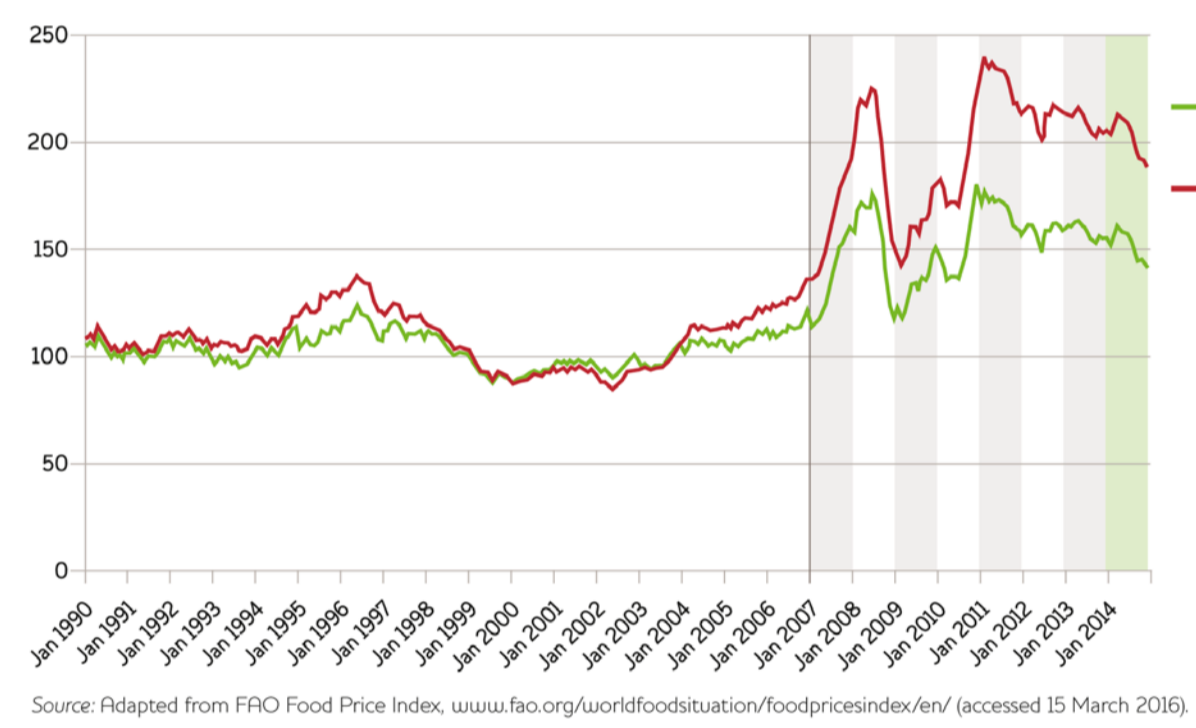




PRECARIOUS LIVES

OR WHY IT'S VITAL TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO FOOD IN THE FACE OF MARKET VOLATILITY



IDS-Oxfam research has found that the 2007-11 global food crisis brought about lasting changes in how people work, what they eat and how they care for their families.

When prices spiked people who were already spending more than half of their income on food struggled to get enough cash to pay for the basics.



Official statistics are **masking the true effects of the food crisis on people's lives**. Women in particular often go uncounted in national and international data sources.



“Our findings show that the process of adjustment to the changing food system has been one of increased integration into markets as people respond to the squeeze of higher prices.”

Naomi Hossain, IDS

IDS-OXFAM LED RESEARCH FOUND THAT PEOPLE ARE NOW:



- Working longer and harder to put food on the table
- Having less time to care for their families
- Eating less nutritiously, which is detrimental to their health



- Enjoying access to new foods
- Empowered by their involvement in the market with access to a wider variety of employment



“Calories and income are being bought at a cost of malnutrition, stress and attenuation of care.”

