barth 1983).

The sellers of these foodstuffs are numerous in urban areas in most developing countries. In cities they practice their trade in many locations. Street foods are sold in marketplaces, at bus stops, outside factories, schools, and cinemas, and along the footpaths of shopping streets. Many residential neighborhoods are dotted with sellers of snacks and meals. The street foods vendors may be stationary or ambulatory. Those occupying fixed sites may operate out of three-sided stalls complete with a stove, a table, and some chairs; others display their foods on a low-lying table, the cooking and processing having been undertaken away from the place of sale. Their mobile counterparts use many different kinds of equipment as they traverse parts of the city. In much of Southeast Asia the shoulder pole, with a brazier slung from one end and the uncooked ingredients from the other is a common sight; in Latin America these vendors frequently use carts that unfold to provide both a cooking area and eating space with a table and seats; in the West African city the mobile street seller more often plies his/her wares on foot using a tray; the pushcart seller with a tray full of drinks or foodstuffs is commonplace in many cultures.

But this system of trade is not limited to urban areas. No less prevalent are street food vendors found in villages and rural

areas throughout the developing world.

In spite of the pervasiveness of this economic activity, street foods have tended to be overlooked by many development planners, policymakers, and researchers. Certainly, street food vending like the rest of the informal sector has tended to be viewed with disdain. The assumption has been made that, with modernization, the informal sector would disappear. Not surprisingly, inaction has often been the preferred approach by development practitioners. Alternatively, the bulldozer method of removal, a system used to eliminate slums a decade ago, has also been used.

Yet street foods by their very ubiquity would seem to be responding to an important need. The sector will not go away. A more constructive approach to the informal sector, in general, and street foods, in particular, is required. As Don Mills of Jamaica rightly points out, "you can't sweep these business people away, you're going to have to plan them into the system ..." (The Daily Gleaner, 1983). It is time to recognize that, while vendors do pose problems, cities must deal with them. The challenge for city government will be to reduce the negative problems associated with street food vending, such as sanitation and traffic congestion. At the same time, city governments must leave intact the constructive contribution this sector makes to the urban economy. In all likelihood, this requires that a new urban administrative machinery be established to deal with the informal sector.

These considerations led the Equity Policy Center (EPOC) to initiate an inquiry into the dynamics of the street foods trade. The initial objectives of this project were to identify interventions that could assist vendors to increase their earnings from street food preparation and sale, and/or to improve the nutritional quality of the food sold. As a first step in a more positive approach which plans with, rather than without, street food vendors, EPOC began a survey of the street food trade in four countries: Senegal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This aspect of the project continues. However, the collection of data without an understanding of the planning and policy environment in which these activities occur makes the undertaking of change difficult at best. To succeed, interventions require support not only by target groups but also by the planning environment and socio-economic system in which they operate. This paper focuses directly on the contextual issues surrounding the street food trade.

The paper begins with a more detailed consideration of the income generation aspects of this economic activity. Reflecting a concern for women, their role as street food processors and sellers is considered in some detail. The street food vending establishment is discussed within the context of the range of food catering enterprises found in developing countries. As already suggested, the street foods trade is seen as a persistent phenomenon of the third world city. The validity of this view, and one that justifies the urgent need to plan with, rather than without, street vendors is argued, as variables that explain the expanding demand for street foods are considered.

Action implications of this important sector must be considered at three different levels: nation, city, and entrepreneur. The interface between the street food vendor and the national policymaker, the process of city government and the pattern of program assistance for the individual entrepreneur are considered separately. Recognizing the sector's important contribution, both to the vendors' and consumers' lives, the paper concludes with a call for an approach to street vendors that regulates any adverse side-effects of this trade, while not endangering the constructive aspects.

WHAT ARE STREET FOODS?

All street foods involve some processing of the raw ingredients. These can be either raw foodstuffs or partially processed items. Rice and noodles, which can be processed either at home or industrially, fall within this second category. Preparation prior to sale will be minimal for certain foods. The sale of peeled oranges or mangoes are two familiar examples. Another grouping calls for processing but no cooking, such as ceviche, a fish appetizer eaten along the Pacific Coast of Latin America.

However, the majority of street foods are cooked, either prior to sale or on demand at the time of purchase. Monie is a millet-based porridge widely consumed as a breakfast food along the West African coast. The sellers have large cauldrons of food ready to be spooned out to the consumer at their selling sites. By contrast, many hawkers of noodle-based dishes in much of Southeast Asia are fast food cooks: the food is prepared upon receipt of a customer's order, although the noodles themselves may have been boiled in advance.

Street foods include both snacks and meals. Snacks include a myriad of foods; roasted peanuts are the most common. Ceviche and acaras, mentioned earlier, are mainly eaten as snacks, as are cookies, sweets, and a variety of beignets or donuts. The components of meals will vary by culture, as will the degree of entrenchment of the custom of eating out. In West African cities a

plate of rice and sauce bought from a street food vendor is a popular lunch for many workers; in Southeast Asia, a street meal may mean anything from a bowl of noodle soup to a dish of rice, vegetables, and perhaps, meat.

Another distinguishing feature of street foods is their ready consumption at the point of sale. Such a definition also includes foods that the consumer may take home for inclusion in a family meal. Tempe(1), a food widely consumed in Indonesia, is often bought as a snack to be eaten immediately or for inclusion in the household meal later in the day (Peluso, 1981). In Peru, tamales, which are a Sunday and holiday treat, are rarely made at home. Generally, people of both high and low incomes purchase them either for immediate consumption or to be eaten at home. Excluded from this definition are processed foods that are bought primarily for home consumption such as a pound bag of cookies.

A further dimension of the street food sector is the scale of and locale in which the sale occurs. The trade in street food, as discussed here, falls largely within the ill-defined notion of the informal sector. The street food trade is generally very small in scale. Like most services, it is a labor-intensive and capital-scarce economic activity. Apart from investment in mobile trading units, the equipment required to conduct this trade is limited: little more than several dishes, a cooking pot such as a cauldron or wok, a brazier, and a few utensils. Thus, street foods are marked by very low capital to labor ratios. Yet, even as the enterprise begins to upgrade itself, the technology retains its labor-intensive characteristics and its very low capital to labor ratios. The creation of street vendor emporiums in certain cities has meant the designation of specific food vending spaces within the urban area that are provided with serviced infrastructure. For many of these "modernized" street food vendors, the change may mean a shift from charcoal to gas cooking facilities, with few changes in the tools of the trade but frequent substantial increases in overhead costs (McGee and Yeung, 1977).

Often the street food trade is practiced within a family-based unit of production. Responsibility for either or both the preparation and sale is usually vested in one member of the household, either male or female. The undertaking of various tasks by other household members is remunerated in different ways, varying as much by household as by culture. In Liberia, children sell the bread their mothers produce to other school children (Carter, 1982). Generally, their earnings go into the household pot, a pattern that ties in closely with the trade apprenticeship system that operates among traders in many West African countries. Elsewhere, members of the household are remunerated for the individual tasks performed.

The introduction noted the range of sites in which street foods are sold: on doorsteps, in front of the cinema, outside schools and factories, or in and around marketplaces. Many of these are sites that have never been functionally designated by the government as trading areas. However, within some trading communities, such as Lima's ambulantes, rights of tenure for these lots may be well recognized (Rowe, 1983). Officially sanctioned sites include the occasional booths within marketplaces and the specific cooked food vending areas found in some Southeast Asian cities (McGee and Yeung, 1977).

The practice of street food trading may be fixed or ambulatory. For the former, the vendor's designation of his or her trading site may be no more than a cloth upon the ground or a single table and several chairs in the front of a house. Mobile vendors are identifiable by their tricycles, shoulder poles, or their four-wheeled barrows. In many countries, the impermanent location of these trading sites reflects a legal system that frowns on such activity, making earning a living from this trade even more precarious. In Lima, Peru, and Jakarta, Indonesia, strong actions are taken on a regular basis by the municipal government and the center of the city has been "cleansed" of most street vendors because they were considered an affront to the tourists (Babb, 1982; Jellenik, 1977). The official reasons for these cleanups, be they health hazards or urban unsightliness, ignore both the strength of demand and supply for this service.

