

Exploring Food Insecurity and Support in Slum Areas of Bangladesh during COVID-19:

Lessons for future emergencies in light of the “right to food”

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RATIONALE/OBJECTIVE

Nearly half of Bangladesh's slum dwellers faced food insecurity, exacerbated by COVID-19

Objectives:

- ✓ To explore the changes and causes of food insecurity during the pandemic
- ✓ To understand the nature and extent of the support received from duty bearers considering the "right to food"

METHODS

Repeated cross-sectional survey

- Round 1: 2018-19 [1,112 HH Heads]
- Round 2: 2022 [614 HH Heads]

10 slums across 8 divisions

Descriptive analysis using Stata-17

Qualitative interviews (over the phone)

- Round 1: Rapid semi-structured interviews; March–April 2020 [80 participants]
- Round 2: In-depth interviews; October 2020 – January 2021 [30 participants]

6 slums of Dhaka

Slum dwellers, community leaders, and health workers

Thematic analysis using NVivo software

RESULTS

COVID-19 worsened food insecurity in slums, affecting both already vulnerable and new groups

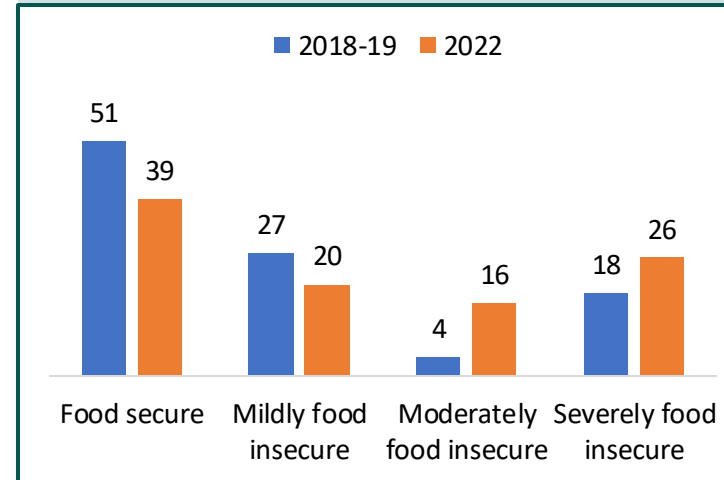


Figure: % of HHs by food security status

- ✓ Inadequate and temporary food and cash support from govt. & NGOs
- ✓ Viewed support as a favour rather than a right
- ✓ Corruption and flawed beneficiary selection make slum dwellers feel powerless and rarely claim their rights

IMPLICATIONS

- The pandemic magnified food insecurities and the State failed to ensure food security for slum dwellers
- Residents lacked clarity on their rights to demand assistance
- Clear policies and better accountability to uphold the "right to food" during crises and post is needed

Causes of food insecurity

Decreased affordability

- Job losses
- Business failures
- Reduced wages
- Salary withholding
- Lack of savings
- Limited loan access
- Price hikes

Reduced accessibility

- Mobility restrictions
- Shop closures