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Food Security Policies for the Urban Poor

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FOOD SECURITY POLICIES FOR THE URBAN POOR

by

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1 Introduction

An urban bias in much of government policies for food security coexists with a rural bias in much of the detailed food security research¹. It has long been recognized that developing country governments are more responsive to the urban poor than to the less vocal rural poor. Urban bias in food policies has been criticized by the research community and rightly, especially if transfers affecting food consumption were financed by the rural poor through the explicit and implicit taxation of agriculture. A more solid contribution of research to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of policies for food security of the urban poor is needed. Less waste of resources from ill-designed urban policies might also free resources for effective intervention to improve the nutrition of the rural poor.

Many developing countries felt strong pressure, especially in the 1980s, for economic adjustment to changed trade-, price-, and exchange-rate environments with more stringent

1 A comprehensive bibliography on urban nutrition problems in developing countries is provided in B. SCHUERCH and A. M. FAVRE: *Urbanization and Nutrition in the Third World: An Annotated Bibliography*, Lausanne 1985.

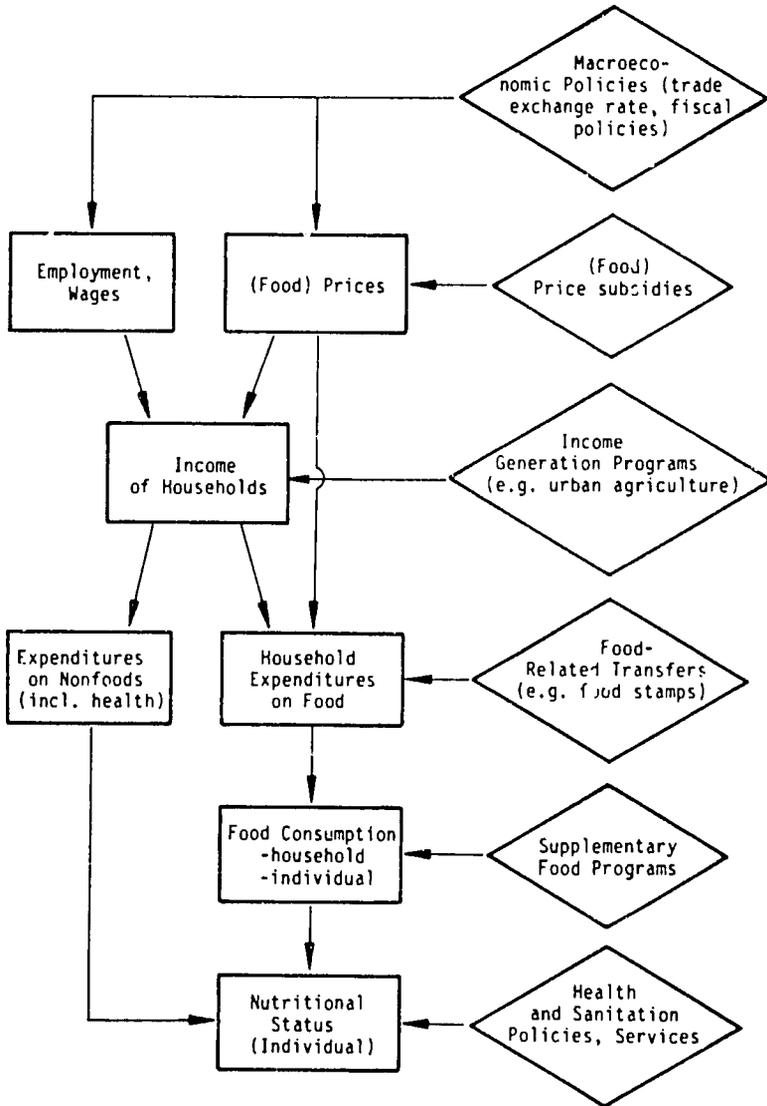
constraints on foreign borrowing. It has become infeasible for many countries to finance fiscal imbalances and trade deficits that accompanied urban-biased food policies and industrialization. The required adjustment falls heavily upon the urban poor. While the long-run adjustments should be expected to revitalize growth and employment, which are the crucial ingredients for food security of the urban poor, food security problems, especially those of the urban poor, may be aggravated in the short- and medium-run unless appropriate interventions are made. The demand for knowhow and thus research on cost-effective policies for nutritional improvement in urban areas is on the rise.