Income Generation for Women: Street Foods

While street foods are important to the diet of the urban poor, they are not exclusively consumed by the poor. In many countries, street foods are an integral part of the diet of all segments of the population. However, the provision of these foodstuffs is an economic activity that is largely the domain of the poor and one that is practiced by many women. It is commonly held that hawkers generally, and street foods traders in particular, are recent urban migrants who, because of the lack of opportunity, are forced into this type of economic enterprise. It is also widely believed that since hawking requires little skill or capital; there are few barriers to entry. Certainly, in their study of hawkers, McGee and Yeung (1977) found that a lack of capital and skills were the primary reasons that many individuals, most of whom were recent migrants, became hawkers in the six Southeast Asian cities surveyed(2).

This same pattern seems to repeat itself on the Pacific coast of Latin America. Both Bromley (1978b) and Moser (1981), who have examined the role of street vendors in Colombia and Ecuador respectively, found that a lack of alternatives for both men and women gave them little choice other than to become micro-

entrepreneurs. However, a significant minority, longer established city residents as well as migrants, sought a living in this area for more positive reasons: the possibility of earning a good income and economic mobility. In West Africa, positive reasons are among the more dominant explanations for entering all traditional market trading. Hawking and vending are seen as a viable basis for captial accumulation (FAO, 1977). For the vast majority of the population, both men and women, the tradition of starting small is widely accepted.

It is the possiblity of starting small, together with the application of cooking skills that women already practice as part of their domestic responsibilities, that leads them into street foods vending. The means of getting established would seem available to many women, even those with the most limited of resources. In many cases, the initial capital is provided by the family. Basic equipment is present in most households. For example, investment in preparing and selling popcorn, one of the more ubiquitous of street foods, requires only a fire stove and pot, which most women have at their disposal.

Women also enter this trade by adding to the family cook pot. They might "set up shop" by selling a few extra servings of food prepared primarily for family members. Food might be sold across the door of the single room that the family calls home. In Monrovia, the term "cookshop" is used to describe the table and two chairs outside a house. To the passerby, this denotes the presence of a street food vendor offering soup and rice (Carter and Mends-Cole, 1982).

While skill requirements and low entry costs may attract many urban women into this trade, it would be wrong to suggest that women form the majority in this economic activity in many developing countries. Moser (1981) identified 14 men to 11 women cooked-food sellers among the occupational categories of the barrio population in Guayquil, Ecuador. In Ziguinchor, a regional market town in Senegal, 77% of all street food vendors were women (Posner, 1983). In Islamic countries where the code of purdah exists, there is little visible evidence of female participation in this economic activity on the street. Yet women are no less active in these countries. Women cook at home, while other family members sell the products. Simmons (1975), working in Northern Nigeria, identified a vibrant area of female economic enterprise in the preparation of a wide variety of ready-to-eat foods. Almost 80% of the women surveyed were involved in food processing. Secluded in their compounds, women prepare foods which they either sell within the compound or which they entrust to their children to vend on the streets. By contrast, urban Thai women are active as producers, sellers, and producer-sellers of street foods in urban areas of all sizes.

The factors that attract, as well as force, women into street foods make it a highly competitive trade. Large numbers of operators make it difficult for sellers to affect prices. In many countries, price-fixing among established vendors is common (Peluso, 1981). Non-price inducements are used to attract the buyer, including attractive displays and strong reputations. But does the competitive nature of this economic activity, which erodes profit levels, make for a precarious livelihood for many of the individuals involved? To date, the evidence is conflicting. The notion that all women can upgrade their businesses and become small-scale restaurateurs is unfounded. Yet not all are merely eking out a living. Teilhet-Waldorf and Waldorf (1983), working in Bangkok, have estimated that food vendors made three times the minimum wage rate (3).

Nelson (1979), working in Kenya in 1974, found that women working in a dominantly female business, beer making and trade, could earn 250-400 Kenya shillings per month. This compared very favorably to the minimum formal sector wage which was 200 Kenya shillings per month. At the same time, it is important to point out that in some countries, food vending is among the lower income forms of street trading. In Peru, most women see food selling as a transient means to earn a living. The goal is to move from selling food that spoils, to vending non-perishables, such as clothes, shoes, and notions.

Unfortunately, the wheels of fortune move in favor of only a minority. Earnings of most prepared food vendors, male and female, place many not only below formal sector wages but also in the marginal and submarginal income categories. Moreover, as Moser (1981: 20) points out:

"In virtually all economies women predominate at the lower end of the labour market where they cluster in specific sectors. Not only are they distributed vertically, that is to say, sex segregated on the basis of gender hierarchy, into lower paid, lower skilled and less managerial work, but they are also distributed horizontally (that is to say, within particular sectors), most obviously in those occupations which are an extension into the market of domestic labour."

The street food trade would seem to be a perfect fit to the above description, and within the sector itself, women predominate in the lower earning categories. In Ziguinchor, Senegal, not only were revenues earned by men from street foods generally six times those earned by women, but also within a product group, men earned more than their female counterparts (Posner, 1983). Lait

Caillé, or yogurt, is a widely consumed street food in much of Senegal. It is also a provision that is rarely made by the household. Both men and women sell it on the street. While returns to investment are comparable -- 43% -- the level of daily profits for men is 1600 francs CFA compared to 370 francs CFA for women (Posner, 1983).

These data, while limited, do suggest that women are locked in at the bottom of the trade. Since the street food trade is an economic activity that offers room for capital accumulation, why then do so many women seem caught in a poverty trap? The EPOC Street Foods Project will examine this issue, but at this stage, only a few clues can be suggested, based on other studies. In referring to Nigeria, Simmons (1975) has indicated that the advantages of the food processing industry for women can be seen "in terms of its adaptability to women's skill level, interests, capital and labour availability, social restrictions and profit requirements" (159). While most Hausa women purport to practice this economic activity, many do it sporadically, often to supplement the household income when particular needs must be met. On the other hand, such flexibility brings with it a continual influx of new entrants, both old hands and newcomers. This persistent change creates intense competition, with the result that consumer prices are kept at minimum levels, often barely above cost, and profits are, at best, minimal (Simmons, 1975).

Yet one reason why women so frequently persist at this trade is the general compatibility of domestic duties, such as childcare and cooking, with market work (Greenstreet, 1981; Heyzer, 1981a, 1981b; Bunster and Chaney, forthcoming). Da Vanzo and Lee (1978) in a detailed study of Malaysian time budget data for market women found that nearly half of the women who have children under 10 have their children with them while they sell street foods. In Accra, Ghana, Pellow (1978) also found that market women combined trade with childcare and, in addition, could cook for their families as they worked; female traders would prepare a coal pot at their market site, purchase ingredients nearby, cook the meal, and either save it until later or send it to their husbands.

The time pressures created by women's need to meet the household's subsistence requirements are well known (Tinker, 1976). Domestic demands not only encourage women to enter market activity, but, in certain cases, these pressures dictate the types of street food activities which are most feasible. However, many of these choices are culture specific. In Senegal, men predominate in those foods where preparation is undertaken at the point of sale, such as brochettes, while women prefer products such as monie and acara which can be prepared at home, so that the time spent selling can be, and usually is, much shorter. In Ecuador, women show a preference for the sale of foods that can be prepared on the

street; those foods prepared at home are processed by women but many times are sold by men (Moser, 1981).

This accommodation to the demands of the household will also change with stages of a woman's life. Traders may shift street foods depending on their time requirements. An example from Indonesia best illustrates the point. Bu Joyo is a Javanese who currently sells tape, a snack made from cassava. As a teenager, she began trading by selling betel-nut leaves. She then turned to salt, and later to unhulled rice which required long hours away from home. With three children to take care of, she turned to emping, a delicacy that is fried crisp and eaten as a snack or with meals and later to tape, both products that could be processed at home and sold at a neighboring marketplace. After the birth of her fourth child, she stopped selling in the marketplace, limiting her trade to nearby food stalls (Peluso, 1981). Bu Joyo, always a trader, has carefully chosen the commodity to fit her life style and family situation.

The life of women street food vendors is certainly not easy. Inevitably, most are governed by the economics of survival, living at the margin. But for those that have migrated from rural areas, the harshness of urban economic life is probably seen as an improvement. Without question, for some women, the practice of street foods trading is a very direct adaptation of their rural lifestyles. Many bring with them a familiarity with vending. In rural areas, the sale of prepared foodstuffs has often been a valuable income supplement. But since women also have to farm, the extra burden of this off-farm employment is particularly onerous in rural areas. The daily routine of the small town or village Ghanaian woman described below is certainly typical of much of the developing world, including Africa south of the Sahara.

