



ADAPTING TO AN URBAN WORLD

Lessons Learned, Gaps and Priorities (2016)

In 2014, the Adapting to an Urban World project was developed in order to modify assessment methods and tools for urban contexts. The project is co-led by the global Food Security Cluster and the World Food Programme, supported by a Steering Committee made up of cluster partners.

By 2016, with a completed desk review and 5 country case studies, the project has compiled a variety of lessons and recommendations. A stock taking exercise has been conducted to consolidate the lessons and to identify gaps and priorities. These have been organised by technical area, and resulted in a number of priority action points.

This document is intended for humanitarian practitioners engaged in urban assessments, researchers working on urban specific issues, and donors developing or refining urban strategies.

Work Complete:



1 desk review



5 country case studies

For any questions or comments relating to this work, please contact Aysha Twose, WFP VAM (aysha.twose@wfp.org) or Marina Angeloni, global Food Security Cluster (marina.angeloni@wfp.org).

CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

Case Study	Context	Methodology	Key Focus
1. Harare (Zimbabwe)	Chronic food insecurity, relatively stable security situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary data review • Mapping Workshop • Household and key informant interviews • Pilot test of household questionnaire 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General exploratory study to better understand gaps and challenges in urban food security measurement; 2. To inform the development of methods and tools for ZimVAC led urban assessment.
2. Syrian Refugees: Amman (Jordan), Beirut (Lebanon)	Massive Syrian refugee population, instability and ongoing population movement, complex legal issues affecting livelihood opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with stakeholders (humanitarian actors and government) to understand and consolidate experiences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refugee specific assessments, including humanitarian coordination and data protection; 2. Best methods of assessing mobile populations; 3. How to define 'urban.'
3. Antananarivo, Tulear, Tamatave (Madagascar)	Chronic food insecurity, relatively stable security situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary qualitative data collection (focus groups, interviews with street food vendors) in one city. • Representative household survey across three cities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing methodology for measuring street food consumption; 2. Using secondary data for representative sampling . <p><i>(primary objective of survey was urban food security analysis to inform WFP school feeding programme design)</i></p>
4. Port au Prince (Haiti)	Unstable security situation in certain areas of Port au Prince. Primary constraint to food security is economic access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary qualitative data (focus groups, street food vendor interviews) • Small household survey • Strongly partner developed/ led. Exercise led by government 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refining street food consumption methodology; 2. Using preliminary qualitative data to ensure quantitative tools are urban specific; 3. Informing design of urban monitoring system.
5. Mogadishu (Somalia)	Assessment in highly insecure area, including many IDPs. Unstable and unpredictable ability to gather data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary data review • Significant consultation with partners in Nairobi as part of secondary data review and interviews with stakeholders. • Small household survey 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimising methods for assessments in extremely insecure contexts; 2. Accounting for IDPs and other mobile populations; 3. Assessing urban livelihoods.

AREA BASED ANALYSIS

- Areas/neighbourhoods can define vulnerability in urban areas. Household location can dictate access to services (electricity, water, health care, refuse collection); risk of hazards; distance to markets; livelihood opportunities, etc.
- Workshops held with multiple stakeholders, including information from a variety of sources, can inform initial area based analyses and build consensus.
- Assessing an entire city is often not feasible or cost-efficient. An initial selection of more vulnerable areas allows for a focus of limited resources.
- Available GIS data can be layered to understand multi-faceted area based vulnerability.
- Key lessons can be learned from non-humanitarian work, for example the Urban Environmental Quality study conducted by Habitat International in Port au Prince.

PRIORITY ACTION: Develop methodology for standardized area based analysis allowing for identification of vulnerable neighbourhoods.



Photo: WFP/Aysha Twose



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FOOD CONSUMPTION AND ACCESS

- Large intra-household differences exist in urban food consumption patterns.
- Many households eat street food, including complete meals during the day and/or snacks between meals.
- Street food composition (ingredient/quantity) data should be collected prior to household survey through interviews with street food vendors. In highly insecure context, vendor interviews can be replaced with discussions with enumerators and partners.
- A rough methodology has been developed to understand and analyse street food consumption. Data must be collected at individual level.



Photo: WFP/Brian Sokol

- Diet and experiential measures can provide very different results in urban areas. Both should be collected to capture different elements of food access constraints.
- Agriculture can be an important source of income and food in some urban contexts. Prior to an urban survey, the relevance of agriculture should be determined.

PRIORITY ACTION:

1. Three month period of operational research required in order to verify validity of in-home, household level measures of food consumption (e.g. Food Consumption Score) in urban areas. Existing datasets including the FCS, such as some LSMS or Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys, can be used for this purpose, allowing comparison of caloric intake and FCS results.
2. Develop methodology for systematic merging of at home (household level) food consumption and outside home (individual level) food consumption.

LIVELIHOODS

- Livelihoods can be very varied in urban areas; access to different economic activities may be defined by factors such as household composition, skills, physical abilities, education, etc. Detailed household information is required – a complete roster should be collected.
- There can be significant variation within one livelihood – for example, one small trader can be much better off than another. Livelihood information should be collected in well-defined categories, which can be grouped later in analysis.
- Through focus groups, determine the appropriate number of income sources to ask about during the survey.
- Assessment should capture access to financial capital – can be important for urban livelihoods and understanding economic vulnerability.



Photo: WFP/Amy Horton

- Urban vulnerability is closely linked to commodity prices, income opportunities and wage rates. Analysis of market functioning, dynamics and structure is a key component of urban food security assessments.
- Labour market analysis can be an insightful component of urban assessments – for example, gathering information on available formal and informal livelihood opportunities, specific constraints to work, regulations impacting labour, etc.

