HUNGRY CITIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

CONFERENCE REPORT

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9 FEBRUARY 2015
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

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HUNGRY CITIES

The *Hungry Cities Partnership: Informality, Inclusive Growth and Food Security in the Cities of the Global South* is an international research project examining food security and inclusive growth in cities in the Global South, led by Prof Jonathan Crush of the Balsillie School for International Affairs in Canada and the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

The five-year collaborative project aims to understand how cities in the Global South will manage the food security challenges arising from rapid urbanization and the transformation of urban food systems. The research examines themes of entrepreneurship and growth in the food sectors of major cities, the impact of supermarket supply chains, and youth and women's employment and entrepreneurship in the informal economy.

KEY POINTS

- Production is certainly not the panacea for food insecurity. In urban areas, more important dimensions include availability, access, utilization, stability over time and quality of diets.

- City planners need to be conscious of food issues. A strategic view of the food system is needed with a governance focus that considers the multiple players involved.

- Systemic issues need to be probed, including how food retail in urban areas actually works and what interventions can be made to achieve improvements, particularly in poor communities.

- Recent research on food insecurity in Southern African cities has found massive inequalities in the food system. The Hungry Cities Partnership will expand this research and probe the impact of income disparity on the food system in cities of the Global South.

- Urban food systems face tensions including undernourishment linked with obesity, as well as the impact of global economic shifts and climate change.

- Research findings on food deserts in developed countries cannot be universally applied and more local research needs to be done on what food deserts mean for cities in the Global South.

SESSION ONE: FOOD IN CITIES

The connections between rapid urbanization, food insecurity and inclusive growth will be examined in a range of large cities in the Global South, said **Jonathan Crush** of the **Balsillie School of International Affairs** and the **University of Cape Town** in his presentation on the **Hungry Cities Partnership** that he heads up.

Edgar Pieterse, director of the **University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities**, opened the workshop by welcoming participants including those from partnering institutions in China, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico and Mozambique.

"We are looking at countries experiencing rapid urban growth," Crush said, noting that all seven cities under study "have huge inequalities and we want to see how that affects food."

The partnership, which "was born at our Cape Town conference" in November 2012, held its inception workshop at the Balsillie School for International Affairs in Waterloo, Ontario, in December 2014.

Noting a widespread "tendency to concentrate on production as being the panacea for food insecurity," Crush said it is becoming "increasingly clear that other dimensions are as, or more, important, including availability, access, utilization, stability over time and quality of diets."

The current rapid urbanization in the Global South follows a similar, albeit slower, process in the North that took 200 years, he said.

"This second wave must be managed at the same time as basic needs are satisfied on an unprecedented scale, economic foundations are built and the transition to a low-carbon economy is effected."

In 2015, the research programme will focus on the dimensions, drivers and trajectories of urbanization and the informal economy; as well as the levels and determinants of food insecurity at the household level and their relationship to formal and informal employment and income-generating activities.

The project's work in 2016 will aim at reshaping informal food systems through inclusive growth, Crush said, noting that one of the aspects investigated will be the patronage patterns of the informal food economy by poor urban consumers and the formulation of innovative strategies by small firms based on consumer behaviour.

The following year, youth entrepreneurship will be under the spotlight, with the project intending to make evidence-based recommendations for programmes that will boost informal entrepreneurship among young people in the partner cities and more broadly.

In 2018, project partners will focus on competition between formal and informal urban food retailers and look at what kind of corporate social responsibility programmes could be developed by supermarket chains that support entrepreneurial activity in the food sector, Crush said.

In his talk on "What is an Urban Food System?", **Gareth Haysom** of the **African Centre for Cities**, said that "in looking at an urban food system, we need to look beyond the individual and household" at the broader system of neighbourhood and city.

City planners "need to be conscious of food issues," otherwise the impact of their planning will be negative, he said.

Urban food systems are complex and include the economic opportunities that enable people to access food in an environment where most of the food consumed is bought, and the spatial dynamics of city living, Haysom said.

With food security primarily viewed as an agricultural issue, "the challenge is how to get urban issues taken into consideration in policy development," he said.

"Little consideration is given to systemic challenges within the food system," he said, noting that a more strategic view of the system is needed "with a governance focus that considers the multiple players involved."

Surveys done by the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) found that, while food is bought in supermarkets across all Southern African cities, "in poorer communities access to food involves a wide variety of systems and strategies," Haysom said.

"There is a vibrancy happening in Cape Town with informal markets flourishing in areas that, if we stuck to Northern literature determinants, would be food deserts."

In urban food systems, "tensions we need to face include that of undernourishment linked with obesity," he said.

"We also need to look at realities such as climate change and global economic shifts that amplify challenges in cities."

SESSION TWO: SOUTH AFRICA, MOZAMBIQUE AND KENYA

In Cape Town, which is home to about 3.9 million people, 47% of households have a monthly income of less than ZAR3,200 per month, said **Jane Battersby** of **UCT's African Centre for Cities** in her presentation on the food system in Cape Town that kicked off this session chaired by **Caroline Skinner** of **Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)** and the **African Centre for Cities**.