- 4 a.m.: Started cooking pap for selling at the roadside; took about 30 minutes; swept the yard, washed the pots and the calabashes for the pap(4).
- 5 a.m.: Heated water for bathing herself and the children, made herself and the smaller children ready to go to the roadside stall.
- 6 a.m.: At the roadside with the smaller children and the pots with pap. Sold pap, with sugar and small portions of bread.
- 9 a.m.: Left the roadside after selling almost all the pap; went to the market to buy fish.

- 10 a.m.: Left the smaller children with the daughters; went to the farm to hoe a new plot; took three hours; collected firewood for one hour; used one hour each way to walk to and from the farm.
- 4 p.m.: Returned to the house with heavy load of firewood; started cooking the evening meal.
- 5 p.m.: Pounded the cassava to "fufu;" ate the evening meal.
- 6 p.m.: Cooked pap again and went with the smaller children to the roadside to sell it.
- 9 p.m.: Left the roadside; took the evening bath and put the children to bed.
- 10 p.m.: Went to bed (FAO, 1979).

Street Foods: A Food Catering Establishment

The street foods trade is an integral part of the urban informal sector, but it can be viewed as a component in the range of food catering establishments in the cities of most developing countries. Street food vendors are but one category in a range of food catering services that includes restaurants, coffee shops, cafes and creameries, fast food chains, and canteens in office buildings, factories, and public institutions including schools (Cheng, 1982). This is a gamut of prepared food outlets which would seem to offer something for everyone. With a broad range of vending outlets, the question must be asked: what specific aspect of demand is met by what we call the street food traders, both stationary and mobile?

Estimates of the significance of street food consumption are few. Only a limited number of household budget studies single out a category approximating street foods. The definition of street food is different in each study, making comparisons difficult. Yet, as the discussion below indicates, some extrapolation is possible. In a 1965 study of urban marketplaces in Accra, Ghana, Reusse (1974) calculated that between 12% and 14% of food expenditures by African households in that city went to prepared foods other than bread. These items included meat pies, cakes, boiled eggs, ground nuts, meals, and beverages sold by traders located on the street, sometimes in kiosks, as well as across the city's marketplaces. While the analysis found that these street foods were an integral part of the diet, there is little further elaboration. Drawing on descriptions of urban life depicted in the indigenous African literature, one finds that street foods are not

only important to the diet, but their purchase is very much part of daily life. In a description of a typical morning in Accra, Ghana:

"For our breakfast, Service gave me a shilling to buy some yoki-gari from a woman who stationed herself just across the road from our house.....The woman put fourpence worth of garri (5) in the pan I gave her, added fourpence worth of beans, and then the oil which added to the flavour of the whole mixture" (Duodo, 1969:111).

Similar conclusions flow from the more recent data gathered on monthly household expenditure for food and non-food items in urban Peninsular Malaysia in 1973. Defining food establishments outside the homes as hawkers and vendors' stands (where food is prepared quickly for waiting customers), or eating shops (where more substantial food is served upon ordering), and restaurants, it has been found that an average of 21% of urban food expenditures was spent on food consumed outside the home. When different income levels are considered, the relationship with foods consumed outside the home follows a U-shaped curve. This percentage is highest (25-28%) for the lowest deciles in the household expenditure classes and lowest (18-22%) for middle level segments of the population. The proportion rises again for the highest end of the household expenditure scale, increasing to 24%, perhaps reflecting expenditures in more expensive eateries, especially restaurants (Iam, 1982).

In Singapore, the pattern of eating out appears even stronger. Cheng (1982) found that in a population of 2.4 million, one million meals are consumed outside the home daily. In food expenditure terms this means that, on average, a household spends 35% of their food expenditure on food cooked outside the home (Cheng, 1982). What is especially interesting when compared with urban Malaysia, is the breakdown of these figures by expenditure quartiles. As monthly expenditures rise, the percentage spent on cooked foods rises, going from 28% to 41%.

Is the evidence from these studies of two Southeast Asian cities contradictory? Certainly, neither study attempts to relate expenditure groups to the type of eating establishment, and, without further information, it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions. While it cannot be argued that feeding the urban poor is the only function of cooked food hawker and vendor units, we can assume confidently that a significant proportion of the low income sector's purchases of cooked foods are made from hawker units and vendors' stalls. As incomes rise above a certain threshold, prepared foods are increasingly, but not exclusively, purchased from high-priced establishments.

Malaysia and Singapore are among the richer of the developing countries. While street foods make up an important component of the urban food expenditure in those countries, a question remains regarding the nature of the demand for street foods in other developing countries where incomes are considerably lower and the street food tradition may be different. Certainly, the figures from Accra, while lower in terms of household food expenditures for street foods, do not appear out of line.

Musgrove (1978), working in Latin American cities in the early seventies, found that between 8% and 14% of household food expenditures were spent on meals consumed outside the home. His elasticities of household expenditures indicated that, as expenditures rise, the proportion spent on foods consumed outside the home rises more slowly than in the cities of Southeast Asia cited above. At the same time, while the elasticities of expenditures on foods consumed outside the home are less than one; in Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela they are higher than overall food elasticities.

Data for rural areas indicate a different, but not conflicting, relationship. In a detailed examination of rural household expenditure patterns in backward regions in Nigeria and Malaysia, Hazell and Roell (1983) provide insightful information on expenditure behaviour for precooked snacks. They found that the average budget share for precooked snacks of total household expenditure was 1% and 2% for Muda, Malaysia, and Gusau, Nigeria respectively; comparable marginal shares were 0.87% and 2.62%. The data further indicated that with expenditure elasticities of 1.34 and 1.43 in Muda and Gusau respectively, increases in rural household expenditure were accompanied by disproportionately larger increases in purchases of prepared snacks.

At first glance, these urban and rural data might seem incompatible. We cannot draw general conclusions from these few findings. Yet certain of the differences would seem to lie in the nature of rural and urban demand. In rural areas, consumption of street foods is limited to the pre-cooked snacks that are offered for sale in every rural periodic marketplace or are purchased on the occasional visit to the local market town. In view of the relative poverty of the rural populations encompassed by the Muda and Gusau surveys, it is likely that snacks fall within the category of luxuries, whose consumption increases as incomes rise. By contrast, the urban data strongly support the assertion that street foods are an integral part of diet. Notwithstanding the tentative base of the above conclusions, it is evident that the demand for street foods is an urban phenomenon. In the discussion below the relationship between street foods and urbanization is examined more closely.

An Expanding Urban Demand for Street Foods

Street foods are consumed by all sectors of the population, although each income level tends to have different reasons. The discussion below offers grounds for concluding that demand for street foods will continue even as average incomes rise. The listing of consumer groups is not intended to be definitive, but focuses, instead, on those groups that can be expected to grow. The urban poor have not been singled out as a homogeneous group. While they are a big group, they are also a very diverse sector. At this stage, the data are insufficient to detail the nature of this sector's demand for street foods; however, it will be an issue that can be discussed in greater depth upon the completion of the first four country studies of the EPOC Street Foods project (6). Meanwhile, suffice it to say that many of the urban poor find the purchase of street foods in their economic self-interest. Given that preparing and cooking food is time consuming, many of the poor find that there are greater benefits to be gained in purchasing street food meals and snacks and spending the time on income-generating activities.

City Growth

Urbanization in developing countries has entailed a rapid growth in city size. With it have come the problems of traffic congestion and the need to travel long distances to work. Many of the urban poor find housing in sururbios and bidonvilles, illegal squatter settlements usually located at the urban periphery. This means a long daily commute for those living in these areas and lucky enough to have work. Since few can return home for lunch, and because food prepared at home spoils quickly in hot climates, street foods become a primary source of mid-day nourishment. Not suprisingly, a typical scene in many countries is the lunchtime concentration of numerous street food vendors outside construction sites, factories, and office buildings.

The purchase by the urban poor of street foods meals for lunch is a function of the distance between home and work and their limited purchasing power, while for middle-income earners an additional set of variables accounts for their consumption of street foods. The speed with which street food meals can be purchased and eaten creates an important demand for street foods by middle-income earners, especially office workers, with short lunch breaks. The lunch-time concentration of numerous street food vendors on the sidewalks around government buildings is noticeable in many developing country cities. In Latin America, a new demand for street foods by middle- and upper-income earners is becoming evident. The traditional long lunch hour has always ensured that the working population (other than the poor) had both the time and

resources to return home for lunch. Now, country after country is witnessing the demise of the "siesta hour." The consequence, as explained by a Latin Americanist, is an expansion of street food vending to meet some of the needs of this new consumer.

