

PARTICIPATORY URBAN FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Communities are well aware of their problems and their viewpoint regarding solutions. Communities' ideas and knowledge have been gained from experience, thus they are able to provide useful and sustainable solutions to their problems. The participants and the communities were spirited and optimistic about their own interactive procedures for finding solutions for their problems. The ability of this process to empower local communities is a unique feature and ensures thorough discussions on problem identification and sustainable solutions.



**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

**EMERGENCY FOOD
SECURITY NETWORK**

**Emergency Food
Security Network**



**Disaster Mitigation
Institute**

September 2004

Experience Learning Series 27

The Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI), Gujarat, India is a community based action research, action planning and action advocacy organisation. It works towards bridging the gap between policy, practice and research related to disaster risk mitigation, in an effort to link the community to the national and international level activities.

DMI's activities for disaster risk mitigation include: (a) Awareness Generation, (b) Capacity Building, (c) Policy Advocacy, (d) Direct Implementation, (e) Research and Publications and (f) Networking.

DMI was established in response to the repeated 1987-89 droughts in India. It has evolved from a project in 1989 to an autonomous organisation in 1995. During its evolutionary journey DMI has developed four security programmes and eleven activity centres.

Four sector securities include: (a) Food (b) Water (c) Livelihood and (d) Habitat.

Eleven Activity Centres include:
(i) Action Review and Research Services,
(ii) Bhuj Reconstruction Project, (iii) Building Peace and Protection, (iv) DMI-AMA Joint Centre for Disaster Risk Management,
(v) Emergency Food Security Network,
(vi) Emergency Health Unit, (vii) Learning Resources, (viii) Livelihood Relief Fund,
(ix) Organisation Resources, (x) Sphere Resource Centre and (xi) Water Security Programme.

Constituted in 2002, the Emergency Food Security Network (EFSN) is a network of local and global agencies that have vast experience in the field of humanitarian response related to food security in India.

The Emergency food Security Network seeks to propagate the importance of food security for disaster preparedness and mitigation. This broadly include: (a) creating a repository of knowledge on food security; (b) building community capacity in handling food security issues; (c) linking public and private initiatives in provision of food security during emergencies; (d) combining modern scientific approaches and traditional indigenous coping strategies and using them with mainstream development activities of poverty alleviation.

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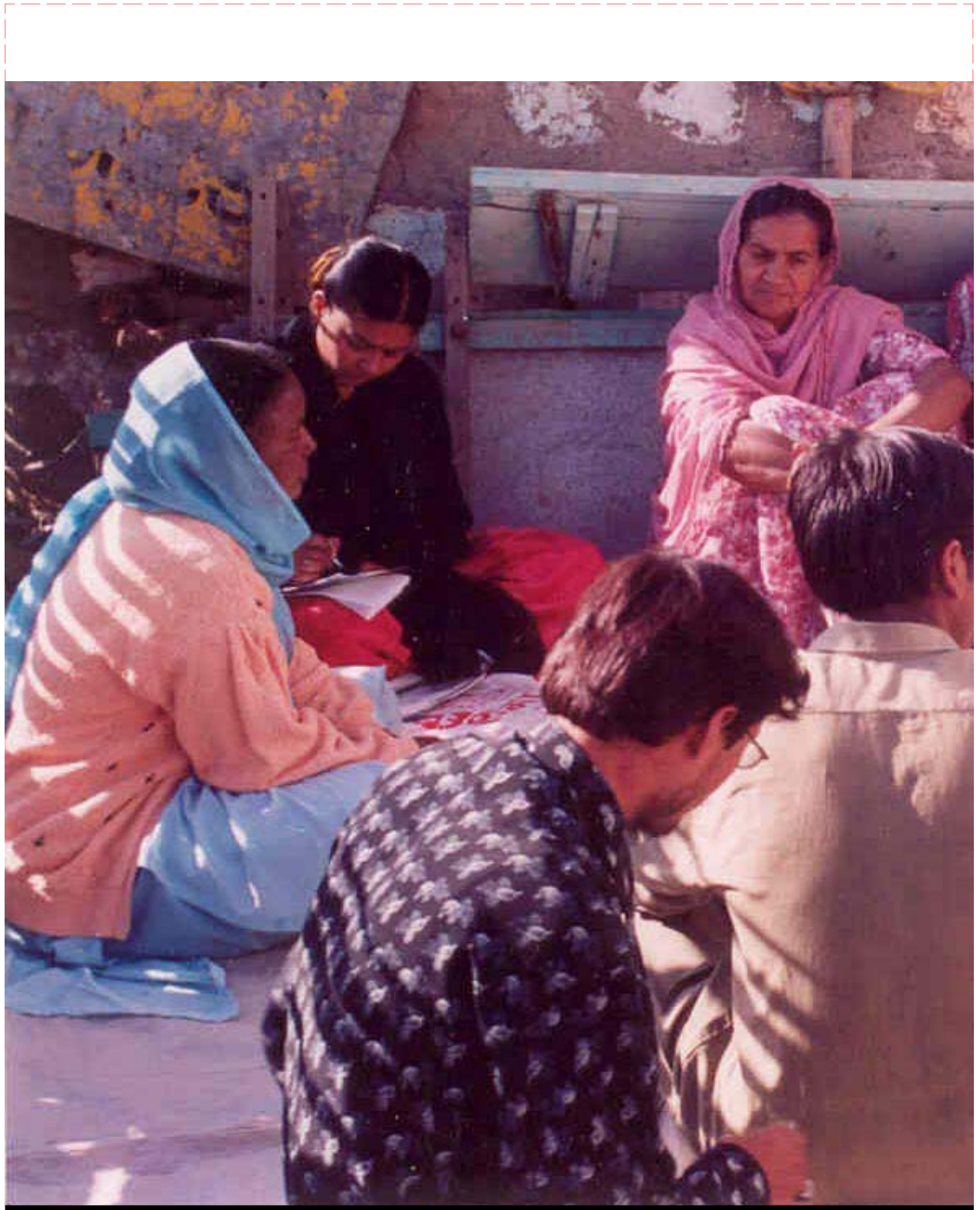
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PREFACE