This paper assesses the nature and extent of the food consumption and nutrition problems in urban areas of low-income countries. On that basis, the experience with policies to improve the food security and nutrition of the urban poor is discussed, and conclusions for effective and efficient interventions are derived.

2 Nature and extent of the urban food security problem

Food security is understood to be the continuous satisfaction of basic food consumption requirements so that people can live active and healthy lives. Figure 1 gives a simplified conceptual overview of the relationships between employment, income, consumption, and nutrition in urban areas and specifies modes of entry for policies that affect the food security of households. It stresses the central role of employment and wage formation along with prices (food and nonfood) for income. Fluctuations in the levels and structure of the employment and wages of the poor and of

Figure 1: Determinants of food security of households in urban areas and related policies



the prices of the commodity bundles purchased by the poor are the main sources of food insecurity of the urban poor.

Little is known about how the urban poor cope with fluctuations in these key variables. The poor's stocks of assets to draw upon when income and savings fall short are extremely limited. Assistance during crises from extended families and neighbourhoods may prevail in traditional urban areas, but appears to be a weaker safety net than in rural communities.

Actual food consumption at the household level and, finally, at the individual level is only one determinant of nutritional status. Food consumption interacts in a complex fashion with health and sanitary conditions. This aspect is shown in Figure 1. If, for instance, unsanitary conditions, such as the frequently inappropriate water supply in urban slums lead to frequent episodes of infectious diseases, the contribution of increased food energy intake to nutritional improvement may only be marginal.

Urbanization as such should not be vilified. It is after all a characteristic of a healthy social and economic development process that exploits progress in labour productivity in agriculture and specialization with rising incomes in manufacturing and services and is in turn a result of the related shifts in consumption patterns with rising incomes. The speed and the form of urbanization, however, may pose a problem for development policy. The proportions of the population living in urban areas have been increasing rapidly and continue to do so, especially in Africa and East Asia (Table 1).

Estimates for the 1970s by GRIMES (1976) suggest that between 33 and 90 per cent of the urban population from 19

Table 1: Population living in urban areas in developing countries

	1960	1980	Projected for 2000
	(in per cent of total population)		
Africa	18.2	28.9	42.5
Latin America	49.5	64.7	75.2
East Asia	24.7	33.1	45.4
South Asia	17.8	24.0	35.1

Source.

U.N. Department of International Social and Economic Affairs, New York 1980.

cities surveyed in Sub-Saharan Africa lives in slum or squatter areas, 19 to 43 per cent in twelve Asian cities, and 14 to 67 per cent in 21 surveyed cities in Latin America. These wide ranges indicate the great diversity of the extent of urban poverty. As much as in the rural environment, a disaggregated view of urban poverty and its food and nutritional implications is required. Food consumption, expressed in terms of per capita food energy, is skewed among urban populations throughout the developing world. The lowest income quartile in Egypt consumes about 26 per cent fewer calories than the top quartile. The bottom ten per cent in Thailand eats 34 per cent fewer calories than the ninth decile compared to Sri Lanka where it was 58 per cent (see Table 2).

Table 2: Calorie consumption by urban populations, selected survey results

Country/City	Year of Survey	Per Capita Daily Calorie Consumption (by expenditure groups)				
		<u>Lowest 25 %</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>	<u>Top 25 %</u>	
Egypt, urban areas	1981/82	2,343	2,761	2,915	3,174	
		<u>Lowest 10 %</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>	<u>Fifth</u>	<u>Ninth Decile</u>
Thailand, urban areas	1975/76	1,596	1,767	1,814	1,980	2,425
		<u>Lowest 10 %</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>	<u>Fifth</u>	<u>Ninth Decile</u>
Sri Lanka, urban areas	1978/79	1,288	1,620	1,718	1,917	2,674
	1981/82	1,137	1,351	1,589	1,927	2,705