Migration

The World Bank (1979) has found that throughout the period 1970-1980, most developing countries have experienced average annual rates of urban population growth in excess of 4%. However, just over half this increase was attributable to natural increase; on average 42% was accounted for by rural-to-urban migration (Linn, 1979). In Africa, much of Asia, and, to a degree, in Latin America, this new city population is composed of men who come to the city alone. "Bachelor" men do not cook and rarely eat at home. Rather, many depend on street food meals and snacks as their primary form of nourishment for all meals (Moser, 1981).

The consequence is a target group made up of migrants, who are important consumers of street foods. Moreover, they are a population that will continue to exist and expand. Projected developing country average annual urban growth rates for the period 1990-2000 are estimated at 3.5% (World Bank, 1979), while anticipated rural-urban transfers as a percent of urban growth are expected to remain the same, 42%, during the same decade (Linn, 1979).

In certain countries, male migrant demand for prepared foods has brought with it the creation of institutional arrangements to meet these men's particular needs. In Korea, for example, vendors are contracted to supply food to factory employees. The diversity of client-seller relationships that groups of men develop with women preparers of meals is separate from the general system of street food vending, yet closely related to it. In Indonesia, this arrangement is known as pondok. A woman is contracted to provide meals and lodgings for a group of migrant workers, many of whom may work as hawkers themselves. Spartan hostel-like accommodations are provided and credit is given, if necessary. Far from being exploitative, the pondok also furnishes protection, friends, and family for recent migrants. Living under this system the migrant can afford to send half his earnings home (Jellinik, 1978a).

A similar arrangement has evolved to meet the needs of migrant mill workers in Bombay. A phenomenon resulting from the growth of the cotton mills, the khanaval is primarily concerned with food provision (Holton, 1981; Savara, 1981). A woman, known locally as an annapura, prepares two meals a day for male mill-workers (usually men from her own native village) for a monthly payment. Lunch is eaten at the work site from tiffin boxes

delivered by the preparer; the evening meal is consumed in the food vendor's place of residence which may also be a boarding house. The annapurna receives between Rs 80-100 per month from each man for this service, a rate that only mill-workers can afford (Holton, 1981).

In much of West Africa a comparable practice exists. L'abonnement du bol is a street food sub-system in which a migrant pays a woman to provide him with regular meals. A more formalized version of these institutional arrangements has emerged in Peru. In the 1930's, the Aprista party introduced communal kitchens or comedores populares. They were established to meet the food needs of low-income segments of this population, many of whom are migrants. Today, they continue to serve this function.

Housing and Fuel

Among the features of third world urbanization is population overcrowding in substandard housing. While data on the incidence of slum and squatter areas in cities of less-developed countries must be considered cautiously (Linn, 1979), estimates do provide some insight into the severity of the problem. Grimes (1976), in his study of housing for low-income families, found that 90% of the population in Yaounde (1970), 35% in Manila (1972), and 40% in Lima (1970) live in low-quality housing. Similarly, even allowing for some variation in the definition of a room from census to census and survey to survey, it is obvious that the low-quality housing stock problem is compounded by excessive overcrowding. In sub-Saharan and Latin American cities, where overcrowding is measured by the number of persons per room, Linn (1979) provides estimates of 3.0 persons per room in Nigeria (1960), 2.5 in Kenya (1962), 2.0 in Peru (1960), 2.1 in Ecuador (1962), and 2.2 in Haiti (1970). High densities are, in most cases, accompanied by shortages in cooking space, making it necessary for residents to purchase their meals. For a large percentage, this translates into the consumption of both street food meals and snacks.

Yet even where cooking space is available, the continually rising cost of fuel has meant that for many poor urban households, daily cooking has become too expensive. Many families find it cheaper to purchase street food meals where economies of scale bring the price of a serving below the cost of home production. While quantitative data to support this assertion are at present unavailable, it would seem an issue that should be addressed by planners.

Food for School Children

Outside the school gates is one of the more universal locations for street food vendors. Street food vendors in numerous

countries congregate outside school buildings to meet the lunch needs of children at all levels. In Liberia there is a thriving trade in bread for school children (Carter, 1982). In Jamaica, it is de rigueur for every child to bring 50 cents in lunch money to school. The money is usually spent on foods sold by vendors outside the school gates. Not only is there a sizeable demand for street foods among children, in some countries this food comprises an important part of the student's daily diet. In selected primary schools in Ile-ife, Nigeria, it is estimated that 96% of school children bought breakfast from vendors before coming to school. The same study also found that 8% of these school children purchased one street foods meal a day, 76% bought two such meals, and 16% purchased three (Kujore, 1983).

In the absence of hard data measuring the size of this segment of demand, its importance is perhaps best reflected by the concern expressed by policymakers and nutritionists in Jamaica, the Philippines, and several other countries to the quality of food purchased with this money. It is argued that too often it is spent on street foods that have a low nutritive value. In Jamaica, feeding school children is among the country's nutrition policies. Reflecting on this problem, researchers at the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute have concluded that improving the quality of the foods that street food vendors sell might be preferable to trying to abolish vendors from the school gates.

While in the early grades many school children live at home, attendance at secondary school, vocational institutes, and university requires migration to the city in many countries. Like migrants in all walks of life, many students must depend on street food meals and snacks as their main form of nourishment. Again, a diversity of informal client-seller relationships has evolved to meet these needs, arrangements not dissimilar from the arrangements for migrants discussed earlier. In sum, students from elementary through university ages -- a sizeable segment of the urban population -- in almost all developing countries eat at least one, and often all, their meals from street vendors.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE STREET FOOD TRADE: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PLANNING

Street foods are eaten by a broad spectrum of the population, although they fulfill different needs for different groups. Irrespective of people's reasons for eating or selling street foods, one fact is obvious: the consumption, preparation, and sale of street foods are established facts of urban life in most developing countries. The patterns of urbanization that have produced this phenomenon will continue for many decades. As a result, the informal sector in general, and the street food trade in particular, can no longer be swept away. Past practices, which, either by default or intention, have had the thrust of trying to eliminate this sector, have not succeeded, and might not be the best way of approaching the problem. But few governments, municipal or national, are willing to accept these realities. The need exists to replace the controversy and ambivalence that surrounds street foods with positive actions. Planning with, rather than without, street food vendors means an accommodation of this service segment of the population within urban economies.

Such a shift in policy perspective has important implications for development practitioners of all types. The rest of this paper identifies some of the key issues, describes current approaches, and considers possible directions for change. Focusing on policy planning issues, the discussion that follows treats three different planning scales:

- o the macro level, where national development policies define the priority accorded both this order of economic activity and the issues surrounding this type of trade, in particular, food and nutrition;
- o the middle level, the city context in which the street vendor practices his/her trade, and
- o the micro level, or the scale of the individual vendor's mode of operation

National Planning and Street Food Vending

Governments' Approach to Street Food Vending

"Hawking is a manifestation of the syndrome of urban poverty" said Y.M. Yeung (1977:85). "but removing hawkers or curbing their activities will not attack the root of the problem."

Not only is the street food vending sector held in poor esteem, in most developing countries, but this negative attitude is expressed across a spectrum of political persuasions. At one end of the scale are those who judge the informal sector to be "unmodern" and, therefore, not to be supported, since modernization is presumed to bring with it the demise of the informal sector. At the other end lie those that view the informal sector in general, and petty commodity producers in particular, as an inevitable and undesirable consequence of the political economy of capitalism. Thus, according to this view, assistance intended to help the street food vendor can be no more than palliative, unless it is accompanied by changes in the underlying structural dimensions of the economy.

Lurking in the wings behind all this political rhetoric is a reality in which street vendors are a continuing phenomenon in the cities of developing countries. In view of their persistence, a more constructive approach would seem called for, one that focuses on why, in the many countries now attaining intermediate stages of development, the street trade thrives rather than shrinks with economic development.

At present, the gap between the rhetoric and reality often translates into a position of ambivalence among many national authorities with regard to street vending. Least ambiguous are the views of many government officials in Latin America who see this type of economic activity as unsightly and pathological signs of underdevelopment (Bromley, 1978b). In Colombia, this has been translated into a national government policy, both rhetorical and actual, toward the street vending population which reflects: "an almost obsessive belief in the desirability of 'modernization and progress' coupled with a strong belief that these objectives can be achieved by imitating the features of the countries which are considered to be the most 'modern' and 'progressive'" (Bromley, 1981:79).