Every agency interested in influencing a set of undesirable conditions, that are harmful or have the potential for damaging lives, can approach the situation from two directions. They can work directly in the subject area, understand the micro situation, come out of the area and use the inside knowledge to influence the macro sphere. This is the most commonly used approach that intervening agencies employ. The advantage being the world view and the resource power that these organisations bring to the mostly secluded and underdeveloped areas. One serious shortcoming of such an approach is that outside involvement in this area cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be construed as a permanent, long-term commitment. In spite of the incorrigible and unyielding nature of underlying issues requiring considerable time and effort in addressing, the involvement of outsiders in an area is time-bound, resource-bound, top-down and agency-specific.

The basic aim of this booklet is to delineate a different approach that has successfully obviated these pit-falls by initiating a method that precludes a direct involvement of an outside agency after the initial phase. The community and the local administration alternate in major and minor roles during and after the exercise. It describes the method of entering an area, creating a network of able locals, training them to collect and analyse information, generate solutions, and chart out a plan for implementing them jointly with the local administration. The role of outsiders is limited to initial orientation of the selected group, facilitation of the process and short-circuiting the connection between them and the local administration.

The exercise was undertaken in seven low-income habitats in Bhuj, located in the district of Kutch in western India. The problems of the slum dwellers are multi-dimensional; they face insecurities related to shelter, water, livelihood and food on a daily basis coupled with the ever-increasing pressures of urbanisation. The affects of continuous droughts in Kutch and the devastation brought by the January 26,2001 earthquake have created exceptional challenges in Bhuj. The method documented in this booklet has used the framework of food and nutrition security to view the various facets of their problems through the lenses of availability, accessibility and utilization.

How and why should this approach be studied?

By preparing this book the authors have provided a road map for an intervention that is far-sighted with two in-built components – of sustainability for the subject group and an exit

strategy for the intervening agency. The readers are urged to consider the use of this method in their areas and spheres of work.

The benefits of understanding this approach as described in this book are two- fold. First, though this method used the food- security lens, it can be easily modified and contextualised to address any other issues, depending on the priority of the area and the intervening agency. Second, using the local resources costs only a fraction of the investments needed in setting up of unsustainable infrastructures (physical and otherwise).

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| AWC | Anganwadi Centres |
| BRP | Bhuj Reconstruction Project |
| DMI | Disaster Mitigation Institute |
| EFSN | Emergency Food Security Network |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| FPS | Fair Price Shop |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| NGO | Non Government Organisation |
| PDS | Public Distribution System |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |

OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This booklet is intended to describe in detail a unique method by which local communities are trained to investigate their problems and generate their own solutions. This is not merely a conceptual exercise. This method was tested in seven communities in Bhuj, in the State of Gujarat, India. The purpose of the booklet is to provide readers with a complete description of the process of events undertaken, to serve as an aid for others wishing to conduct similar assessments. Examples from the project in Bhuj are used to highlight the steps in the process and the outcome of the exercise in Bhuj.

This method was initiated jointly by Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI)¹, Ahmedabad through its activity centre, Emergency Food Security Network (EFSN)², supported by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific and FAO headquarters in Rome. The common aims of the partners were four-fold:

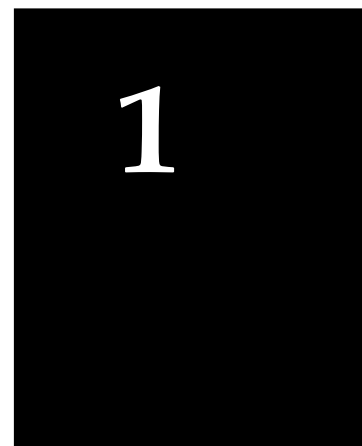
- (a) To train community volunteers to investigate for themselves the reasons for food and nutrition insecurity in their communities
- (b) To understand the food insecurity problems the urban poor have to overcome.
- (c) To create a team of selected community members, with enhanced capacities in qualitative research
- (d) To provide a direct interface between the local administration and the community to forge a sustainable linkage between the two.

1.2 DECISION TO WORK ON URBAN FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

In India, fast growing urban populations have created a corresponding increase in the number of poor living in cities and towns. Though the scale of income and infrastructure in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, the food and nutrition security of the urban poor is not much better than their rural counterparts. The urban poor rely on wage-earning jobs to exchange for food (or non-food) items. As the majority of the urban poor are engaged in casual labour they are increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity. This is not unique to India. Fifty percent of the world's poor are expected to live in urban areas by the year 2020.

In tandem with the poverty flux clearly shifting to urban areas from rural belts, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has increased interest in urban food and

¹ Refer Annex 1: History of DMI's Work in Bhuj



nutrition security. Nutrition quality of street foods, change of food habits and impacts of globalisation on food and nutrition security and habits of the poor are areas of continuing interest of the organisation.