PRIORITY ACTION: Given the variation within one livelihood, livelihood groupings are particularly challenging in urban contexts. Specific research, including primary data collection, is required to determine how to best collect, analyse and group livelihood data in urban contexts.

ASSETS

- Prior to survey, ask focus groups about how to distinguish between wealthier and poorer households using observable characteristics. This is often housing characteristics and assets.
- Collect the number of rooms in the house used for sleeping in order to calculate a crowding index, which can serve as a useful proxy for wealth.
- A detailed housing module may be required, including materials used for construction of roof, walls and floor separately.
- Generally, possession of livestock is not a sign of wealth in urban areas. It can differentiate between very poor and poor households, but wealthier households may not own livestock. Do not collect this data to differentiate between households. However, livestock may still be an important livelihood asset for many households.

EXPENDITURE

- Due to frequent purchase, recall period for food expenditure should be seven days.
- Include separate food expenditure categories for street food / prepared food purchase.
- Current food expenditure share thresholds (established by IFPRI, used by WFP) may be too high for urban areas, where households have higher non-food expenses.
- When calculating a minimum expenditure basket, consider establishing urban and rural specific MEBs.
- Debt/credit is particularly important in urban areas. Assessments should seek to understand amounts, sources and uses of debt, interest rates, and constraints to accessing credit.
- Debt can be positive (e.g. accessing credit can facilitate business investments) or negative (high proportion of expenditure devoted to debt repayment, not invested in productive activities but required for meeting basic needs).

PRIORITY ACTION: Three month period of operational research required to establish urban specific food expenditure share thresholds. Existing data, such as LSMS or Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys, can be used to examine expenditure information and compare against other indicators.



Photo: WFP/Jane Howard

NUTRITION

- With a greater variety of food available and accessible, urban contexts require more nuanced food security and nutrition analysis.
- Urban areas generally have higher rates of obesity. The most commonly used measures of food security do not consider this.
- Frequent consumption of prepared/street foods may provide enough energy, but limited micronutrients. FCS-N can be more important in urban contexts, to better understand the adequacy of consumption of micronutrient rich foods.

PRIORITY ACTION:

1. Create (or adapt) simple measures or proxies that can account for overnutrition, and/or risk of overnutrition.
2. Twelve month operational research project to understand factors determining food choices in urban areas, and effective activities/policies to influence this. This research should focus on the social, economic and informational environment within urban contexts, and how this relates to biological factors and personal experiences.

SHOCKS AND COPING

- Prior to a survey, focus groups or interviews should determine commonly used coping strategies and relative severity of each. A range of strategies should be included with varying severity. In highly insecure contexts, the focus groups may be replaced with enumerator/partner discussions.
- Capture information on seasonal fluctuations in income opportunities. Income seasonality can be determined by a variety of factors – it is useful to understand this first. For example, in Mogadishu it can be affected by Indian Ocean monsoon seasons.
- Due to higher rates of insecurity in urban areas, it can be important to ask about insecurity-related coping strategies (not just for lack of food or lack of money).

PRIORITY ACTION: Create more comprehensive list of coping strategies including urban-specific options. This will require a participatory approach, gathering qualitative data from a variety of urban contexts.



Photo: WFP/Allison Prather

OPERATIONAL

- Future case studies should be selected purposefully to fill identified contextual and geographical gaps.
- Before a household survey, collect initial data to understand when households might be at home, and when would be the best times to reach them. Weekend data collection may be required.
- Security can be a key constraint in urban areas. Use enumerators from the neighbourhood to be assessed, or enumerators who have previously worked in those areas.
- Build extra time into the schedule to account for any unforeseen security related delays.
- In contexts involving multiple partners sharing data, a focus on data protection is essential (important lesson but not urban specific).
- Involving municipal/local government actors is critical; this can be more important in urban contexts due to neighbourhood dynamics, political affiliations and sensitivities.

PRIORITY ACTION Develop recommendations to guide interactions between humanitarian actors working within the cluster approach and local authorities.

SAMPLING

- When population data is limited, using population density mapping, aerial maps and other GPS data can be a useful start to understanding populations and defining sampling clusters.
- A variety of methods have been successfully used in different contexts without population lists, such as UNHCR registration lists (e.g. Lebanon), neighbourhood leaders providing local lists (e.g. Madagascar), and sending enumerators to create a complete household list before the survey (e.g. Nairobi).
- Mobility and insecurity can affect sampling calculations. Higher non-response rates may need to be built into sampling calculations.
- For cost efficiency, it may be necessary to systematically exclude wealthier households. Easily observable characteristics to identify wealthier households can be discussed and agreed upon through focus groups.
- If statistically representative sampling is necessary, a statistician may be required in the assessment team.

PRIORITY ACTION Develop Standard Operating Procedures for creating sampling frames and identifying households when there is no up to date population list.



Photo: WFP/Rein Skullerud

MARKETS

- In urban areas, households are highly dependent on markets for income opportunities and access to essential food and non-food items
- Urban households are highly reliant on markets for food. Food sources module should focus on disaggregating different types of markets.
- Market and price monitoring should include local markets and small shops.
- Understanding proportions of food purchased in cash versus in credit is important for analysing economic vulnerability.
- Markets in cities rely on regional products – therefore it is important to assess and monitor regional production dynamics and flow of key commodities into major cities.

Adapting to an Urban World

Global Food Security Cluster and WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping

Project management, coordination and technical guidance



Project Steering Committee

Advises on planning and implementation