(by income groups)

		<u>Lowest 30 %</u>	<u>Middle 50 %</u>	<u>Top 20 %</u>
		Brazil, urban areas	1974/75	1,713
		(by income groups, 7 groups)		
		<u>Lowest</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Top (6 and 7)</u>
Zaire/ Kinshasa	1970	1,279	1,740	2,938

Source:

- a) H. ALDERMAN and J. VON BRAUN 1984, p. 31.
- b) P. TRAIRATVORAKUL 1984, p. 50.
- c) N. EDIRISINGHE 1987, p. 39.
- d) Ch. WILLIAMSON-GRAY 1982, p. 20.
- e) J.E. AUSTIN 1976, p. 79.

Large differences exist in the number of calories consumed by the poorest groups in urban areas of different countries. Egypt's lowest income groups, for instance, consume more calories than those of any of the other developing countries with comparable data (Table 2). There are clearly large shares of the urban population that actually consume diets that are deficient in calories by even minimal standards. Frequently this food deficient population group ranges up to the third or even the fifth decile of the urban population. Egypt stands as an exception among the five cases in Table 2.

It should be stressed that most of the available detailed urban consumption surveys were made before major economic adjustments incurred real per capita income losses in LDCs in the 1980s. Sri Lanka is rare in that two comparable urban consumption surveys were made, one before and one after a major adjustment situation. The data indicate a deterioration of calorie consumption among the poorer deciles up to the fourth decile but an increase in food consumption by the top half of the population (Table 2). Between the two surveys a major reduction of food subsidies and other income support policies were implemented.

The nutritional position of urban poor seems also to be poor in regard to nutrients other than calories. In some countries the vulnerable groups - infants, children, and pregnant women - appear even worse off in urban than in rural areas. Indicators of nutritional status, such as anthropometric growth measurements, confirm that in Thailand, for example, middle-class and rural children have mean heights and weights equal to the North American standard of the 50th percentile during the first six months of life; but children from urban slums are well below the 50th percentile in weight during the first six months, and fall

below the third percentile during the second six months (AUSTIN 1980, p. 12).

Comparison of urban and rural life expectancy at birth by income groups in Brazil shows that the urban poor have substantially lower life expectancy than the rural poor in the same income group - 46.0 versus 51.4 years (MONTEIRO 1987).

Child-feeding practices and child care are particular problems in urban areas and are inseparable from the (women's) employment and the housing problems of the urban poor. Decreased duration of breastfeeding without appropriate supplementation is frequently found to determine deteriorating child nutritional status (POPKIN, BISGROVE 1987). However, lack of knowledge about nutrition, which could be tackled just by educating mothers, is seldom a root cause of this sad plight. A lack of resources, including time, leads most often to this waste of human resources.

Nutritional improvement in urban areas is not only called for on humanitarian and equity grounds but also because of the adverse effects of malnutrition on labour productivity. Increased support for the hypothesis that better nutrition improves labour productivity is given by SAHN and ALDERMAN's (1986) analysis, which finds that in urban Sri Lanka, a one per cent increase in calorie intake increases men's wages, and thus presumably labour productivity, by 0.25 per cent.

Little is known about the fluctuations of the urban poor's household income over time, which are a major determinant of food security. Much of the urban poor earn their income in unsecure informal services and as short-term hired manual workers. Thus their income is likely to be highly unstable. Cross-sectional analyses show that urban low-income families (defined as those consuming 1,750 to 2,000

calories per capita per day) spend about 60 to 75 per cent of their income on food and increase their spending on food by 0.6 to 0.9 per cent when income rises by one per cent (see Table 3). This generally coincides with a high income-elasticity of calorie consumption for low-income families. Brazil, a middle-income country, is an exception among the countries presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Food expenditure and calorie elasticities of low-income urban families in selected countries

Country	Food Expenditure Elasticities	Income Elasticities of Calorie Consumption
Egypt	0.71	0.20
Thailand	0.62	0.26
Sri Lanka	0.72	0.41
Indonesia	0.88	0.55
Brazil	0.83	0.10
Sudan	0.74	0.30

Source:
H. ALDERMAN 1986, pp. 37-38.