The outputs of a State-level consultation conducted in Ahmedabad by DMI and EFSN (April 2003) focusing on food and nutrition security in Gujarat, echoed similar needs to explore better ways of reaching out to the nagarpalikas (small towns) to incorporate the needs of the slum dwellers within food and nutrition security coverage and to define food and nutritional security concepts in local contexts

The amalgamation of the three organizations, DMI, EFSN and FAO was spurred by the above action agenda along with a common desire to understand and ameliorate the obstacles that stand between food and nutrition security and the slum dwellers.

1.3 FORMAT OF THE BOOKLET

The booklet is based on the experience in Bhuj. The research was qualitative focusing on the slum dwellers in seven poor habitats in the city of Bhuj. The city of Bhuj is the headquarters of the district of Kutch, which is one of the poorest districts of Gujarat and India. Bhuj is an urbanizing centre with a large slum population. In addition this town was affected by the January 2001, earthquake.

The booklet is divided into III sections which highlight the steps in the community food and nutrition security assessment. An attempt was made to highlight important activities in the process using bullet points and descriptive technique. Readers are also provided with examples from the project in Bhuj, displayed in shaded boxes.

1.4 SPECIAL NOTE ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST: ROLE OF THE LOCAL ORGANISATION

DMI has been working in Bhuj since February 2002, and has set up the Bhuj Reconstruction Project (BRP) to organise its relief activities. BRP has worked in Bhuj for almost two years and regenerated lives of earthquake affected slum dwellers by restoring their livelihoods and rebuilding their shelters. Over the last two years, BRP has created a relationship of trust with the local population. The benefits of this direct relationship were used by EFSN when selecting BRP as the local organisation to implement the project in Bhuj.

The role of the local organisation, in this case the Bhuj Reconstruction Project (BRP), is critical and can influence the outcome of the whole process. BRP was most influential in the selection of key actors, orientation of the key actors towards food and nutrition security, and training the key actors to take up new

roles. The selection played a key role in the successful implementation of the method. Through BRP, EFSN could convince the local population of the significance of the activity being undertaken. The BRP staff provided active support to EFSN in conveying to the key informants the importance of analysing food and nutrition security and overcoming their fears of not being capable of new responsibilities.

This direct involvement of DMI in Bhuj helped EFSN and FAO in additional ways. The presence of BRP precluded the need to search for and identify a capable, willing and committed organisation. The existing network of volunteers were selected and trained for conducting focus groups. This saved valuable time. Their familiarity with the areas and the residents contributed to the ease of information exchange during the focus group discussions. There was no lag between planning and implementation. Whether in logistics, time, comprehension or communication what was planned was well understood by all parties involved. Annex 1 can be consulted for more information on the history of DMI.





DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

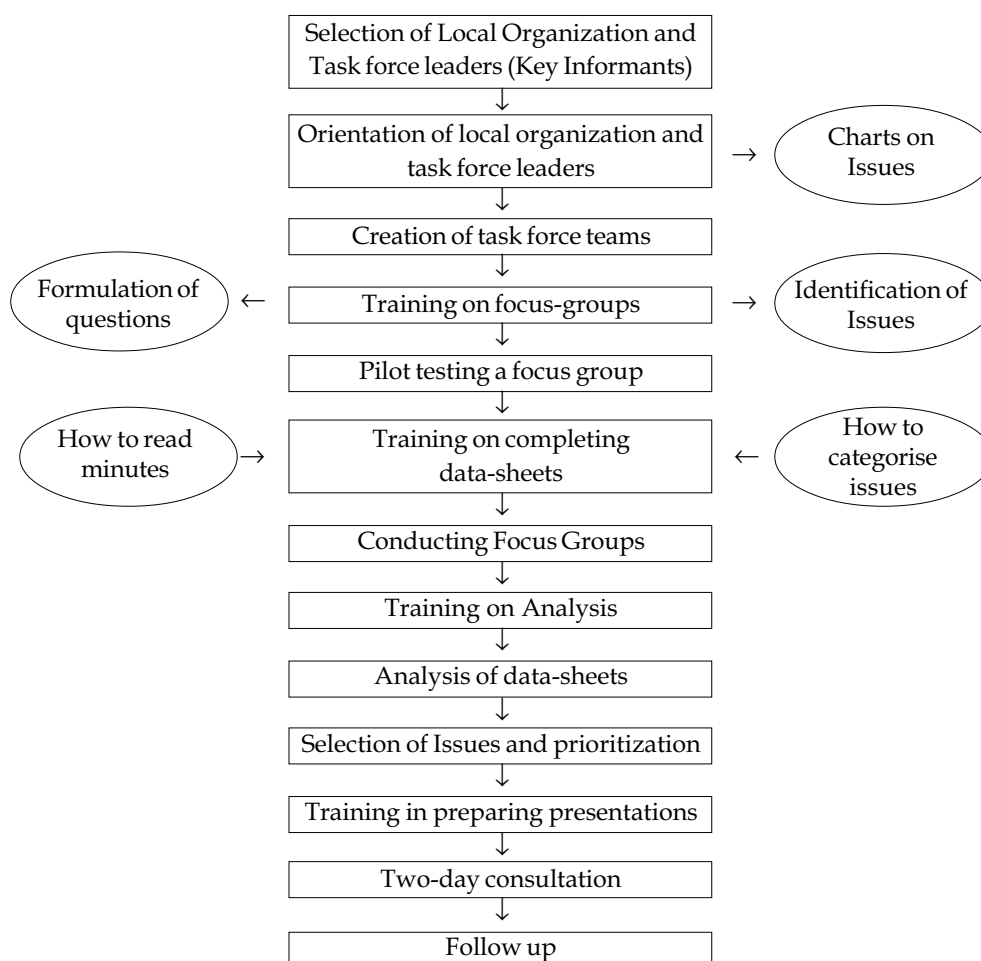
2.1 THE PROCESS MAP: A STRUCTURE FOR WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

"Community finds out their own problems, community prioritizes them, community analyses them, community finds out plausible solution and community presents them to an audience who can assist in the achievement of the solutions" - This is the motto of the method tried in Bhuj slums.