In India, the ambivalence of government officials is manifested by an absence of official recognition of the rights of street sellers coupled with a de facto acknowledgement of their role within the urban economy (Sebstad, 1982). In Chandigarh, for example, authorities earmark parking spaces for mobile vendors who use four-wheeled barrows, but make no allowances for the equally numerous pavement sellers who obstruct pedestrian traffic (Sarin, 1976). Traders were always an accepted part of the national commercial landscape in Ghana. However, since 1976, the "Specified Commodities Decree" has acted as a cover for the government's progressive exclusion of self-employed women from certain sectors of trading activity. A general "masculinization" of the trade in imports has forced many women to restrict themselves to economic activities associated with the trade in perishable commodities.

Compared to manufactured items, perishables provide a considerably lower rate of return on one's investment (Petritsch, 1981).

A parallel distrust of street vendors in South Africa is intertwined with the country's deeply ingrained apartheid policies. Many urban traders -- all of whom are black -- are bound by two systems of rules: white and black. By the "white man's law," vendors are considered to be an inconvenience. According to the "black man's law," this is not the case; but the traditional black authorities who are local chiefs sell the women expensive licenses to enable them to hawk (Nene, 1981).

Echoing a restrictive colonial hawker tradition in Hong Kong, changes in the legislation over the years seem to reflect a purposeful attempt to squeeze out this sector of the population. Food vendors have been limited to designated locations (McGee and Yeung, 1977). As in all countries that regard hawkers and vendors as "undesirable," these micro-enterprises have exhibited a tenacity that has foiled the best of government intentions. In Hong Kong, as elsewhere, the hawkers continue to function outside zoned areas (Newcombe, 1977). In Singapore where the streets have been cleared of street food vendors, the underlying thrust of the policy has been similar. Not only have food vendors been limited to zoned trading areas, but no one under the age of 40 will be granted a street vending licence (McGee and Yeung, 1977). These attempts to control hawkers have been only partially successful. By forcing vendors to operate in designated areas, most of which are serviced with water, electricity, and sanitation facilities, the government has raised overhead costs for vendors which has, in turn, forced them to raise prices. One consequence has been that the cost advantages of buying from hawkers has disappeared and the foods sold by many street vendors are now beyond the means of some of the poor in Singapore. Observers have suggested that evidence currently exists that alternative modes of street food delivery in the form of house-to-house deliveries are emerging to fill this gap.

Contrasting noticeably with the above anti-street vendor policies is the approach taken by the Malaysian government. Very much the exception, this country has had one of the more positive and supportive approaches to street vendors and the service they provide. Since 1969, the government has encouraged hawking. Not only is it seen as a means of incorporating bumiputras or indigenous Malays into the economy, but the Malaysian government also recognizes the interests of the consumer. Hawkers perform important functions that other institutions such as supermarkets have found more cost-effective to leave to the hawker sector. In urban areas and small towns, itinerant and market vendors are the primary source of perishable foodstuffs which are purchased by most households on a daily basis (Friedmann and Sullivan, 1974; Lam,

1982; McGee and Yeung, 1977; Yeung, 1977). As Lam (1982) points out, the consequence is that in Malaysia, "hawkers probably will not be a relic of the past but will probably thrive because they are complementary, not competitive, elements in the urban food system" (Lam, 1982:28).

Nutrition

Nutrition is a different, but important issue in any concern for food, including street foods. Malnutrition is the scourge of many countries and its eradication takes high priority within broader health policies. Among the many responses are a variety of programs for the provision of fortified foods, weaning foods, school feeding, and maternal and child health. Underlying these projects is the premise that urban as well as rural diets are poor in quality. Notwithstanding the inadequacies of diet, the nutrition profession has tended to ignore street foods as a component of household diet. Thus, where such projects were defended on the basis of available nutrition surveys, in all likelihood they were studies that largely ignored street foods.

In the past, most nutrition surveys have assumed that foods eaten outside the home, especially street foods, were of minimal importance in the diet. While the above discussion provides clear evidence to refute this assumption, within the nutrition profession the importance of street foods in diet is only now beginning to arouse interest. There is growing recognition that street foods may be not only of considerable importance but also may be nutritionally sound. They are not necessarily supplements to diet, in the manner that many perceive snack items, but also integral components of diet. Moreover, certain very important items consumed on a regular basis are rarely made within the home, but usually purchased from outside processors, often from street vendors. Bean curd, which is eaten in many parts of Asia, is one example of this type of food. Elsewhere, it has been suggested that many households in Southeast Asia lack oil in their diet. Given the high cost of oil in most developing countries, it is very probable that most fried food items are purchased from outside sources, in many cases street vendors.(7) If valid, this would seem to have important implications for previous estimates of calorie and fat consumption.

The provision of food aid for maternal-child health and school and institutional feeding programs is inseparable from nutrition policy. A diversity of methods has been attempted in school feeding programs, among them the distribution of ready-to-eat commodities, the establishment of centralized kitchens, as in India (Indira Community Kitchen Society, 1980-81) and the operation of larger assembly-line cooking facilities in Mexico and Peru. Among the impediments to the success of these initiatives have been

weaknesses in their delivery systems. Too often, governments have found them to be too costly. In the Philippines, attempts were made to put additives into school lunches with the intention of improving the nutritional quality of the food (GRS Nutrinews, 1978). Among the effects was an increase in the price of the food, at times placing it outside the budgets of the consumers.

In Nigeria, a country where school lunches are not available, school children purchase their meals from street food vendors that congregate outside the school gates. In many parts of the country, there are established training programs whose objectives are to improve the quality of the street foods sold to school children. In the city of Ile-ife, these street food vendors are required to be licensed. In order to obtain such a permit, a vendor must pass through a course in health, hygiene, and menu planning. Not only has this program, which was established in 1958, been effective in imposing some quality control on the foods these vendors sell, but passage through the course has acquired a status of its own. Increasing numbers of city-wide street food vendors want to take the course so that they can hang out their "diplomas" and attract more business (Kujore, 1983). Not only does such an approach use existing and familiar traditional institutions, but the program has other merits in introducing standards of food preparation and sanitation to segments of the population not otherwise easy to reach (Berg, 1981; PAHO, 1982).

Food Policy

Attitudes and policies toward street foods can usefully be viewed not only in terms of employment, consumer demand, and nutrition, but also in the context of national food policies. Drought, world recession, and population growth, together with declining food production and consumption prospects in a number of countries over the last decade (especially in sub-Saharan Africa) has led to a policy emphasis on increasing the domestic production of food. Increasing domestic production is not only intended to feed an expanding population, but is also aimed at reducing food imports, a major factor contributing to the adverse balance of payments situation confronting many developing countries. This has also meant encouraging a lessening dependence by low-income countries on international food aid, which has become an integral part of their long-term food supply system (Jackson and Eade, 1983).

There has been a recent growing emphasis on increasing production within traditional small farmer marketing systems. Actions are being advocated that will translate into production incentives for farmers, while also improving the informal and formal distributive infrastructure for food. Reflecting the primary rural concerns of many of these projects, this approach

largely ignores the nature of the demand for this food. In most instances, demand for produce is assumed as a given. It is formulated largely using oversimplified measures such as "tonnages" and "calories." The complexity of urban and rural consumption and distribution patterns are lost from view (Lele, 1982). In turn, this would seem to beg the question of whether this urban demand is being effectively transmitted to rural producers.

Street foods are extensive users of domestic food supplies. Of the fifteen most extensively consumed street foods in Ziguinchor, Senegal, all used domestic and regionally grown ingredients. In addition, all the six cereal-based foods in this group either used millet or corn, locally grown staples that the government is trying to promote. In most countries, street food that use imported staples are still in the minority.

Conventional wisdom has it that urban consumers prefer imported grains such as rice. Local cereals are perceived as "inferior" goods and to be inconvenient to use. Certainly many grains, such as millet, require long preparation and cooking times. Preliminary evidence from EPOC's Street Foods Project suggests that urban residents will substitute cheaper, domestically produced grains for increasingly expensive imported foodstuffs and do so more readily if the inconvenience variable can be offset through the purchase of already processed grains from street vendors. People are responsive to domestically grown grains if these can be obtained in forms that are easy to prepare and/or already ready to eat. Foreign aid agencies (for example, AID in Senegal), and some governments have begun to turn their attention to ways to process domestic grains to improve their convenience and their palatability. Another means to the same end -- and a means almost totally overlooked thus far -- is fuller utilization of the already-existing networks for preparing local grains and other staples -- that is, the street food vendors. At present, cous-cous that takes a household two days to prepare can be bought in a ready-to-eat form on all urban markets in Dakar.