As a policy conclusion from these parameters, it can be stated that any real income transfer to poor (calorie-deficient) households will readily translate into an increase of food expenditures and food energy consumption. The income-food consumption relationships are reassuringly strong enough to build nutrition-oriented interventions on them.

The urban poor tend to be not only continuously short of cash but also short of time for food acquisition, given their employment situation, which requires much time in

finding income-earning opportunities. The "time cost" of food acquisition is a critical determinant of the urban poor's consumption behaviour. A survey of food consumption in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, found that the poorest tercile consumes a high percentage of their cereals in the form of rice - 54 per cent, compared to 46 per cent for the top tercile - which is more quickly prepared than millet, sorghum and wheat; a higher percentage of cooked rice from street vendors is consumed by the poorest tercile than all the other population groups - 32 per cent in the bottom tercile versus eight per cent for the top tercile (DELGADO, REARDON 1987). Such consumption habits, often mistakenly addressed as a shift to luxury food consumption in urban areas by the poor, are largely driven by time costs and not by "taste".

The Egyptian food system has a number of different commodity-specific outlets for subsidized food - bakeries, ration shops, government cooperative shops selling sugar, rice, etc. - that frequently involve search time and time waiting in line. It was found that Egyptian low-income consumers were at least as unwilling to wait in line or to be subject to other search costs as the rest of the population (ALDERMAN, VON BRAUN 1984). This reflects the opportunity cost of time but not wage costs. Furthermore, as higher-income consumers purchased more per visit than the poor, and the cost of queuing are calculated for each visit and not for each unit purchased, the time costs per unit purchased were higher for the poor, and queuing contributed to a middle-class bias of the shop system.

The Ouagadougou and the urban Egypt examples stress the role of time and cash constraints and also point out why poor people are frequently found to pay higher unit prices of food commodities in their bundle of food items. Efficient marketing outlets selling at market prices may fre-

quently do more good for the poor than a rationed subsidized supply source with a lower selling price but a higher time cost of food acquisition.

Rapid growth of the urban population results from rural to urban migration of people in young age groups and results in the high fertility of the urban population. Consumption patterns change as a consequence of migration but the nutritional consequences of rural-urban migration do not appear to be adverse for the migrants. Frequently migrants appear nutritionally even better off than comparable urban households and those in the sending areas (GREARDON 1980). In countries or regions with a low degree of urbanization (for instance, Bangladesh, parts of India, and Rwanda in Africa), the rural-urban relationships are direct and the urban poor's food security is largely determined by labour demand in agriculture.

Intra-urban mobility has probably increased substantially in the 1980s, forcing more impoverished families to move from lower-class urban areas to slums as employment and wages deteriorated, especially for low-income households. In Guatemala, for instance, urban unemployment rose from two per cent to 17 per cent during 1980-85; in Peru, from ten per cent to 19 per cent, while real wage rates dropped (CASAR 1986). Per capita GDP fell by 18 per cent in Guatemala and 15 per cent in Peru between 1980 and 1985. This occurred in many Latin American countries in the 1980s (CASAR 1986). Reactivation of growth, especially of employment, is critical if poverty is to be alleviated in the urban areas of these regions.

The following is a brief sketch of the policy options at hand for improving food security for the urban poor (they are given in Figure 1). The different policies considered are diverse and their implementation requires different institutional frameworks. They range from community development initiatives, possibly guided by non-governmental organizations (urban gardening, for example) to local government tasks (service provisions, such as water) and even internationally coordinated efforts to stimulate growth and employment.