There are three basic actors in the process, the facilitating agency, a counterpart local agency and the community. The relationship between the three and their different roles and responsibilities will depend on local circumstances, however the basis for the process will be explained drawing on experience from the project in Bhuj.



Process Map



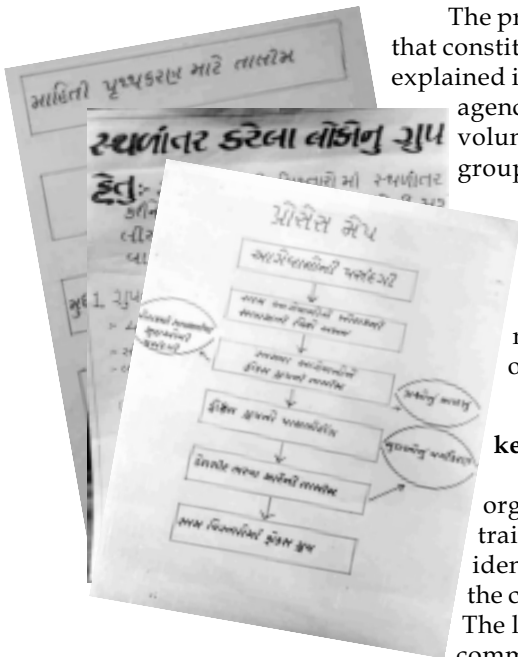
In the Bhuj example, the Emergency Food and Nutrition Security network was the facilitating agency and the Bhuj Reconstruction Project served as the local organization from which seven communities participated in the project.

The process map gives an outline of the sequence of events that constitute the method. Each of the steps will be further explained in subsequent paragraphs. The role of the facilitating agency is to provide training and support to the community volunteers. The trained volunteers then conduct the focus groups, analyze the results and present the findings to the larger community.

The entire exercise in Bhuj was completed in three months. The direct link that EFSN had with the BRP team saved the time that might have been necessary for identification of a local facilitating organisation.³

(i) Selection of local organisations and community key informants

The first step in the process is to identify a local organization within the community that can provide training and support the process. It is important to identify a local organisation with knowledge of the area, the community and the day-to-day problems faced by them. The local organization should have close ties to the community and be trusted and respected. Ideally, they will have a network of community volunteers who can be informed about the project and join as volunteers if interested.



Experience in the Bhuj Project:

EFSN was fortunate to have direct link with the Bhuj Reconstruction Project (BRP), a local organization working in Bhuj on post disaster rehabilitation for the past two years. The process of finding such community organizations can be lengthy. Fortunately the BRP had already gone through a community volunteer selection process. It was decided to adopt them as the volunteers for this programme also. In the two years BRP has created a network of fourteen slum dwellers that were trained to identify potential beneficiaries and handle the distribution of relief material in the fourteen areas that BRP was active⁴. This same group of slum dwellers (henceforth referred to as community volunteers) played the major roles of issue-identification, data collection, data analysis, prioritization and presentation of the findings to the local administration.

³ EFSN has recently completed an exercise that involved selection of local organisations in three other states in India, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa and Assam. On an average it took almost two months for identifying a suitable local body.

⁴ Refer Annex 1:History of working of DMI in Bhuj

After the local organization has been selected, community leaders can be asked to participate as key informants/ community task force leaders⁵. The first step, the identification of community volunteers and local organizations, is critical as these will be the actors who guide the entire process.

The key informants should be:

- local community members
- belong to the communities where the focus groups will be conducted
- be knowledgeable of the area
- be considered acceptable by the larger community
- Additionally it is helpful to choose persons with prior experience in conducting focus groups, or similar qualitative methods

(ii) Orientation and learning session with local organization and key informants

An orientation session with the local organization and key informants is the next step in the process. The orientation session involves the facilitating organization, local organization and key informants. The purpose of this step in the process is twofold (i) to explain the aim of the project and concepts of food and nutrition security and (ii) to discuss the food and nutrition security problems in the communities and set up the framework for focus groups. The interface is not a one-way flow of knowledge, but the first chance for the actors involved to contextualise the problems through a food and nutrition security framework.

The facilitating organization should explain the aim of the project: a community food and nutrition security assessment to be carried out in their neighborhood in an effort to discuss food and nutrition related problems of the urban community and formulate potential solutions.

The process of data collection by the community volunteers can also be explained. Including the steps which will be involved in helping them prepare to handle focus groups, conduct analysis and present their findings to the local administration through a consultation. An explanation and description of the following tools can be provided: focus group discussions, key interviews, missing voices and photo documentation. The need and significance of the community taking on a central role should be



Introducing the elements of food and nutrition security to the community volunteers during orientation.

⁵ The term Key Informant/Community Task Force leader is used as dual roles are played. The key informants help describe and present the situations in their communities and also serve as the task force leaders for conducting the focus groups. The term Key Informant will be used to reflect this in the remainder of the document.



The Community volunteers framing questions on food and nutrition security issues.

conveyed along with stressing the focus on solutions and not just problems.

Introduction to Food and Nutrition Security

The key informants who will be the leaders of the task force teams need to have a clear idea of the type of information needed to achieve the purpose of the study. The facilitating organization should provide an introduction of the concepts which provides the community volunteers with a clear picture of the different factors affecting the food and nutrition security of the community. At the same time the key informants can begin to define the type of information which should be collected from the community.