In transforming local output, the street foods trade generates not only value added, but also creates jobs and generates income in rural as well as urban areas. As such, it also meets a criterion of all food policies and programs: improving food consumption by expanding the productive employment and income of men and women who at present lack the purchasing power to obtain adequate food (USAID, 1982).

This link between street foods and food policy casts a different light on the significance of the street food trade. It suggests that it has a role to play in the broader national policy of increasing production and consumption of domestically produced food crops.

Figure 1

A policy paradigm for hawkers (the policies range from positive to negative going from left to right in the table).

Policy actions	A	B	C	D
Locational	Allow hawkers to sell legally from locations they desire	Allow hawkers to sell legally from some of their locations but remove from others to public markets or approved "sites"	Relocate hawkers in locations chosen by government authorities	Clear hawkers from all locations in city and do not allow them to sell within city
Structural	Encourage hawkers by: (a) Government loans (b) Inducements to enter hawking profession, e.g. no military service if a hawker (c) No legal action against hawkers for employing children on stalls (d) Allow existing marketing chains to remain (e) Make large firms distribute commodities through hawker outlets	Limited encouragement of hawkers by small-scale operation of measures put forward in Column A	Limited discouragement of hawkers by small-scale operation of measures put forward in Column D	Discourage hawkers by: (a) High licence fees (b) Make hawking punishable by many legal restrictions (c) Offer high salaries to hawker enforcement agencies' employees
Educational	Encourage hawkers by: (a) Typifying them as examples of successful entrepreneurs (b) Educating public to utilize services of hawkers (c) Encouraging philosophy of education that emphasizes experience as against schooling	Limited encouragement by small-scale operation of measures put forward in Column A	Limited discouragement by small-scale operation of measures put forward in Column D	Discourage hawkers by: (a) Emphasizing the immorality of hawking (b) Stressing the possibilities of corruption, petty crime that exists in hawking (c) Stressing the dangers of hawkers from the point of view of hygiene, etc.

Urban Planning and Street Food Vendors

While national policies and biases are important, it is at the level of the city government that the directives and biases of public policy and the reality of street food trading confront each other. In most developing countries, the city government is responsible for implementing all actions intended either to develop or eliminate the economic base of this segment of the food catering sector. But national and urban policies and practices are interlinked. While many urban governments have a high degree of administrative autonomy, their independence is constrained by their limited tax revenues and personnel. Since the central or regional government remains the main source of urban finance in most countries, city actions toward street vendors are often influenced strongly by the priorities of these higher level governments which may be somewhat detached from the realities of urban life. Thus, in analyzing and evaluating a city's approach to street food vending, although local conditions are important, actions of municipal governments should not be seen apart from biases of national policies toward the informal sector. Rather, they should be interpreted as reflective of an accommodation set within the broader parameters and attitudes defined by national policy.

Drawing on the policy paradigm developed by McGee and Yeung (1977), three foci of policy actions associated with street food vending can be identified. They encompass the locational, structural, and educational dimensions of urban planning (see figure I).

Locational Policy Actions

City policies toward the location of vending can be ranged along a continuum, extending from the prohibition of all street food vending at one extreme, to allowing sellers to trade legally anywhere they desire at the other. Irrespective of the stated reasons, of which the most frequently given are health dangers, obstruction of motor and pedestrian traffic, and the unsightliness of street vendors (Newcombe 1977), the periodic removal of street vending activities from urban streets by city government officials is probably the rule rather than the exception. It is an approach that rarely meets with any long-term success. Within three or four days of clearing Lima's streets of ambulantes, they are back en masse, responding to the undiminished demand for their services (Babb, 1982; Rowe, 1983). Likewise, in India, the harassment of street vendors by police and municipal workers is one of the most constant problems confronting street food sellers (Sebsted, 1982).

Anti-vendor actions have been a widespread phenomenon in the cities of many developing countries, but there is growing evidence

of an increasing de facto, if not de jure, recognition of the vital role of street foods within the urban economy (McGee and Yeung, 1977). For example, outside Manila, municipal officials in the Philippines take an accommodating view toward street vendors, and there is little evidence of the harassment or banishment from the streets that has occurred in the capital. Furthermore, from this recognition has followed a diversity of approaches that begin to integrate the street food trade into the urban system. Among them are moves towards legitimizing this economic activity by the relocation of vendors to specific sites chosen by government authorities or the provision of designated areas for vendors to "set up shop" at certain times of the day. The street food markets in Singapore referred to earlier in this paper come to mind (McGee and Yeung, 1977). Another strategy has been to forbid street foodsellers to operate in specific zones of the city, while at the same time allowing them to choose a trading site from a range of designated alternatives, including footpaths, outside schools, bus stations, and marketplaces. These experiences seem to have been shared by Malaysia, Thailand, and Bangladesh.

Structural Policy Actions

Where the presence of street food vendors is accepted, steps are beginning to be taken to lessen the many barriers that have been erected to prevent the legitimization of the street food trade. High license fees, official identification cards, sanitary inspections, the threat of arrest, and the confiscation and impoundment of goods are actions available to city officials. "Trader Clearing Operations," as they are known in Indonesia, (Jellinek, 1977) can temporarily ruin those already living at the margin. On the other hand, official recognition of the presence of street food vending, can serve the interests of vendors as well as city government officials, even if legitimization is not forthcoming. This can be achieved in a diversity of ways, including the provision of bank loans for operating capital that frequently make the difference between moving from survival economics to self-sufficiency. Elsewhere, as in Malaysia and Mexico City, city government have provided vendors with small carts (Azipe, 1977, McGee and Yeung, 1977).

The provision of functional space for street food activities is advised by many urban development experts as an alternative to the congestion that plagues so many streets and sidewalks where street food sellers conduct their trade (Bromley, 1976; McGee and Yeung, 1977). An integral part of such interventions should be the provision of sanitary services and municipal sanitary inspection and control. While desirable and feasible in countries where controls are stringently enforced and incomes sufficiently high, this services recommendation must otherwise be viewed with caution. The provision of such service raises overhead costs for vendors who

must pass them on as higher prices to the consumers if they are to cover their costs. Among the consequences might be more limited entry into the street food trade, or the possibility that vendors using these serviced lots might find themselves outpriced by other sellers not using the facilities.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a spate of marketplace construction projects intended to address comparable problems associated with the larger issue of perishable foodstuffs retailing. These projects were, to a large degree, a reflection of that period's development vogue for capital-intensive infrastructure investment. Several years later, however, many of these marketplaces are either underutilized or stand empty, testimonies to the misunderstanding by governments as well as international donor officials of the locational and socio-economic dynamics of small-scale food distribution systems (Mittendorf, 1978). Some of these marketplaces were located at distances well outside the time and income budgets of their users, both buyers and sellers, as in Cali, Colombia (Bromley, 1981).

This brings us to the second issue: who can afford to bear the costs of legalizing the street food trader's operations? In most instances, the designation of serviced or even unserviced trading space brings with it the imposition of a user tax to be paid by the trader. In World Bank projects, among others, vendor fees are expected to cover costs of marketplace development. In assessing the ability to pay, the levels of those fees are central. Avoiding the costs that arise if charges are too high should be a high priority. Traders, like all business people, try to pass on such costs to their clients, so the question that follows is whether consumers are willing to pay, or if traders can absorb, these costs. As noted above, the trade in street foods provides income and a source of inexpensive food for the poor.

Education

Hand in hand with any legalization of street foods is the need to change attitudes toward street food vendors and among street food traders themselves. A 1982 Pan American Health Organization report on the "Sanitary Control of Food" proposed several strategies attacking what was perceived as one of the most "intractable" problems in urban areas in Latin and Central America. To confront the dangers "associated with ambulatory street sales which are usually sold under the most unsatisfactory hygienic conditions" (1982: 46), programs for permanent and intensive training of the ambulatory food vendors and handlers were proposed.

Endeavors that address this problem are not new. As mentioned earlier, Nigeria has had, for many years, programs of providing hygiene and nutritional training to those street food

vendors that sell to school children. Vendors must pass such training programs before they can sell school meals. A collaborative effort between the Equity Policy Center and the University of Ife, Nigeria, intends to expand this training intervention to the street food trade at large.