Patta Scott-Villiers, IDS



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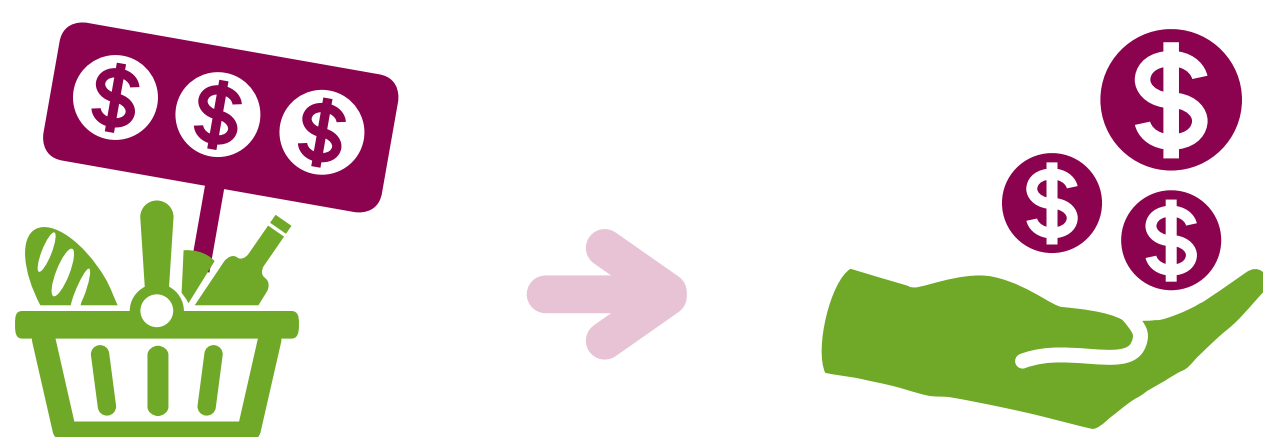


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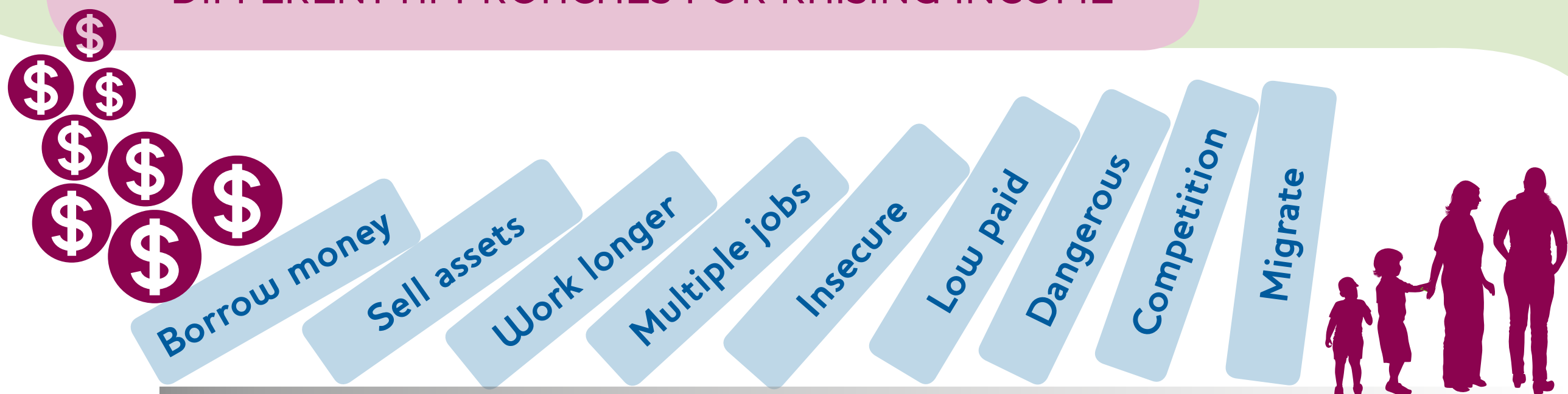


The food crisis was a catalyst which pushed people into a precarious market economy

FOOD PRICES GO UP - PEOPLE NEED MORE CASH



DIFFERENT APPROACHES FOR RAISING INCOME



WHICH IN TURN HAS AN IMPACT ON

WHAT, WHERE AND WHEN THEY EAT

SOCIAL AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



Mobile eating of fast food and food from street kiosks has become more prevalent as people, particularly men, move around for work. More people also sell these foods to increase household incomes.



Women who have taken on more work are exhausted and have less time to care for children, the elderly and the sick, which they are still generally expected to continue doing.



People, particularly women who have taken on more paid work, have less time to cook and feel pressed to speed this up. Increasingly available ready-made sauces, stock cubes and quick-cook, more processed staples are a source of anxious expediency.



Migrant workers may not have access to a kitchen, and are no longer enjoying family meals. Some find community and camaraderie in restaurants and snack bars that form part of their working day.



“The consumption of street food is so widespread that already health statistics [in Bolivia] show alarming rates of obesity and instances of poisonings in schools.”

Rosario León, Partner Researcher, Bolivia

“[In Burkina Faso] Maggi has become the staple flavouring to make a meal ‘acceptable’ as no one can afford the meat required to make a good sauce with 100CFA (approximately £0.11).”

