



ROLE OF URBANISATION ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION, AND FOOD SAFETY

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Definition: The world's urban population is around 3.2 billion people-more than the world's total population in 1960. Demographically urbanisation is the increasing share of a nation's population living in urban areas. Generally urban population growth and physical expansion of urban areas are treated synonymous with urbanisation. Urban population growth occurs from natural increase [births minus deaths], net rural to urban migration and reclassification [classification of previous rural settlements as urban or expansion of boundaries of urban settlements]

Economic drivers of urbanization: Over the past 60 years, there is a strong association between economic growth and urbanization. Urban areas provide many potential advantages for better economic opportunities and for improving living conditions through the economics of scale and proximity they provide for most forms of infrastructure and services. Today around 97% of the world's Gross Domestic Product [GDP] is generated by industry and services and around 65% of the world's economically active population involve in industry and services. In the best governed European, Asian, North and South American cities there are high life expectancies, literacy rate and stronger democracy especially at the local level. Besides this urbanization is associated with pro-poor social reforms in which collective organization by the urban poor has had important roles. The economic, social, political and demographic changes underpinning urbanization include multiplication in the size of the world's economy, the shift in economic activities and employment structures from agriculture, forestry and fishing to industry and services [and within services to information

production and exchange], and the virtual disappearance of colonial empires. Economic changes such as growth of multinational corporations, changed in their structure, shifts in goods productions to greater use of outsourcing and advanced telecommunications including internet also have positive contribution on rural- urban migration. Exceptionally some migration has occurred due to growth in places where retired people choose to live or in tourist resorts. Economic success leading to urbanization depend more today on success of cities in global markets and their roles with in the internationalized system of production and distribution than fifty years ago, intercity competition beyond national boundaries, expansion of the state and competent and accountable urban governments. Growing cross borders flows of raw materials, goods, information, income and capital managed by transnational corporations have generated a network of global cities. International, national and local tourism have important underpinnings on urbanization. Large international migration flows and consequent remittance flows due to globalization have profound impact on cities both in areas of origin and destination. Around 175million people [more than 2% of world's population] live in a country in which they wear not born.

However, association between globalization and large cities is moderated by 2 factors; firstly advanced tele communications systems and corporate structures allow separation of the production process form those who manage and finance it. Secondly, well-developed transport and communications infrascture lead to more decentralized pattern of urban development. Most successful urban forms are less dominated by a large central city and have new enterprises developing in a network of smaller cities and green field sites (Castells and Hall 1994). This is due to growing capacities of cities outside metropolitan areas to attract significant proportion of new investment. This is also supported by decentralization which increase local governments capacity and accountability to citizens.

Implication of Urbanization on house hold food security

(a) Urbanization and the loss of agricultural land

Some plots of agricultural land are gobbled up by urban expansion. Lands around cities are left vacant for selling it to non-agricultural uses on capital gains. Urban areas expand haphazardly due to absence of any land use plan for guiding land use changes and different household, enterprises and public sector activities locate and build illegally. Regulations meant for limiting this are often avoided by politicians and real estate interests. Unregulated

physical expansions segregate low income groups in illegal settlements on the worst located and most hazardous sites. Besides this a patchwork of high and low density land uses make provision of infrastructure and services both expensive and difficult.

Initially, Urbanization concentrated on the highly fertile soil for achieving self-sufficiency in food. But of late, prosperous cities demand agricultural commodities far beyond what could be produced in their surroundings and depend on large and complex global supply chains for food, fuel and carbon sinks. This dependence makes them vulnerable to disasters in the supplying or buying locations and also to rising fuel prices.

(b) Urbanisation results in more land- intensive diets.

Urbanization has led to dietary changes with increasing meat consumption per capital. But a review between urbanization and food prices suggests that higher urban incomes rather than urbanisation or urban living is primarily responsible for this.

(c) Urban agriculture

Urban agriculture partly provides food consumption or income to hundreds of millions of urban dwellers who sell high-value crops or non-food crops or raise livestock for sale. Urban farmers include professionals, teachers, government officials, urban planners, students, and casual labourers, un- employed and part-time workers.

(d) Urbanisation does not imply less hunger and malnutrition.

