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Title: Urban food insecurity and migrant wellbeing: Insight from Bangalore slums

Global trends suggest poverty would increasingly be concentrated in urban areas as cities across the developing countries grow. Given cash based economies in urban spaces, reliance on market purchases for food pose food insecurity as a major urban challenge. For migrants, urban food security challenge is further compounded by inequitable access to infrastructure and resources, especially across the Global South. While income poverty has been considered as the main driver of food insecurity, urban food insecurity is also driven by a range of non-income factors which goes unacknowledged in the larger debate on food security.

In the context of greater rural-urban mobility, exclusionary urbanization and spatial inequality, this paper contributes to the understanding of urban food insecurity among poor migrants in the city of Bengaluru – a large metropolis in South India. Existing studies on the impact of migration on food security have focused exclusively on the rural populations with a sparse body of knowledge on the food security status of migrating households at the destination. Using experiential indicators of food security for 1200 households across Bangalore slums, we show that migrants experience greater food insecurity than the local inhabitants. We further argue that this relative deprivation is largely driven by non-income factors like lack of access to essential public services, employment status and access to subsidized food.

Motivation for this research comes from multiple strands of literature cutting across food security, urbanization, informality and exclusionary migration in the developing world. This study contributes to the literature on multiple fronts. First, this is the first quantitative evidence for the association between food security and migration status at the place of migration for India. Second, this study opens up avenues to understand the complex relationship between food insecurity and non-income welfare indicators, especially across informal urban settlements. Third, we contribute to the nascent literature which uses experiential measures to assess household food security.

Broadly, we emphasize the role of access to physical infrastructure in understanding urban household vulnerability. We further discuss the role of urban food systems for reducing food insecurity in poor urban neighborhoods of the cities of Global South.