Despite the good intentions of such educational programs, it is necessary to point out that the success of such endeavors will be limited by the absence of trading spaces provided with basic sanitary facilities. Advocating cleanliness in the presence of a contaminated water supply is a difficult goal to achieve. To this should be added a further footnote on the health and hygiene issue. A comment by a keen observer of the street food trade suggests that the distinction needs to be made with respect to the degree of disease generated by the hygienic conditions under which these foods are prepared and the resistance of the local population to certain food-borne illnesses. If so many street foods are contaminated, how do many street food vendors stay in business? Or is the problem that street food consumers tend to suffer from a low level of endemic disease, making the contamination issue somewhat invisible to both buyers and sellers?

Implementation of Street Vendor Regulations

In view of its varied elements, the street foods trade tends "to fall between the cracks" in the administrative purview of city policymakers, planners, and regulators. It touches on the primary interest of no single authority in most municipal governments, but rather is of marginal concern to many. Regulation and licensing of vendors usually falls within the orbit of the police department; health and sanitation control is the responsibility of the health department; obstruction to traffic flows concerns the department of transportation; and the provision and maintenance of marketplaces falls under public works. The result is frequent duplication of responsibility and confusion in policy toward vendors. Inevitably, the implementation of any legislation is very difficult. At the same time, it makes taking action to remove street vendors from the streets easy.

Under such circumstances, the key to successful planning for the integration of street food vendors into the urban economy lies with a coordinating mechanism within city government. Without delving into the mechanics of urban administration, a subject that is outside the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that in most developing countries successful coordination is the exception rather than the rule. Also, in view of the budgetary and staff problems that confront most municipal governments, the feasibility of coordinating a course of action toward street food vendors would seem to be severely constrained. The limited tax base of many developing country urban governments means that operating costs for

new programs have many times come from central government sources (Rondinelli and Ruddle, 1979). This is often disbursed sectorally, so that the funds move directly from the central ministries to their provincial or urban counterparts. The allocation of these funds may reflect national priorities rather than city needs, a point of inevitable conflict. If there is to be any movement toward a coordinated approach to street food vendors, the impetus will have to come from outside as well as within city government itself.

Planning at the Micro-Scale:
Assistance to Street Food Vendors

The post-1970 introduction of basic needs and equity values into the mainstream of development assistance brought with it an impetus for projects aimed at assisting small-scale entrepreneurs and those operating at the micro level, such as street food vendors. The rationale for these actions reflected a view clearly expressed by the World Bank:

"...that small-scale enterprises play a major role in providing employment and income to the urban poor, and that past neglect and policy bias need to be corrected to give small enterprise a fair chance in competition with large firms" (World Bank, 1978:9).

The extension of assistance to the smallest firms and to self-employed entrepreneurs has tended to center on supplying credit. Extensive research has suggested that obtaining capital is the major problem confronting the smallest entrepreneurs (Fraser, 1979; Hill 1982; Liedholm and Chuta, 1976; Reno, 1981; Sebstad, 1982). Traditional sources of capital -- money lenders, rotating credit associations, and family -- were either too expensive, or were ill-suited to meeting the overwhelming need for working capital. Formal banking institutions regarded this sector as outside the purview of their field of operations; the majority of vendors were unable to meet banks' collateral criteria and the costs of administering a lending program to micro-entrepreneurs were regarded as prohibitive. Confronting these constraints, indigenous and international development agencies implemented a diversity of credit assistance programs targeted on elements of the informal sector.

Without reviewing individual programs, we find that credit generally is made available to individuals through a wide variety of institutional arrangements (A.T. International, 1981; Frazer and Tucker, 1981; Farbman, 1981; Reno, 1981). These include:

- A. Specialized credit assistance organizations that give individual loans to traders. Many of these programs are implemented by agencies, such as the Metro-Manila Barangay Industries Development Program (MMBIDP), which fall under the jurisdiction of a government department (Brown, 1981);
- B. Community-based PVO organizations like the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK). They guarantee loans that are, in turn, lent to their members, most of whom are micro-scale operators (O'Reagan and Hellinger, 1981);
- C. Group-based loans are most frequently granted to an individual who is a member of a small group of fellow traders usually formed for this particular purpose. This group of peers guarantees the loans from a more conventional lending institution and members are held accountable to one another. If one fails to repay, all are penalized. Thus, there is group pressure to comply. The Self-Employment Program (SEIP) in Manila (Reno, 1981) and the assistance of solidarity loans to trícecleros operators in Dominican Republic (Farbman, 1983; Beardsley, 1982) are of this type.

Certainly, the level of repayment of many of these credit assistance programs has shown micro-entrepreneurs to be low credit risks. Reno (1981) indicated that some 200 self-employed women have participated in the Manila SEIP program and there has been 100% repayment. Programs in El Salvador and Nicaragua, sponsored by both government and non-government agencies, have experienced rates of repayment of close to 97% (Bruce, 1980). In Brazil, similar programs showed rates of repayment of between 63% and 71% (Bear, Jackelen and Tiller, 1982).

However, not all such projects have been so successful. There have been problems of implementation. The conceptual underpinnings of many of these types of projects have not always been clearly understood. Among the guiding assumptions of many credit assistance programs for micro-scale entrepreneurs is the view that such enterprises will expand and eventually accumulate capital and cross the divide between informal micro-economic activities into small-scale, more formal sector operations (Bear, Jackelen, Tiller, 1982). The result is a blurring of the objectives of such programs, particularly in cases where foreign donors are involved in the provision of seed capital. The distinction needs to be more clearly drawn between credit for business development -- an on-going structure that can support itself, create profits, and accumulate capital -- and credit to stabilize income-generation activities.

Quantitative evidence of the division of credit among operating capital, investment, and non-business purposes is rare, but Sebsted's (1982) analysis of the small-scale street vendors who belong to the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Ahmedabad, India, offers one illustration. She indicates that the credit received by small-scale street vendor members was broadly used for working capital (60%), social obligations, debt repayment (12%), health care (4%), and other purposes (20%)(8).

For many street food vendors, especially women vendors, the building of their business is only one among several goals; others include taking proper care of their families and furthering their children's education, and meeting other obligations imposed by social cultural standards. At least some of these expenditures, however, are certainly developmental in the long term: the families, and in the aggregate, the society, would suffer long-term consequences of reduced education and health if someone did not meet these costs of daily requirements. Thus, the question of whether vendors use some of the credit to which they may have access for purposes other than building their businesses should not be viewed in narrow bankers' terms.

A comparable debate surrounds the issue of interest rates charged to the borrowers. The NCKK makes available loans to women produce sellers in Nairobi at an interest rate of 3.5% (O'Regan and Hellinger, 1981); the Annapurna Mandal, a Bombay organization formed specifically to assist women who provide room and board to migrant workers, gives its members loans at 4% (Purau, 1980; Savara, 1981); SEWA charges the 13,000 self-employed members of the SEWA Bank between 4 and 12% annual interest for credit (Sebsted, 1982). Subsidized credit for these very poor operators probably realistically reflects what the borrower can afford (Bruce, 1980). Certainly, it is considerably lower than interest rates charged by money lenders and other traditional credit sources. In fact, they are lower than the rate of inflation, thus they are negative rates in real terms. Yet, if we talk of business expansion as an objective of credit assistance, the issue that must be confronted is the timing of a move from subsidized to non-subsidized loans. (The Tribune, 1982; Hoskins, 1980; Hellinger, Hellinger, and Walker et al., 1979).

Loan programs can make the difference between operating on the margin of economic survival and self-sufficiency for most street vendors. Certainly, the rates are lower than their alternative sources of money. However, for the implementing agencies who justify such projects in terms of business expansion, this is not always the case. Furthermore, one impediment to replicating credit assistance programs for micro-entrepreneurs lies with their high administrative costs, a situation not helped by subsidizing interest rates.

However, credit is only one of many constraints confronting street food vendors and the providers of other services on a similar scale. These include: lack of various business and/or technical skills, incomplete knowledge of the market, unreliable sources of raw materials, intense competition, illiteracy, a general lack of information about types of assistance available to small-scale entrepreneurs, and restrictions and harassment by local authorities. In addition, women encounter another range of issues pertaining to child care, possible sexual harassment, and laws governing male/female relations (Heyzer, 1981; Savara, 1981; Singh, 1980). Some of these needs, such as training in management, bookkeeping, household budgeting, hygiene and health, technological improvement, and legal assistance, may be provided as integral components of credit assistance programs. For example, in the NCKK project, management assistance is provided in bookkeeping, credit education, and marketing; in Bangladesh, MIDAS (the Micro-Industries Development Society) expects to provide the following range of services to organizations that support micro-entrepreneurs: information, technology, research, marketing, training and financing (Beardsley, 1982).