The various institutional aspects of policy options cannot be properly addressed in this brief paper. The choice of policy options depends on conditions in the country and on the nature and scale of the nutrition problem to be tackled. A guiding criterion, especially considering current conditions, in which the constraints on fiscal and foreign exchange resources have increased, must be the cost-effectiveness of policies that lead to short- and long-term increases of income and nutritional improvement. However, a narrow concentration on cost-effective mechanisms for short-term transfers of income to the poor would be as inadequate as concentration on the provision of services only (for example, in health and sanitation) that frequently turn out to be out of reach of the poor. Income transfer mechanisms will be part of any developmental strategy and sustainable service provision requires their cost-effective design. It therefore calls for appropriate compositions of policy packages that make use of the reinforcing effects of individual policies combined with each other (for example, income transfers and nutrition education) but that can only be assessed satisfactorily in specific situations. The discussion on individual policies that follows should be understood in this context.

3.1 Macroeconomic policies

The direct and indirect protection and taxation of the economic sectors determines their relative competitiveness, which in turn determines the resource flows in the economy. Agriculture has frequently been on the losing side in much of LDCs due to a focus on industrialization that was financed out of agricultural taxation. But agriculture can function as a vehicle of growth if labour productivity and employment in agriculture are enhanced through new technologies, especially for food production (MELLOR 1986). Under such conditions, it can be expected that the speed of urbanization with poverty aggravation will be reduced and food security of urban areas will be increased. Functioning rural-urban infrastructure linkages are a precondition for this since improved infrastructure advances domestic and international trading and mobility.

In the current adjustment process of LDC economies, the urban poor's food security will depend largely on whether policies lead to further rapid contraction of the economies or whether the adjustments can be made with growth and poverty alleviation (BRONCHI, DEVLIN, RAMOS 1987). In rapidly contracting economies with little short-term alternatives for employment expansion through activation of export or import-competing production, short-term nutritional problems need to be addressed jointly with the problem of providing for long-term investment in human capital (education). Cost-effective interventions for nutritional improvement have become increasingly relevant in this context and require the fastest implementation. Small countries frequently lack the institutional structure for this. Economic adjustment programmes require related assistance for institution building to implement cost-effective policies against nutritional deterioration.

3.2 Food price subsidies and food-related transfers

At the core of the food price policy dilemma is the demand for protection on the rural producers' side and the demand for subsidies on the (urban) consumers' side. The heterogeneity of rural poverty, however, requires a disaggregated view of the problem. High food prices are not necessarily "good" for the rural poor. In fact, time series analysis for India shows the adverse role that increased food prices can play for the extent of poverty (MELLOR, DESAI 1986).

General food price subsidies have long benefited mainly the urban populations in LDCs, although there are some noteworthy exceptions to the general rule of urban bias (such as Sri Lanka). A complete assessment of complex systems may show, however, that the urban-biased effects of one part of a subsidy scheme may be cancelled out by other effects and that in general urban bias may appear to be smaller, or even insignificant, under such a broadened perspective (Egypt shows this; see ALDERMAN, VON BRAUN 1984).

Most countries that have consumer-oriented food subsidy schemes reduced their spending on them between 1980 and 1985, but much of the cost savings stems simply from the reduced import prices and not from active cost-saving policy changes (Table 4). Sri Lanka is a noted exception. Consumer-oriented food subsidy programmes now surviving in countries where they would be probably unsustainable without the change in international prices have provided substantial benefits to the poor, yet frequently at high fiscal and economic costs that will increase when prices increase again. An intensive survey of these programmes by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) shows that income transfers from food subsidies tend to

provide 15 to 25 per cent of the real income of low-income households (PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN 1987).

Table 4: Government expenditures on explicit food subsidies, 1980-1985 (per cent of total government expenditures)

Country	1980	1985
Bangladesh	5.7	3.8
Brazil	5.6	1.7
India	3.5	2.2
Egypt	16.4	15.0
Marocco	5.0	7.9
Pakistan	7.9	4.1
Sri Lanka	7.2	2.8

Source:

P. PINSTRUP-ANDERSEN and M. JARAMILLO, Government Expenditures on Explicit Food Subsidies in Selected Countries 1980-1985, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C. 1986, mimeographed.

The income and price elasticities of the poor for staple foods are high. The consumption of the poor and the income distribution among them tend to be improved by lower food prices due to their impact on expenditures. Also, lower food prices permit increased spending by the poor that increases human capital formation and short- and long-term labour productivity.