Cape Town is geographically segregated with enormous disparity in income, Battersby said.

In the 2008 AFSUN survey of food insecurity amongst the city's urban poor, 68% of households were found to be severely food insecure, she said, noting that data from a recent follow-up survey revealed similar findings.

"The figures were higher than expected," with the vast majority of households suffering food insecurity in Khayelitsha, the poorest area in the sample, she said.

"We found households struggling to afford sufficient food and to have some diversity in their diet."

January is a "distinct hungry season" as are Cape Town's winter months, Battersby said, noting that the reasons for this include people "choosing to go hungry to meet other household needs," such as school fees.

Battersby said she and other researchers had mapped informal food retail in an effort to understand "the lived

geographies of food and the interplay between the formal and informal food economy."

"We found massive inequalities in the food system," she said, noting that there are seven times fewer supermarkets in low-income areas compared with middle and high-income areas in Cape Town.

"Our findings show that while all households are getting at least some of their food from supermarkets," the average low-income household buys food from a spaza shop or a hawker five days a week, she said.

Cape Town's informal traders, including many international migrants, source most of the food that they sell from wholesalers, she said, noting that wholesalers told researchers that they are adapting their marketing strategies "to respond to how the Somali traders are operating."

While the South African government at national and local levels "focuses on urban agricultural as the answer to food insecurity," only two percent of low-income households in Cape Town grow any of the food they consume, Battersby said.

Investigations into where food in Cape Town originates revealed that "just over half of Cape Town's vegetables are grown within 200km" of the city, she said.

Maputo "is getting poorer" and most households live below the poverty line, said **Ines Raimundo, Centre for Policy Analysis, Eduardo Mondlane University**, **Maputo**, in her presentation with colleague **Ramos Muanamoha** on the food system in the Mozambican capital.

Rapid population growth as a result of urbanization is a major challenge for Maputo, Raimundo said.

"The primary source of livelihoods for the urban poor is the informal market," she said, noting that "street food" plays a very important role in Maputo's food system.

Researchers found that as well as buying food, people living in the city's poor areas grow some of their food and also borrow from friends and relatives.

Shifts in food consumption patterns in Maputo include growing dependence on supermarkets and an increase in the number of fast-food restaurants, Raimundo said.

Also, highly processed food is brought into the city by *mukheristas* (cross-border traders), she said.

These changes have led to a rise in so-called lifestyle diseases, with an increasing number of people in Maputo's poor communities suffering strokes and living with high blood pressure, she said.

In his presentation with colleague **Donatien Beguy** of the **African Population and Health Research Centre**, **Nairobi**, **Blessing Mberu** said that severely food insecure residents of Kenya's capital spend more than half of their income on food.

"Among their coping strategies are eating fewer meals per day, buying food on credit and taking their children out of school," Mberu said.

While schools are free, "people feel they can't send their children to school without food."

Among the coping strategies of the severely food insecure are begging for food or money and scavenging for food that would otherwise go to waste, he said.

Researchers found that the severity of the food insecurity in poor areas of Nairobi determined the coping strategies used, with mildly food insecure households cutting down on their number of meals per day in times of particular hardship.

Because people have "very erratic incomes" and buy their food on a daily basis, "they are very susceptible to shocks," Mberu said.

Nairobi's population is growing at between four and five percent and is predicted to reach five million people by 2025, he said.

Informal settlements, marked by squalor, are growing rapidly, he said, noting that these areas are overlooked in service provision.

Street food is a popular source of food in informal settlements, he said.

"To cook your own food you need to have the time and money to buy it, as well as a stove and fuel," he said, noting that refrigeration was also an obstacle.

Problems faced by informal traders include harassment by municipal officials, frequent demolition of market places, exposure of food to the elements and inadequate sanitation, he said.

SESSION THREE: CHINA, INDIA, JAMAICA AND MEXICO

Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu Province, is in one of the wealthiest parts of China and has an urban population of 6.59 million people, said **Zhenzhong Si, Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada**, in his presentation on Nanjing's food system.

Jonathan Crush chaired this session on the food systems of cities outside Africa within the Hungry Cities Partnership.

Very little research on food insecurity at the household or community level has been done in China, Si said, noting that the "supply of greens" seemed to be the central government's main concern.

Within each of Nanjing's 11 districts there are "very poor communities" and huge income disparities, he said, noting that with the economic restructuring that saw many state-owned enterprises become private, unemployment levels have risen.

Also, in the "transformation of the socialist welfare system, many people became poor when they suffered serious illnesses and faced huge private bills" for health care.

Photo by Thom Pierce for the Growing Informal Cities Project

Migrant workers, mostly from rural areas, are the most vulnerable group in Nanjing to food insecurity, Si said.

With a "reduction in reciprocal and informal ties," the "new urban poor are isolated and marginalized."

"Agriculture accounts for only 2.8% of total GDP in the municipality," Si said, noting that a decrease in farmland in the last 10 years has led to a drop in grain and poultry production.

Almost half of the rice in Nanjing "comes from local farms and the rest comes from other provinces" in China, he said, adding that most residents buy their vegetables from fruit-and-vegetable markets ("wet" markets) and only 6% buy them from street vendors.