It is helpful to ask the key informants to note down the food and nutrition security issues and categorize them into availability, access, utilization and sustainability of food and also think of the most vulnerable groups in the community.

Deciding on the composition of the Focus Groups

Once the concepts of food and nutrition security are understood, vulnerable groups can be identified. The type of information specific to each group can be elaborated on. Teams can be formed for each vulnerable group identified and a set of focus group questions formulated for each vulnerable group. Aspects that can be included are sources of food, capacity/ barriers to buy food, hygiene, and issues concerning pregnant and lactating women, and young children.

The groups can then present a chart on issues and questions for each of the vulnerable groups identified.

The community volunteers were also asked to note down further questions that they would like to ask during the focus groups discussions to the selected groups. They were given additional time to frame the questions, which were finalised later with inputs from EFSN, DMI and FAO.

During the discussion with the key informants it came out that within a community there might be various groups facing different food related problems, and that it is necessary to capture all these issues. Thus in order to categorize the food and nutrition security issues in the slums, four groups whose food and nutrition security status would serve as a measure of the level of food insecurity of the locality were identified.

1. Pregnant and mothers of young children (age: 0-6 years)
2. Single women headed households
3. Migrants due to earthquake

Later it was decided to include one more group i.e.-General group, which will help bring knowledge of the food-related

problems and their solutions for all the community. Thus in total it was decided to include four groups in the focus discussions.

Introduction and discussion of data collection sheets

It is useful to create a discussion guideline to facilitate the focus group. Once the training group has identified and agreed upon the groups in their community most vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity and had some time to brain storm on potential questions for each group, a discussion guideline can be prepared. The discussion guideline provides an outline for the topics and issues to be discussed in each focus group and provides a standardized format for recording the response of each group, which will then facilitate analysis.

A guideline has the following major functions:

1. Give information on the type of issue being investigated.
2. Give information on the people conducting the meeting.
3. Give information on the participants and the venue.
4. Provide a framework for easy logical progression of the discussion.
5. Collect all relevant data and avoid non-relevant discussion.

Data sheets⁶ should be prepared for each type of focus group. The involvement of the community in creation of the data-sheets helps them internalize concepts of food and nutrition security and also can serve as a tool for analyzing information after the focus groups have been conducted.

The question sheets for each focus group can be found in Annex 2

(iii) Creation of a community taskforce

The community key informants cannot conduct the focus groups alone. For each community, a task force consisting of at least four people should be created. The task force will help to inform the community about the aims and objectives of the food and nutrition security assessment, stimulate participation in focus group discussions, help to select eligible participants, aid in facilitating focus group discussions, contribute to the analysis and then disseminate the



⁶ Each data sheet would contain leading questions that will guide the facilitator. This is a data-collection tool developed by DMI for an organizing the information from the focus group minutes.

results to the community. This team of local volunteers will be referred to in this document as the community taskforce.

The guidelines for selecting community volunteers include:

- Basic literacy skills- reading and writing of the local language (In Bhuj it was Gujarati language)
- They should be representatives of the slum areas and familiar with their area as well as with the community
- They should have basic information about community problems and needs
- They can include community leaders, informal community leaders, religious leaders, teachers, etc.

The local organization and key informant are best suited to request assistance as they are the ones who know the communities and the capacities of those best suited to form part of the task force.

The process for creating the task force in Bhuj, went as follows. According to the guidelines specified during the initial orientation, the key informants made a list of ten slum-dwellers from each of their communities who could potentially volunteer to be on the taskforce. Then from among each list, three volunteers were chosen on the basis of their literacy skills, intellectual ability and impartiality. This group of four, including and led by the key informant for each area, is called the 'task force'. In the Bhuj project, seven such task forces were created, one for each of selected communities.

2.2 TRAINING OF TASK FORCE TEAMS AND CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS

Once the members of the task force teams have been chosen, a day of training should be held to prepare the team to conduct qualitative research into the food and nutrition security needs of the community, to identify various problems the communities face in achieving food and nutrition security and to chart out routes to solve these problems. The training should be conducted in order to strengthen the capacity of the community to conduct the focus group discussions in the target slums and prepare presentations of their findings.

The style of training should be interactive. Participation can be encouraged through role-

play, dialogue and group exercises.

The following is a guideline of the elements which can be incorporated into the training session:

1. Concepts of food and nutrition security



The taskforce team

2. Guidance and practice in conducting focus groups
3. The different groups to be assembled for discussions
4. Analysis and presentation of the results

Annex 3 provides an example of a training schedule, which lists the session topics and provides a suggested time frame for each. Each local organization in collaboration with the key informants can decide upon the most appropriate training schedule and sessions for their unique situation.



The level of involvement of the facilitating organization needed for the task force training session, will depend on the training skill level of the local organization and their familiarity with the project concept, in this case, food and nutrition security. The facilitating organization and local organization should meet together to decide on the training schedule. The facilitating organization should encourage members from the local organization and key informants to conduct some of the sessions. This will provide them with more teaching and public speaking experience as well as help them internalize the concepts of food and nutrition security.

The following is a description of the elements included in the Bhuj project training of community task forces.

In the first session the participants were introduced to the objective of the project and given an overview of the entire series of steps which will lead up to the city-level consultation, where the community will share their findings with government, NGO's and other members of the community. It is a good idea to set the tone from the beginning, that one of the most important outcomes of the focus group discussions is to seek solutions, not just come up with a list of problems.

