

WFP to report on preliminary study on the promotion of human rights of the urban poor

Under II B 5. Food security.

Description of urban food insecurity could be better elaborated. Some considerations follow:

- Reliance on cash/income to meet food requirements: economic insecurity plays a far greater role in urban than in rural food insecurity. Not only most of the people rely on cash transactions to obtain food, but at the same time they have to pay for many goods and services that are free or highly negotiable in rural settings, including shelter, water, sanitation and transport. This places households under pressure to ensure a steady flow of income, and makes the poorest households especially vulnerable to internal and external economic factors outside their control.
- Coping mechanisms from food insecurity: like in rural areas, people may resort to negative coping mechanisms such as withdrawal of children from schools, prostitutions and thefts. Unlike in rural settings though, the adoption of these coping mechanisms may be accelerated by the absence of those common informal safety nets – such as food sharing, child care, loans – that are normally available in rural areas. Poverty in cities tends to be more individualistic and is suffered in more isolation.

Under II C (Situation of more vulnerable groups)

The HIV-AIDS is poorly addressed throughout the document despite the higher prevalence in urban areas: the complex combination of social factors behind this trend (e.g. higher proportion of single men increasing the demand for prostitution; rural immigrants' limited awareness of HIV/AIDS risks; stigma associated with HIV/AIDS encouraging rural people to seek anonymity in cities) might deserve further elaboration in a separate section.

Under II C 1 (Women and girls)

The characteristics of urban employment should be also mentioned as a further factor of vulnerability for women. Urban employment (requiring long working hours outside the home) is not compatible with child care, which may also have repercussions on breastfeeding. Also employers tend to offer women lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs. Women are also the first to lose their jobs during financial crises.

Under IV Good Practices

Over the last couple of years the World Food Programme (WFP) has been scaling up the use of cash and vouchers as an alternative, or complement, to traditional food transfer programmes. Cash and vouchers are particularly useful where food is available in the marketplace, but people lack the resources to buy it, as it often happens in urban contexts. The introduction of this new transfer modality represents an innovative solution which contributes to protect the right to food of urban poor, with special regard to the detrimental consequences of food price fluctuations.

In Burkina Faso, WFP launched its first voucher operation in Africa in February 2009— reaching more than 200,000 people in the capital, Ouagadougou and the city of Bobo- Dioulasso. The scheme was aimed at people living in urban environments where food was available in the market, but at very high prices.

In Syria, in 2010 thousands of Iraqi refugees received their WFP entitlement in the form of a text message code on their mobile phone. Refugees exchange the electronic vouchers for food items including fresh foods such as cheese and eggs, which would not formally be part of a traditional aid ration. In September 2010, the scheme was extended to cities outside Damascus.

In OpT WFP is currently providing vouchers to some 85,000 people (55,000 in the West Bank and 30,000 in Gaza) among the most vulnerable non-refugee population residing in urban and semi-urban areas. The vouchers, redeemed for bread, flour, dairy products, pulses, rice, vegetable oil and eggs, are aimed at meeting their immediate food needs as well as enhance their food consumption and dietary diversity.

Under V Recommendations

More emphasis on:

- Rule of law: establish/strengthening legal and regulatory measures to codify and protect employment, shelter and land is crucial to promote people's rights, including the right to adequate standard of living;

Accountability: establish/strengthen systems through which people can know and claim their right and access remedies from governments