India's government has a public distribution system through which rice, sugar, wheat and kerosene are provided to people in need, said **Rukmani Ramani** of the **MS Swaminathan Foundation, Chennai, India**, in her presentation on Chennai with colleague **Venkatesh Athreya**.

"Close to 30% of Chennai's population of 4.6 million people live in slums," she said.

Chennai City has a few state-run supermarkets that provide cheap vegetables and fruit, Ramani said.

"Among services in this city, all children in government primary schools get one free meal a day every day of the year," she said. The urban poor also benefit from subsidized meals in state-run canteens.

In urban India, almost 40% of children younger than five have stunted growth and 33% are underweight through malnutrition, Ramani said, noting that India's population is 31% urban.

With a population of close to 600,000 people, the Kingston metropolitan area is the largest urban centre on the island of Jamaica, said **Robert Kinlocke, University of West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica**, in his presentation with colleague **Elizabeth Thomas Hope**.

Participants in the Hungry Cities of the Global South workshop, Cape Town, South Africa, 2015

The city is segregated by income, but there are "pockets of poverty" that could be home to hundreds of households in some high-income areas, he said.

The legacy of the plantation system includes unequal distribution of land, with crops grown for export on large plantations and crops for domestic consumption grown informally on a small scale, he said.

There is a high dependence on imported food in Jamaica, he said.

Noting that an increasing number of Kingston residents are working in the informal sector, Kinlocke said that cuts in agricultural subsidies are "pushing more people into poverty."

Kingston has an ageing population, he said.

In Mexico City, "large wholesale merchants constitute the central axis of the urban food supply and distribution system," said **Silvia Nunez, Centro de Investigaciones Sobre**

America del Norte (CISAN), Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City, in her presentation with colleague **Valeria Marina Valle**.

A supply centre called Ceda, which stocks fresh fruit and vegetables, covers 327 hectares and is the world's largest wholesale market, Nunez said.

"About 350,000 people do business here every day," she said, noting also that produce from 24 states in Mexico is sold at this supply centre, "which means that national produce prices are set here."

The Mexico City metropolitan area, one of the world's largest urban centers, has 21.2 inhabitants, Nunez said.

However, urban migration has slowed and "natural growth is the main reason" for population growth in Mexico City, she said.

Recent research showed that the city's "rate of deprivation due to lack of access to food was 13%."

AGENDA

Monday 9th February 2015

14:00–14:30   SESSION ONE: FOOD IN CITIES

Chair: **Edgar Pieterse**, Director, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

WELCOME: **Edgar Pieterse**

THE HUNGRY CITIES PARTNERSHIP: **Jonathan Crush**, Balsillie School for International Affairs (BSIA), Waterloo, Canada

WHAT IS AN URBAN FOOD SYSTEM? **Gareth Haysom**, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

14:30–15:45   SESSION TWO: SOUTH AFRICA, MOZAMBIQUE AND KENYA

Chair: **Caroline Skinner,** African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA: **Jane Battersby**, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE: **Ines Raimundo** and **Ramos Muanamoha,** Centre for Policy Analysis,
Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo

NAIROBI, KENYA: **Blessing Mberu** and **Donatien Beguy,** African Population and Health Research Centre, Nairobi

15:45–16:00   BREAK

16:00–18:00   SESSION THREE: CHINA, INDIA, JAMAICA AND MEXICO

Chair: **Jonathan Crush**

NANJING, CHINA: **Zhenzhong Si**, Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada

CHENNAI, INDIA: **Rukmani Ramani** and **Venkatesh Athreya**, MS Swaminathan Foundation

KINGSTON, JAMAICA: **Elizabeth Thomas Hope** and **Robert Kinlocke**, University of West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO: **Silvia Nunez** and **Valeria Marina Valle**, Centro de Investigaciones Sobre America del Norte (CISAN),
Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Wilfrid Laurier University

Balsillie School of International Affairs

University of Waterloo

African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

MS Swaminathan Research Foundation

University of West Indies, Mona Campus

Centro de Investigaciones Sobre America del Norte (CISAN), Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM)

Centre for Policy Analysis, Eduardo Mondlane University

African Population Health and Research Centre (APHRC)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PRESENTATIONS

Workshop presentations can be found under Presentations on the Publications page of the AFSUN website: www.afsun.org/publications/

MEDIA

Television

Jonathan Crush interviewed by Iman Rappetti on eNCA, 9 February 2015:
http://www.enca.com/media/video/debunking-myths-around-migrants-stealing'-jobs

Newspaper article

Jane Battersby interviewed by Michael Morris of the Weekend Argus, 7 March 2015: "Meeting the needs of the hungry"
http://www.afsun.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/jane.battersby.07.03.2015.pdf

Radio

Gareth Haysom interviewed on Breakfast Beat, Voice of the Cape, 5 February 2015
http://iono.fm/e/137641

Social media

This conference was comprehensively covered on Facebook and Twitter through Moving on Empty and on the homepage news section of the AFSUN website, www.afsun.org.

facebook.com/MovingOnEmpty   **@MovingonEmpty**