In the second session the participants were given basic training on food and nutrition security. One of the key informants can be chosen to explain the concepts of food and nutrition security and the three primary dimensions of food and nutrition security availability, accessibility and utilization. If there is a particular concern in the community (drought, natural disasters, eviction) this can be discussed as well. The participants can then break into smaller groups to identify the most vulnerable groups.

The third session focused on enhancing communication skills. During this session simple examples of effective



Explanation about the Special Groups of focus discussions with the taskforce.

communication were discussed using practical examples and role-play. Another aim of this session was to understand the ability of the new participants in talking and getting information out of the focus group participants. In addition, it gave a chance to the participants to interact with fellow participants through communicating with each other and confidence to talk during community gatherings. The session helped to remove the fear and shyness of many participants in sharing opinions in public. It also helped to bring them together since they will be conducting the focus groups as a team.

The fourth session dealt with special groups. The groups identified below are those selected by the Bhuj key informants, these may differ depending on the community and their perception of the most vulnerable. The four groups selected in Bhuj and the discussion points that focused on each group are given below.

(a) Pregnant and lactating women

The first group to be considered was pregnant and lactating women. The participants discussed the particular nutritional needs of pregnant woman and young children. The female participants within the groups participated actively and suggested inclusion of affordability of adequate quantity and quality of food and the various constraints to it including some health issues.

(b) Single women headed households

The second group to be considered was single-women headed households. The issues concerning them were divided into the following issues:

- Employment opportunities within and outside the community
- The problems in balancing child-care with employment
- The stigmas that single-women face

(c) Migrants due to earthquakes

The destruction of the central town area meant many residents had to shift to the outskirts. It is these new settlements that form a share of the slums in this study. Many of the participants belong to this category and hence it is necessary to know the issues that they have to face. These are:

- The impact of migration on employment
- Changes in food habits after migration
- Social acceptance by the community

(d) General Group

The need for this group was to get the view of an ordinary resident of the slums. The issues to be covered by these groups were:

- The food supply of the area as a whole
- The common factors that influence the food and nutrition security of the area
- The working of the municipal bodies in the area

The next session focused on how to conduct a focus group. Participants were given guidelines on three stages of conducting a focus group discussion and the different roles involved, including discussion facilitator and note taker.

Stage 1: Initial Preparation

This involves:

1. Deciding time and venue.
2. Deciding participants and informing them.
3. Deciding the team and clarifying their roles.
4. Preparing the data-sheet.

Stage 2: During the focus group meeting

1. Conveying Aim
2. Seating Position
3. Maintaining a smooth proceeding
4. Taking down minutes individually
5. Include information based on observation.

Stage 3: After the focus group discussion

1. What is a data-sheet?
2. How to compile the individual minutes into the data-sheet?

Taskforce roles during the focus group discussions

One of the following roles should be filled by each task force member:

- Focus group discussion leader (facilitator)
- 2 note takers
- Observer

The different taskforce members can decide who should fill the various roles during the focus group depending on their comfort level with the skills required for each role. The specific tasks for each role can be reviewed during the training session.

Both note takers should record all of the responses for each of the questions discussed. It may also be useful to keep a

Enhancing participation and communication skill of the training participants through role-plays, dialogue and groups exercises.



tally on how many focus group participants provide the same response or have the same concerns. If a majority of participants give the same response then that response can be considered as more significant.

The final session gave presentation tips to the taskforce on how to present the findings and conclusions of the focus group to the larger community and government representatives. This is meant only to introduce these concepts to the task force teams. They should be given more support in conducting the analysis and preparing for the city level meeting in subsequent training days.

Lastly, the participants were asked to complete an evaluation of the training. Each of the sessions was listed and they were asked to rate the utility of the content and effectiveness of the trainers. Evaluations of this type can be used to help the facilitating and local organizations improve their effectiveness as trainers.

The participants should be given a certificate which states they completed one day of training on how to conduct focus groups.

(i) Pilot testing

Soon after the training, taskforce teams should get together for a practical training pilot test on how to conduct a focus group discussion. The pilot test serves two purposes, to test the discussion guideline and to provide the task force teams with practical experience in conducting focus groups.

Piloting: Focus group discussion with single women headed HH's.



It is a good idea to combine two or more taskforce teams. Some of the team will facilitate the focus group and others can observe and practice note taking. One of the chosen group compositions (single women headed households, recent migrants, etc.) should be assembled for the pilot test. The pilot test should be conducted in a community outside of those selected for the project.

In addition to gaining skills in facilitating focus groups, the taskforces should also identify problems/ difficulties encountered during the focus group.

After conducting the pilot test in Bhuj with a group of single women headed households, the following areas were seen as requiring additional practice:

- Proper seating positions

- Coaxing the reticent participants to talk
- Not breaking the flow of discussions

These areas were noted and re-enforced on a refresher course given right before beginning the focus group discussions in the communities.

(ii) Organising and conducting the focus groups

The focus group meetings should be spread out over a period of days and generally no more than one should be conducted on any day, to avoid getting the discussions confused and also to allow the taskforce teams time to summarize the discussion. The taskforce should decide the venue and timetable for the focus groups in each area keeping in mind the convenience of different groups attending them. For example a focus group with recent migrants might best be scheduled to take place in the evening when eligible participants have returned from work, while a focus group for pregnant woman might be more conveniently conducted during the day when older children are at school.

The following tips can be used to help organize the meetings:

Time - the day and time of the focus group should be convenient for the members of that group

Venue - the meeting should take place near to the participants homes in a neutral location in which all members of the group will be comfortable meeting.