Food subsidies are a cost-effective tool for nutritional improvement only if they are targeted on needy households. Practical targeting mechanisms in urban areas that may be used include:

- a) shops/outlets for subsidized foods located in poor neighbourhoods to reduce (increase) time cost for the poor (nonpoor) in food acquisition;
- b) selection of food items for price subsidies that are largely consumed by the poor (self-targeting of poor people's food);
- c) subsidized rationing (rations as designed in reality are seldom inframarginal, thus they assure mainly an income transfer that is of greater importance for the poor as they purchase less food than the nonpoor beyond rationed quantities on the usually existing parallel markets);
- d) coupons or stamps distributed on a household (per capita) income basis (using assets or evaluation of household income as eligibility criteria).

Experience is mixed with each of these alternatives. While recent findings by ALDERMAN and GARCIA (1987) in Pakistan show an 80 per cent leakage of the flour rations, the Egyptian ration system was found to be much more effective in transferring income to the urban poor (ALDERMAN, VON BRAUN 1984). The Sri Lanka food stamp programme reaches 68 per cent of the lowest 20 per cent of the urban population and 55 per cent of the second quintal, but only eight per cent of the top quintal have access to the programme (EDIRISINGHE 1987). The Egyptian food subsidy system transfers an equivalent of 16 per cent of total expenditures to the lowest quartile of the urban population and three per cent to the top quartile (ALDERMAN, VON BRAUN 1984). The income transfer value from food stamps in Sri Lanka (Kandy district) was twelve per cent of total expenditures in the bottom quartile and four per cent in the top quartile (EDIRISINGHE 1987, p. 63). Whether income

transfer objectives for nutritional improvement are reached depends mainly on the design of systems. The cost per unit of income transferred to the target group is largely a function of rigidity in targeting the systems.

Administrative hurdles and a lack of political support frequently prevent narrowly targeted systems from being implemented effectively. Also, an adjustment of a system to rapidly changing poverty patterns in the urban population or to changes in the economic environment (inflation, for instance) poses a problem. The rapid adjustment is required not only to reach the "permanent poor" but also those households that fall into and out of poverty and so face transitory food security problems. Much more than in rural areas, targeted policies for urban nutritional improvement face the problem of higher social mobility and thus a "moving target".

Broad-based systems, such as those mentioned above, rather than household-specific transfer systems have an advantage in this respect, though they are frequently costly if coupons or food stamps require lengthy procedures for adjustment. For choice of policies, not only does the per unit costs of food and income transferred to the poor affect the effectiveness of the programmes, but so does the coverage.

3.3 Supplementary feeding programmes

Supplementary feeding programmes are aimed at the individual rather than the household. School children, infants, and pregnant or lactating women are typical target groups. Frequently, such schemes operate through the health system. Their success depends on the amount of food that is delivered to the beneficiaries, the duration of feeding, the

timing of supplementation, the nutritional status of entrants, and the degree of targeting of the food programme (KENNEDY, ALDERMAN 1987). The programmes have proven most effective when targeted at high-risk individuals. Their operation in countries with well-developed public health systems in urban areas (such as Chile and Cuba) have been satisfactory and cost-effective. In countries without such well-based public health infrastructure programmes, effects were at best mixed (BEATON, GHASSEMI 1987).

Food distribution schemes do not assure that the distributed food will add much to consumption over and above the income equivalent of the food. Supplementary feeding programmes and food-for-work schemes handing out rations must be aware of consumer behaviour. It should be kept in mind that the sovereignty of a household over its consumption behaviour cannot be easily circumvented. As REUTLINGER (1987, p. 10) puts it, "the notion that it is possible to increase an individual's intake by 300 calories or his protein intake by 20 grams when a carefully calculated food ration containing 300 calories and 20 grams of protein is supplied, should by now have become thoroughly discredited."

