

**PATTERNS OF HOUSEHOLD LEVEL AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
UTILISATION OF FOOD IN SOME RURAL AREAS OF SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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ABSTRACT

Sekhukhune district is considered as one of the district that is food insecure, and one of the poorest districts in the country. However, few studies have attempted to study issues of food insecurity looking specifically into poverty, livelihoods and asserts portfolio overlooking issues related to food availability, accessibility, utilisation and coping strategies/ stability in this district. The purpose of the study was to identify and assess the factors that determine food insecurity of the rural households along with their coping strategies which they use to avert food insecurity. The objectives of this study was to identify and describe the factors that affect the level of food insecurity among the rural households; to document the current coping strategies in instances of food insecurity, and develop a framework that could be used for intervention programmes. The study was conducted in 21 villages in three municipalities of Sekhukhune District (Makhuduthamaga, Elias Motswaledi and Ephraim Mogale municipalities). A total of 602 respondents were involved in the quantitative study. Furthermore, qualitative data was collected by conducting 8 focus group interviews and discussions with 70 women living in 4 villages (Elandskraal, Mmatilu, Mogaladi and Letebejane) in the study area. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design that applied both quantitative (structured questionnaire) and qualitative (focus groups using open-ended set of questions and a check list) method of data collection and analyses was used. Food insecurity was measured using a composite index (HFIAS) that assessed the extent of hunger each household experienced. Binary logistic and stepwise backward elimination regression procedures were performed.

Results obtained from the study showed that 104 of the 602 households in the study (17%) had adequate food security at home, while 498 of the 602 respondents (83%) had inadequate food security at home. The predictors of rural household food insecurity in decreasing order of importance as indicated by odd ratios (OR) and P- values were found to be: (a) not having enough food for children (OR=26.10; P=0.001], (b) inability to eat desired

food due to shortage of food (OR=5.80; P=0.001), (c) inability to afford food (OR=5.26; P=0.001), (d) excessive dependence on remittance (OR=3.66; P=0.001), (e) having to borrow food or money due to shortage of food [OR=2.96; 95% C.I. = (1.38, 6.35); P=0.005], and (f) having an occupation that is different from that of a farmer/ non- farm occupations [OR=2.49; 95% C.I. = (1.21, 5.16); P=0.014]. Chronologically, food - insecure households used various coping strategies, namely: (a) relying on normally less preferred and inexpensive food (91%); depending on government grants for purchasing food (81%); reducing the number of meals eaten in a day (71%); borrowing money to buy food or borrowing food (57%); purchasing food on credit from the local shops (57%); limiting food intake to ensure that children got enough of it (50%); relying on handouts from relatives and friends outside the household (46%); skipping meals in a day (28%). In addition to this, results from the focus groups discussions revealed the following coping strategies: taking up piece jobs or temporary employment, moving out of the area (out migration), eating elsewhere or sending children to eat elsewhere, resorting to small business operations, backyard farming and the wheel methods (when members of a social groups known as wheels/ "mabili" buy food and rotate in sharing the food). Based on the findings of this study, a theoretical framework that could be used for household food insecurity intervention programmes was developed.

The present study clearly shows that the majority of residents of the study are food-insecure. To address food insecurity in the study area in a sustainable manner, intervention strategies should be based on some of these coping mechanisms identified in this study. Moreover, relevant agricultural extension programmes that places the households at the centre of the process should be promoted. However, emergency relief and other forms of social protection should be reinforced, specifically targeting the most food insecure households. This could be done based on the predictors identified in the present study. Policies that could enhance income earning capacity of household members and their access to higher education and the promotion of backyard and subsistence farming are advocated. Based on the findings of

the present study, the author recommends that proposed framework should be tested to establish its suitability in addressing food insecurity in the study area, and adopted or improved upon.

Key words: Food insecurity, coping strategies, South Africa, Odds ratio, predictors, theoretical framework, Sekhukhune District