Possible venues include:

- Community center
- School
- Taskforce members home
- Office of the local organization

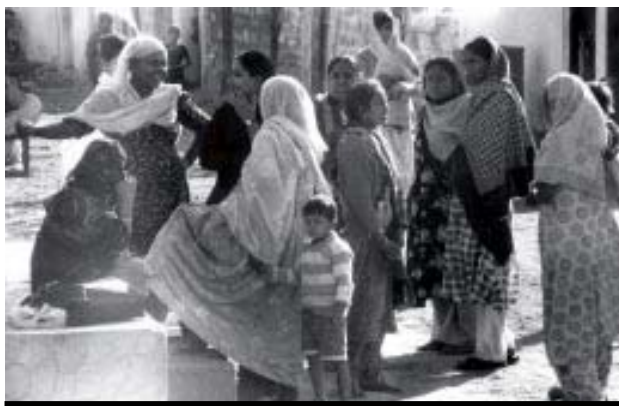
The timetable for the focus group meetings in each community can be finalised by each taskforce in their respective areas.

After each focus group, the team members should sit together to complete the datasheet. The taskforce members compare notes taken during the discussion and bring together all the relevant information. They also discuss how the focus group was conducted, the positive and negative points and talk about ways in which they can improve their techniques.

Annex 4 provides an example of the Data sheet which can be filled by the taskforce team upon completion of each focus group.



(iii) Examples from the Bhuj Project



Bringing together the participants invited for the discussion before the focus group discussions in Sanjognangari.

The Section below provides a pictorial essay along with commentary and some findings from the focus groups in Bhuj.

The team members of the taskforce gathered the participants just before the meeting at the decided place. The taskforce introduced the EFSN team members to local participants to make the atmosphere more relaxed and enable the participants to speak freely during discussion.

Example from focus group with Newly arrived migrants

This predominantly Muslim group of migrants mainly lives in single room shelters built by an Islamic religious body. Now they face dislocation from this area due to the plan of the administration to build a police station and quarters for personnel on this land. Facing relocation twice in three years is not something that this group is very happy with.



A meeting of migrants in Rahimnagar, discussing their food insecurity issues and their possible solutions.

They are displaced from their original houses within the Walled City of Bhuj which was destroyed in the earthquake in January 2001. This has resulted in loss of employment and considerable distances from the ration shops that they are registered with. The transfer of ration cards to the closer shops was the issue of top priority that emerged from meetings of this group. The majority of them live in temporary shelter, which

negatively affects their health, especially the health of their children.

Example from focus group with Female headed households

The majority of the women were widows belonging to age group 60-70 years. The major reason for food insecurity for the group is insufficient income. They mainly work as servants or doing handicraft work. They earn approximately 700-1000 RS per month (USD 15-22). Discussing the amount they earn one woman said, "I am not able to provide enough food for my three children in the amount I earn."

Another said, 'since I have become very old I have difficulty finding work. My eyesight has become very weak. Even then I

have to do handicraft work. At this age I have become very weak and always have joint pains. In spite of illness I have to work'.

The women are not able to satisfy even their food needs. One woman said 'Food prices are very high as compared to my earnings'. Another said, 'I can't afford to buy food items like vegetables and pulses regularly from my income'.



Example from focus group with pregnant women and lactating mothers on their food habits

The moderator first discussed with the participants types of food eaten by pregnant women and the constraints for not consuming enough food or a sufficiently balanced diet.

The discussion with pregnant women revealed that all women are aware that pregnant women should eat more during pregnancy. Kureshi Salma Mahmud a pregnant woman said, "during pregnancy women should eat more quantity of food.

Normally we eat twice a day, so, during pregnancy we should eat 3-4 times in a day and more green vegetables, cereals, pulses, oil, ghee and fruits which gives more energy. But the majority are not able to do this because of poor financial conditions of the family." The pregnant women don't take advantage of supplementary feeding given to them in the childcare center since they are unaware that they can get food from center. They thought the centers only distributed supplementary food for children.



Focus group discussion in the Sanjognagari slum area of Bhuj with pregnant women and mothers of young children.

Example from focus group with general slum community

This group discussed incomes and employment, sources and cost of food; urban agriculture; urban diets; health and environment; and social assistance programs, or safety nets. The participants were mainly engaged in self-employed activities like mobile vegetable and fruit vending, garbage collection, driving rickshaws or running small shops. Some are daily wage earners engaged in road building and construction.



Focus discussion with the General group in Ramnagari.

There was direct link found between livelihoods and purchasing patterns of urban dwellers. Mavjibhai Jetha, a vegetable vendor said, "90 percent of the people in our area are daily wage earners thus depend on tiny purchases of food items. This forces us to buy from local food outlets, which is at accessible, distance even though if I have to pay more price."

It was discussed that government food subsidy schemes are unable to satisfy the needs of the poor. Meghbai Siju, who sells firewood says, "PDS provides us either with monthly or half-monthly quota of food ration but I never have that amount of money to purchase food grains in bulk. So I prefer to purchase from local food shops. They also give food items on credit at times of money shortage in my family."

Example from focus group with mothers of young children on child care and supplementary feeding

Discussions with the mothers focused on childcare and supplementary feeding practices. Most of the women said they start giving supplementary food to their children by at least the age of 6 months. Initially we start giving them biscuits and milk with semi liquid food like rice and khichdi. When children are about one year of age, they eat the same food cooked for the family.



Focus group discussions with pregnant women and mothers of young children.

Detailed discussions revealed that the regular diet of the child doesn't increase as per the age of the child. Mothers said they feed children when they cry or ask for food. There is not much attention given to the quantity of food given to children as per their age. The food pattern was limited to certain items mainly cereals. Intake of non-cereals items like vegetables, fruits, pulses were limited.