Alex Wanjiku Kelbert, Partner Researcher, UK

REAL LIVES IN A TIME OF FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY

Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility was a four-year collaboration between Oxfam, IDS and research partners which looked at the impact of the global food crisis on people's everyday lives.

Our research involved yearly return visits to 23 urban and rural communities in ten countries – Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Vietnam and Zambia – and analysis of national and international food data.

Examples from our research of how people responded to the changes brought about by food price volatility



Migrating to find work

Guatemala: Rising food prices led Mr M to try to migrate to the United States. He was jailed for four months after his second attempt failed before being deported back to his country.

[Read more](#)



Hedging against crop price fluctuations

Vietnam: For farmers, food price rises can be a boon. Mr H from An Giang province expanded his rice production in 2009 to take advantage of rising prices. By 2011, he made a substantial profit, but when prices plunged in 2012 his earnings halved.

[Read more](#)



Gold rush in the face of difficult and unreliable farming

Burkina Faso: When world food prices went up while drought had squeezed food production, gold mining became an important alternative to subsistence farming. It was lucrative but dangerous.

[Read more](#)



Impact on care as women also work to increase shrinking household incomes

Indonesia: In 2012, when the dry season was longer than usual and the price of rubber plummeted, Mr K's wife also started working on the plantation with him in addition to looking after the home and children. As prices (and incomes) continued to drop, she went from working part time to full time.

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Less varied diet and poor quality food

Kenya: In 2011, Mrs M and her family had been able to afford rice, spaghetti, chapatti, meat and dried fish. By 2014, *githeri* (a maize bean mix) *sukuma* (kale) and *ugali* (maize porridge) were the only cheap and readily available options.

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Hungry days

Pakistan: While the Government is committed to controlling food price spirals and shortages, nearly a third of all households responding to the National Nutrition Survey have reported "hungry days". In times of hunger, people rely on social networks for help.

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SHIFTING THE FOCUS

from *feeding* people to how people *choose* to feed themselves. We need to look beyond technical approaches to nutrition and agriculture.



"The language of kcal/day, stunting and anaemia has little to do with how people experience hunger."

Haris Gazdar, Partner Researcher, Pakistan

"Today it seems more valid to earn money than to work as a subsistence peasant. Young people are leaving the farm and heading to town where they become more politically active and more significant as citizens."

David Otieno, social justice activist, Kenya

TWIN PRESSURES AFFECT CHOICE OF LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD

Faced with the twin pressures of

1

Needing to earn more cash



2

Maximising "value" in food being consumed

people still choose what to eat and how to feed their families based on:



What they can afford to buy



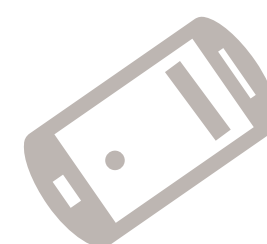
Time they have to cook nutritious meals



How they earn a living



Taste, pleasure and social status



Impact on the household income of other goods such as mobile phones which are increasingly important for finding and keeping work



"From Indonesia to Ethiopia, parents interviewed frequently voiced concerns over food safety and high levels of sugar, colourings and additives and said they wanted government restrictions on advertising junk food to children and regimes to guarantee food safety."

John Magrath, Oxfam

RETHINKING SOCIAL PROTECTION

The global challenge is to protect the right to food against market volatility, while building local economies, valuing unpaid care and promoting public action for food quality. Social protection means protecting our whole societies so that everyone can live and work well.



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, FAIR PRICES AND BASIC INCOME

We need to:



Protect access to good food



Insulate people against price shocks



Protect people against precarious labour



"It is time to start thinking not only about stabilising the price of food, but also making it possible for citizens to have a greater control over what and how they eat, alongside the rights to care, equitable gender relations and a fair working working environment"

Duncan Green, Oxfam



Read the report



Policy recommendations



View other resources

Please visit [our project website](#) to freely access all resources and outputs in relation to this research including individual country reports and blogs.

With thanks to research participants and our country partners without whom this work would not have been possible. See the [Acknowledgements page](#) of our report for a complete list of everyone involved.

This infographic draws on research led by IDS and Oxfam and was supported by Irish Aid.



All images courtesy of partners working on the Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility except for the two images of gold miners in Burkina Faso, which were taken by Ollivier Girard for Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

This infographic was developed by Emilie Wilson (IDS) and Fruit Design with support from Patta Scott Villiers (IDS), Sarah King (IDS) and John Magrath (Oxfam)