It is true that urbanization is associated with economic growth and urban agriculture has important contribution for many households. But the number of urban dwellers facing hunger has not declined in all nations. Though urban areas have higher average income, in twelve of eighteen low-income nations, food and energy deficiencies and extent of food security is greater than rural areas. During 2007 and early 2008, urban food price shot up because of continued strong demand for energy, for cereals, for food, feed and fuel. Structural land and water constraints and likely food production impacts of climate change also contributed to the inflationary increase in price. Long-term measures for coping with the extent of food insecurity have hazardous impact on health and nutritional status. Various short-term measures for coping with the urban food insecurity include provision of regular small cash sum for low income households and provision of certain staple foods at subsidized prices.

(e) Urbanisation and climate change

Current and likely future changes are in the form of more severe or frequent storms, floods and heat waves, constraints on fresh water and food supplies, water-borne, food-borne and vector-borne diseases. The highest risks from direct and indirect impacts of climate change are concentrated within low income populations in low and middle income nations. This is because of very large deficits in the infrastructure and services needed to protect urban inhabitants from climate change impacts such as buildings conforming to health and safety regulations, city planning and land use regulations, changes in insurance premiums and coverages. So deaths from extreme weather disasters are in low and middle income nations. Low income groups especially those reliant on wage labour suffer the most from disaster disrupted food demand and supplies because of disruption in their income earning activities and the little asset bases they have are rapidly used up. The issue of climate change induced migration is no less significant. By 2050 there could be 200 million environmental refugees who will be forced to leave homes, social networks and assets and plunge into vulnerable conditions due to environmental stress for rural livelihoods and absence of agricultural adaptation initiatives. Ironically this indicates failure of governments and international agencies to support poorer households to adapt and high income nations in reducing green house gas emissions that cause crisis driven migrations.

Correlation between Urbanisation, Food Security, Nutrition and Food Safety

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) defines food security as a situation that “exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

Impact of Urbanisation on four dimensions of food security is as follows

Food Availability: In the near future agriculture will be challenged to meet the demand of growing and urbanising populations because pressing food demand will come from net food buyers, prime agricultural land will be converted into residential or industrial areas and there will be increased competition for irrigation water. Excessive drawing on ground and surface

water will put pressure on distant ecosystems, lowering water table zones leading to increasingly dry zones in soils.

Food Safety: It is linked to the quality of food so that it can be consumed without risking major health problems. Urbanisation generally decreases child malnutrition and increases dietary diversity. However, in urban areas food is increasingly consumed outside the house in unregulated street stalls frequently lacking adequate refrigeration, water and sanitation facilities. Street foods are served by vendors not trained in preparing, handling and storing food safely.

Food Stability: It requires that food can be accessed at all times. Urban expansion implies transportation of more and more food to the cities and its distribution putting additional pressure on rural infrastructure, transport technologies and food distribution outlets which are already insufficient in urban areas. In this way stability of food supplies may be jeopardized.

Food Access: As urban dwellers are net food buyers they should have sufficient resources for affording healthy diet. This means they are more dependent on cash incomes and hence employment opportunities which may not be available sufficiently in small to medium size cities. As such food prices play a major role in urban areas. Urban food prices and expenditures depend on (a)-a efficiently operating food marketing, (b)-a households purchasing behaviour, e.g. whether the household purchases in bulk, (c) a household's opportunity to produce some of its food, e.g. through a home garden, (d) a household's access to public transfers such as food subsidies or food aid or private transfers through exchanges with family members and (e) macroeconomic policies, including the availability of food subsidies and the ability to import food. As illustrated above these factors are often not given in rapidly urbanizing cities, which makes poor urban dwellers particularly vulnerable to change in food prices.

Conclusion

It is seen from above delineation that poorer urban households with a volatile income and a larger share of food in their total expenditures suffer the most from high food prices. The following immediate short term measures can be adopted to counteract rising food prices:

- Trade oriented policy responses that use policy instruments such as reducing tariffs and restricting exports to reduce prices and/or increase domestic supply.

- Consumer oriented policy responses that provide direct support to consumers and vulnerable groups in the form of food subsidy, social safety nets, tax reductions and price control among others and
- Producer oriented policy responses intended to support farmers to increase production using measures such as input subsidies and producer price support.

List of References

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OBJECTIVE:- Kanyashree Prakalpa seeks to improve the status and well being of girls, specifically those from socio-economically disadvantaged families through Conditional Cash Transfers by: Incentivizing them to continue in education for a