3.4 Health and sanitation policies

The urban nutrition problem, like the rural one, is not just a food problem. Preventive health care to reduce infectious diseases and care to reduce the long-term adverse effects of frequent episodes of children's illnesses such as diarrhea are essential components of policies for nutritional improvement. Nutritional surveillance can play a constructive support role in this context, especially if there are timely warning and intervention programmes. To

make such systems work beyond the observation of the individual child for national policy design and redirection requires cooperation between those responsible for collecting data and those doing the analysis. A lack of such cooperation frequently appears to be a constraint (MASON, MITCHELL 1987).

The provision of clean water in urban slum areas and garbage and waste disposal are key problems with direct implications for nutrition. Water is an extremely scarce commodity in suburbs which are not connected to public systems, and the poor pay a high price (to merchants) for water brought in by tanks in such cities as Cairo or Guatemala City. Provision of clean water thus has a nutrition effect related to both income and health.

3.5 Community development (urban agriculture)

Construction of urban infrastructure, such as water works, is a task in which community development activities with self-help initiatives can play an important role to reduce fiscal costs. Housing reconstruction and improvement schemes can also fall in this category. Positive spillover effects for nutrition can be expected from any improvement in the living environment of the poor in urban areas, especially changes that reduce a mother's time and effort for child care and increase its quality.

A frequently overlooked potential component of such programmes can be the promotion of urban and periurban agriculture as a source of income (that frequently ends up in women's hands) and as a source for improvement of the diet. For Shanghai, it is reported that 100 per cent of vegetable consumption is from city production; Hongkong produces 40

per cent of its vegetables (GUTMAN 1986). Cattle raised to provide milk in backyards and chickens raised on the balconies or roofs in downtown Cairo or gardening programmes in Guatemala City are features of urban agriculture, but are usually not included in existing support systems for agriculture, such as formal credit or access to inputs. Enhancing urban agriculture could have favourable employment effects because it is mostly labour-intensive and transport-cost-intensive products that move into the city production.

3.6 Access to credit and savings opportunities for the poor

The urban poor typically lack access to means that bridge the annual ups and downs of their unstable income flows. Programmes that facilitate savings and investment in productive assets that would stabilize the income flow would assist in reducing transitory consumption and nutrition problems. The typical institutional setting for this would be cooperatives or groupings formed to cope with the collateral problem of individuals. In countries with hyperinflation, such as some Latin American countries, the investment component of a banking system for the poor is particularly relevant. The ability of the poor to draw on such systems in times of need and then use loans for consumption should not be viewed as a problem. In fact it may be quite appropriate to maintain, for instance, labour productivity and health (the human capital) through such credit schemes. Group pressures in urban neighbourhoods or among families are frequently strong enough to provide loan security, which have a counterpart in rural areas where such banking schemes already operate successfully (for example, the Grameen bank system in parts of rural Bangladesh). Frequently,

such schemes may be best linked to community development initiatives.

4 Conclusions

A disaggregated view at urban poverty is required to attack the urban nutrition problem effectively. A strong income-food consumption relationship is a solid base from which to tackle the urban nutrition problem through income- and employment-based approaches. Enhanced service provision to the urban poor, however, is a crucial requirement. Policy options and initiatives discussed include:

- Employment-oriented macro-economic and sectorial policies that recognize potentials for agricultural growth that can ease the food security problems of the urban poor through employment creation in the rural areas. Such policies can be most effective in countries with low levels of urbanization.
- Food price subsidies and food-related or other forms of income transfers with a call for targeting of transfers toward the poor (no system is perfect).
- Supplementary feeding programmes aimed at the vulnerable groups within households.
- Health and sanitation policies, especially for improved clean water supply to the poorest neighbourhoods.
- Community development initiatives in poorest quarters including the much neglected developmental potentials of urban and periurban agriculture.
- Access to credit and savings opportunities for the poor to bridge the gap of their notoriously fluctuating income flow.

These policy options can only be effective if each is tailored to a specific country and urban area and packaged along lines given by the socio-economic and political con-

ditions. A generalizable ideal solution to the urban food and nutrition problem does not exist.

Little is known about fluctuations in urban poverty and the related food security problems of households. Research can contribute to effective policy design for urban food security by improving the understanding of the urban poor's coping mechanisms with poverty. This would contribute to identifying effective points of entry for policy interventions.

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