



Mrs Q.'s mother prepares roti with bee'h (lotus root) for the household. Photo: Collective for Social Science Research

## WHAT ARE PEOPLE EATING?

Views from *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility*

Mrs Q., climate migrant in Dadu, Pakistan, 2013

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This case study is one of several produced to accompany *Help Yourself!*, the second year synthesis report from the *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility* research project. Other case studies, country reports, synthesis reports, and further information about the project can be found at [www.oxfam.org.uk/foodprices](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/foodprices)



In Dadu, on the right bank of the Indus River, there is an overwhelming sense that the vast majority of people became worse off in 2013 as a result of rapid inflation and that, for the most part, the current government is to blame for the worsening conditions. The immediate causes of inflation include tax increases, hikes in fuel prices and utility charges, shortfalls in agricultural production and increases in agricultural inputs.

20-year-old Mrs Q. and her 30-year-old husband have four children aged four, three and two years, and 4 months. Their family is one of the many migrant families whose homes and livelihoods were destroyed by the floods in 2010. Since then they have been living alongside many others in a derelict school building.

Mrs Q. explains that she is hopeful that her husband's new job will mean better conditions for her family in the near future.

Her husband was a 'starter', a daily wage worker at a bus stand, earning on average PKR 200 (£1.20) per day, when there was work available. She explains that sometimes he would go for five days with no work. However, eight months ago he got a job with the police department and is now completing his training in Karachi. Mr Q. is now earning PKR 16,000 per month (around £3.20 per day).

At the moment most of Mr Q.'s salary is spent on accommodation and expenses in the capital. Mrs Q. explains that one of her sons is unwell and so she has to pay for medical treatment. Her average expenditure for one week is PKR 700. Mrs Q. gets most of her groceries on loan from the local shopkeeper. Her debt has now reached PKR 10,000 (£60.30).

Mrs Q. explains that commodities used to be relatively cheap but have now become expensive. The table below illustrates some of the price changes in day-to-day expenses.

Items	Current price (PKR)	Unit	Last year's price (PKR)
Wheat	1,200	Sack	1,200
Wheat flour	40	kg	30
Rice	90	kg	60–70
1 <i>chanai</i> (split gram)	60	kg	40–50
1 <i>bhah palak</i> (spinach)	50	500g	25–30
2 potatoes	30	kg	15–20
3 <i>bhindi</i> (lady fingers)	80	kg	30–40
Milk	60	kg	30–40
Chicken	280	kg	180–200
Small fish	110	kg	60–70
Tea	10	Sachet	7
Oil/ghee	140	Packet	110
Sugar	60	kg	40–50
Salt	5	Packet	2–3
Chillies	200	kg	50

Mrs Q.'s mother cooks for the family with ingredients purchased by Mrs Q. They then eat together. On a normal day, the family has tea and *paratha* or *roti* (flatbreads) for breakfast, *daal chana* (split gram pulses) and rice for lunch, fried potatoes and rice for dinner and tea with samosas later in the evening.

On the day the team met the family, Mrs Q.'s mother was preparing roti with bee'h (lotus root) for the household.

#### **Recipe for the bee'h**

Spinach leaves – 1kg

Bee'h – 1kg

Ginger – 1 or 2 pieces

Green chillies – 6 or 7 pieces

Onions – 2 medium-sized pieces

Tomatoes – 4 pieces

Salt – half a tablespoon

Pepper – half a tablespoon

Mrs Q. explains that as her children grow up, they need to eat more, which adds to the financial pressure of keeping everyone fed.

She is hopeful that next month when her husband returns, their condition will improve.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail [research@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:research@oxfam.org.uk)

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