There was one mother in this group who said that her child is of two years and still not eating outside food and is still surviving on breast milk only. Some examples also show that mothers don't encourage their children to have enough food if the child is rejecting it.

The mothers complained that there is no childcare center in their slum. The one, which is available, is very far from their community. None of the children in this area received supplementary food from the government programs.

Some of the lessons learned from the focus groups in Bhuj include the following:

1. Role selection

Some of the community members who were selected for conducting focus groups were naturally gifted for the role, while other moderators had initial problems facilitating group discussion. By the second or third group, most of the moderators had become adapt with the role. In a few cases, the moderator changed to the role of observer and some of the more efficient moderators conducted meetings in areas outside of their own community

2. Selection of participants

Improper selection of participants affected the quality of information obtained from the discussions. For example, the initial meetings with single-women included widows who had other earning members in the family. This was rectified from the next meeting.

3. Time management

For the major part meetings went according to the time-table. Though it was difficult to gather the employed people on time. The groups including pregnant women and children were the most punctual to start.

Some of the meetings went on too long and it was inconvenient to the moderators as well as the participants. The debrief sessions which came afterwards made it even more difficult.

2.3 ANALYSIS

Analysis is an on-going process that begins during focus discussions and continues through synthesis and writing a report. The following section describes steps in the analysis procedure.

(i) Debriefing session

Immediately after the focus group the taskforce team should have a debriefing session. Part of the debriefing session should include an evaluation of how well the focus group discussion was conducted, whether the discussion was maintained in a natural way and the comfort and ability of participants to speak honestly and openly. It is also important to check during the debriefing that all of the information required has been collected.



The taskforce preparing for their presentation in Consultation.

The debriefing session is held to :

1. Review with the team impressions of how well the focus group was conducted and discuss any difficulties or changes to be made before conducting the next focus group
2. Use the notes from the two note takers and memory of the discussion from the facilitators to complete the datasheet. The data sheet will be the main tool used for synthesis of all of the focus groups and preparation for the city level consultation



The debriefing session after the focus group was over in Jantanagari. The taskforce discussing about how the groups discussion was carried out- plus points and improvements needed. In this session notes from the focus group are finalized and the data sheet is completed.

conjunction with the time already spent on organizing and conducting the focus groups.

Transcripts of focus group discussions generate a lot of information. In order to make the information useful, it should be categorized and sorted according to common themes and participant responses. These can then be entered into the datasheet under the appropriate questions. In designing the appropriate data collection forms for use by the taskforces simplicity and ease should be two of the priority characteristics. Annex 4 provides an example of a completed data-sheet of focus groups of pregnant women and mothers with young children.

(ii) Synthesis of results from all of the focus groups

Once all of the focus groups have been conducted and the datasheets for each have been completed, the task force members, local and facilitating organizations should meet together to synthesize the results. This synthesis will form the basis for the final report of the project as well as help the team prepare to present the results at the city level consultation.

Each taskforce should be supported by a member of the facilitating organization for at least the first one or two focus group discussions and debriefing sessions. The member from the facilitating organization can clarify any questions regarding completing the data sheet and also provide comment on the aspects of the focus group which went well and things that could be improved.

The debriefing sessions will last about 1-2 hours, which is a significant time commitment for the taskforce team, particularly in

The main purpose of synthesizing the results is to identify common food-related problems faced in each community and highlight the community ideas for solving these problems. There may also be problems faced by only one or two communities (or by certain groups within communities) these can also be highlighted.

The finalized datasheets are the main tool used to prepare the synthesis report. The report should contain the following types of information:

1. Background information on the number of focus groups of different compositions conducted and information on the participating communities.

Useful information for the background section includes, community size (population if available); health and educational facilities including clinics, schools and child day care; main food retail outlets (small and large shops, nearest fair price shop) and community access to water and sanitation facilities. It is also helpful to have a profile of the main sources of income and employment of community members.



The taskforce analysing the focus group discussion rolls.

2. Following the background section, the synthesis should contain a description of the findings from each of the focus group themes. The information in this section can include:
 - Specific information on the number of participants and their sources of employment and income
 - Key elements raised in the group discussions which make it difficult for them to achieve food and nutrition security
 - Solutions they propose to improve the food and nutrition of their family and community

In this step, the group will try to summarize common threads from each of the selected focus groups and then describe findings that apply to the study as a whole. The end result will be a report on the findings from all four groups (i.e. pregnant and mothers group, recent migrants, single women and general group) and then a summary of issues and solutions common to all.

The facilitating organization can review the main objectives of the study and explain the basic tasks needed to summarize the focus group results. The group can then either work together or in smaller groups completing the following main steps:

- Sort the datasheets into the four major groups (pregnant women and mothers of young children, recent migrants, single women and general group)
- Read each transcript repeatedly to get familiar with the talks
- Identify the major opinions, food related problems and suggested solutions that were mentioned during the discussions
- Identify specific list of issues from the transcripts (datasheet) that match the objective of the study from each of the groups
- Find relationship between various issues that are short listed and arrange them in a flow. (e.g. cause of various food related problems in each group)
- Interpret the findings and results by using the existing knowledge of the taskforce who are the representatives of the same community. This team will have good insight on the ideas that came from the respondents, since they also belong to the same community. Thus this interpretation will help us to give some more concrete findings

As a result of following the steps above, the group should:
(i) Identify of the core problems mentioned in each group
and (ii) Design a framework of the proposed solutions



The taskforce team interpreting the findings and results of focus discussion.