The need persists for all-encompassing assistance organization programs. Drawing on her experience with the Annapurna Mandal, Savara (1981) has noted that: "it is essential to develop new and different forms of organization amongst women, but these can only sustain themselves on a long term basis if they materially benefit the women in some clear way."

Among the many efforts to move in this direction perhaps the most impressive and successful attempts at organizing poor women working in the informal sector is that of SEWA (Bruce, 1980; Buvinic, et al., 1979; Chinas, 1981; Hoskins, 1980; Sebstad, 1982). Begun in Ahmedabad in 1972, this is a trade union with a membership of over 5,000 women. Members are grouped by trades and pay fees of RS 3/year. While SEWA's success owes much to the dynamic leadership of Ella Bhatt, it is also the result of the broad-based type of assistance it offers its members. The union provides child care facilities for working mothers, social security benefits, and legal aid. The economic wing of the union facilitates the provision of raw materials, training programs in income generation, household budgeting, hygiene, and workers' rights/labor law.

SEWA's experience is important. It is one, but not the only, model of how the micro-level self-employed can be organized to confront their problems collectively. In addition to providing a ranges of services to assist each member in the operation of her enterprise, the organization has used its collective muscle to legitimize the operations of many of its members. It has successfully lobbied government officials for recognition of women

in the informal sector. In Ahmedabad, the vegetable vendors, who had been banned by the police from the central market as traffic obstructors, staged a sit-in strike and won the right to return to the market. Another example of successful collective action is the Working Women's Forum in Southern India (Azad, 1981; Brown, 1981).

The emergence of organizations that can provide credit and other services is of great importance. However, the fact that this type of base can evolve into an organizational structure that can serve other purposes is also of significance. By their very existence, such organizations can provide an institutional base for communication between government and the vendors. It is more difficult for governments to harass and ignore organized vendors' interests. By the same token, vendors can deal more effectively with government by organizing. This has been evident in Kenya, where the NCKK has played an important advocacy role in obtaining licenses for its "clandestine" clients (Beardsley, 1982). At the same time, the creation of vendors' organizations can result in self-regulation. For example, the Baguio Market Vendors' Association in the Philippines maintains market sanitation and has the power to apprehend peddlers (Nelson, 1979).

In view of the largely negative context in which most street vendors must operate, a primary objective must be a stable working environment. If credit programs can provide a means of achieving this objective, be it de facto if not de jure recognition of street vending, then the credit programs' inefficiencies and weaknesses need careful reevaluation.

CONCLUSION

When the Equity Policy Center (EPOC) initiated its worldwide project on street foods, it was immediately confronted with a dearth of information. Even in the context of broader areas of inquiry, such as the role of the informal sector and nutrition, mention of the street foods was minimal at best. For this reason, phase one of the EPOC Street Foods project concerned itself with documenting the economic viability of the street food enterprise and the nutritional contribution of street foods to household diet in Senegal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Yet, even the preliminary results of this work indicate that close to 25% of urban household expenditures are spent on street foods in many developing country's cities. Furthermore, given the observed ratios of one person in 16 of an Indonesia city's population is economically active in some aspect of the street foods trade (Chapman, 1983), street foods would seem to be of more than peripheral importance in such urban economies.

In view of the pervasiveness of the street foods sector worldwide, and its many positive contributions, the central issue

becomes how best to plan for its orderly development. An approach is called for that maximizes the benefits of this sector and minimizes its costs. As an integral element in the process of food demand and supply, street foods affect many issues of concern to national policymakers. These include employment generation, nutrition, health and sanitation, energy consumption, as well as a range of issues associated with food provision, such as marketing, distribution, food processing, and a reduction in food imports. In addition, street foods cannot be divorced from the "informal sector," which in most developing economies has been subject to a continuing negative approach. This feature of governments of both the right and the left needs to be reassessed.

The centralized nature of political, administrative, and budgetary power in many developing countries makes it difficult to separate municipal government from central government policies. In the absence of support at the top levels for the street foods sector, many city governments have found it easier to be destructive rather than constructive in their approach to those involved in this trade. Implicit in this modus operandi of government is a perception of street food traders as a problem. Yet the evidence presented above suggests precisely the opposite, that the street foods sector is a vital and vibrant segment of the urban economy and should be treated accordingly.

Viewed creatively, the street foods sector can enlarge the choices available to policymakers. At the city level, policy toward street foods can no longer be allowed to fall between the developmental cracks. One accommodation might involve a coordination of the concerns of the various segments of local government that affect the street food trade. These segments include physical planners, health and sanitation regulators, employment specialists, and transport controllers as well as the police. Ambitious improvements may not be feasible until that distant time when city finances are much stronger, but several key issues could be acted upon promptly, including the designation of serviced trading spaces and the introduction of realistic controls.

At the level of the street food trader, both processor and vendor, the biggest constraint may continue to be the atomization of the unit of production. Existing credit programs, many of them small and pilot in nature, have had high unit costs in their administrative costs per value of each loan. The challenge in replicating these programs without a subsidy must lie in bringing down the cost of their administration to levels where the interest rates are not only affordable for street vendors, but cover the costs of capital, collection, and default, as well as allow for an add-on for inflation. The alternative is bleak. Subsidies for such programs are increasingly difficult to justify, particularly

in view of the situation of acute financial stringency that confronts most less-developed countries today.

The sheer numbers involved, and the vital importance to the urban economy can offset the weaknesses associated with the small size of the individual unit. Furthermore, many street food vendors are heads of households, an important percentage are women, and a majority are drawn from the ranks of the urban poor. Even if credit subsidies do no more than move the vendors from a state of precarious survival to self-sufficiency, they are worthwhile. These programs have also been important as a basis for developing collective action among a segment of the economic community that is largely without political power. Such collective action has been effective in bringing about beneficial changes from the bottom up, for the city and the traders. It has been successful in altering the conditions under which street food vendors operate: in Kenya, the licensing laws for street food vendors have been broadened; in Ahmedabad, India, the police harassment of street vendors has been successfully addressed.

It would be inappropriate to end this discussion without pausing to consider some of the broader implications that stem from the street food issue. While rarely the only sellers and preparers of street foods, it is an economic activity of many women. In some cities, it is the dominant economic activity of women, akin in household economic importance to subsistence agriculture in rural households. It requires skills that many women already have, the initial capital outlay can be minimal, and trading in street foods allows for an accommodation of the time constraints imposed by women's other domestic responsibilities -- childrearing and farming. In some cities, 50% of women are heads of household, and for many of these women, this form of income generation is the only alternative to family destitution.

Street foods are too persistent and too pervasive a phenomena to be ignored. Viewed from the perspective of the developing country's urban and small town economy, their significance both as consumption items and as a means of income generation is probably equal to other traditionally provided goods and services. Unfortunately, government officials' approach to them is frequently not constructive. For whatever reasons, the approach to the problems of the street foods trade by city officials has tended to be governed more by crisis management than by the principles of urban planning. In the absence of mechanisms that consistently commit funds to the needs and the services provided by the urban poor, this situation seems likely to persist. Yet a more creative approach to managing and encouraging the street foods sector can improve the diets and incomes of the urban poor, in general, and women, in particular. This is an area of policy and action where substantial gains can almost surely flow from rather low-cost measures.

NOTES

1. Fried or boiled tempe is made with fermented soybeans but can be made with ground nuts and other standard legumes.
2. These cities include Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, Bandung, Manila, and Baguio.
3. Their sample included the unskilled who sold fresh fruits or vegetables or bought desserts for resale, and others, the semi-skilled, who prepared elaborate dishes. In a few cases, the latter actually paid to learn to cook.
4. Pap is a corn-based porridge widely consumed in Ghana.
5. Garri is a casava-based staple eaten in Ghana.
6. These four country studies are Bangladash, Philippines, Indonesia, and Senegal.
7. This issue has been raised in discussion with a nutritionist, but at this stage no data exist to support the assertion.
8. These figures were derived from a sample equally divided between small-scale street vendors and home-based food producers.

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