

# LIVING WITH FOOD POVERTY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi

## Correspondence:

Dr. Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi,  
Professor of Sociology, Department of Social Science,  
Alzahra University, Tehran,  
Tel: 009821-22859416,

**Emails:** [mtshykhi@alzahra.ac.ir](mailto:mtshykhi@alzahra.ac.ir); [mtshykhi@yahoo.com](mailto:mtshykhi@yahoo.com)

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## Abstract

The paper investigates how food accessibility is currently observed in the developing world where the majority of the world population live. People in those parts of the world while facing numerous shortages need to be nursed as far as their food provision is concerned. The necessary institutions must be prioritized and provided to be able to supply enough food for the increasing population with changing values, new patterns of food demand and changing lifestyles. While increasing migration in the developing world is underway, followed by decreasing agricultural products, food supply is emerging as problematic with ever increasing prices. The issue needs more input, more technologies and high supervision from the government side. It also needs global recognition of climate change which will bring, droughts, floods, famines and extinctions. Ongoing pollution of the sea and land environment will jeopardise further food sources. The UN Warns climate change is driving global hunger (17). Pointing to extreme weather events, land degradation and desertification, water scarcity and rising sea levels, the authors show how climate change already undermines global efforts to eradicate hunger. Accordingly the UN has also positively recommended that the food issue in the developing world can only be solved if improved technologies are used along with efforts to stem climate change. Increasingly urbanised people are in need of more varieties of food in a competitive manner much more than ever before. People in this part of the world

demand more food in quantity and quality. Under the present circumstances, efforts must be made to obtain more yields to feed the increasing number of people. However, their food nursing is felt today more than ever before. The paper points to the hungry people in many parts of Asia, Africa and other corners of the developing world, facing malnutrition and emerging challenges. They urgently need solutions and remedies.

**Key words:** Food shortage. Malnutrition. Improving agriculture. Third World hunger. Climate change, Advanced technologies.

## Introduction

Struggle for survival has ever been the lot of human beings since their appearance. Occupations of early humans have been hunting, collecting seeds, fishing and the like, and such a process has ever been evolving. It was possible for man to struggle by any means to consume any element to fight hunger. But, it was not possible for him to fight malnutrition. It was because the early man could not recognize what was the cause of malnutrition. Since then, the effect of food diets/regimes on illnesses and well-being have been gradually recognized and prevented. However, the industrial world came to know the cause and effect of foods earlier, while the less developed world came to recognize it later (Sheykhi, 2014).

It is now a problem of all countries as the 1% rich are growing richer at the expense of all ordinary people. It is now also a POLITICAL problem born of international Corruption and dictatorships whereby equity is not being tackled by, or capable of being tackled by the politicians.

Currently, nutrition is one of the most important dimensions of public health, its main objective is to create physical and mental conditions to contribute to mobility and efficiency of human beings in social life. Human nutrition is on the one hand associated with the natural conditions, technological development, socio-economic characteristics and cultural factors of nations, and on the other hand, it is associated with the biological structure of humans (age, sex and well-being). Therefore, the social and hygienic aspects of nutrition at local, national and international levels must depend on interactions of the above factors (ibid).

Currently there are about one billion people suffering from chronic hunger mainly in the developing world. Based on the information received from WHO and FAO, today, about one seventh of the world population is suffering from a shortage of food items. Under the present circumstances the number of hungry people in Africa is increasing day by day. While Asia has been able to improve its food products due to more access to improved technologies, Africa with 56 countries is mainly in an unfavorable situation so far as their food productivity is concerned. Therefore, the less developed world needs more capital investment in agriculture and food products. While the world farmers produce enough food products, their products are not well distributed, and many people do not have the purchasing power to buy them. That is because prices are always inflating in those countries just as much due to lack of political will and corruption. In those countries the people do not have the purchasing power to get the food items that they need. Such a scenario leaves many in under-nutrition, malnutrition and even hunger. The above situation is observed in many African countries and other parts of the developing world. The consequences of such a state is the unwanted and uncontrolled migration followed by increasing urbanization; which is creating socio-economic insecurity for those countries.

“Over nutrition” (obesity) is nowadays just as big a concern for human health as malnutrition and is not a straightforward issue of people over-eating. Sugars and fats, like Palm Oil, are added to processed foods to deliberately addict people to encourage them to eat/buy more. In fact those with ‘under nutrition’ are often healthier than the obese as they do not have life threatening diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

By the year 2050, two to three billion more people will be added to the world’s population, and at that stage, demand for food materials will be doubled. Therefore, from the economic sociology point of view, because of the increasing world population, climate change and ecological degradation, checks and balances and more advanced technologies must be applied to produce more food. Therefore, sociologists and agricultural experts must always project the future population and food needs for the year 2030 (17). If not, the future generations will face a food crisis. As per projections, people in the future will have higher incomes, and because of that, they will demand more food and services. Such a movement will lead to more economic dynamics. Food wastage is also causing economic disaster in the wealthier countries.

Roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year, approximately 1.3 billion tonnes, is lost or wasted. Food losses and waste amounts to roughly US\$ 680 billion in industrialized countries and US\$ 310 billion in developing countries (19).

Therefore, countries need to prepare the grounds to sustainably produce, distribute and consume. In this way, and through suitable interactions between production and consumption, backgrounds of economic and welfare of societies are set.

Improving and modernizing agriculture is known as one of the ways to solve/combat hunger. It is worth noting that agriculture must be of priority in planning projects by the governments of the developing countries. It is in this way that even the industrial sector could be improved and promoted. Unfortunately, in today’s world a sum of one seventh of the world population is suffering from food shortage.

## Method of Research

The methodology used in the present article is of qualitative type, in that, various paradigms for finding facts have been used. Qualitative research usually studies the people in their natural settings. In finding facts for the research, the researcher engaged in careful data collection and thoughtful analysis of what was relevant. In the documentary research applied in the present article, printed and written materials were widely regarded. The research was performed as a qualitative library type in which the researcher referred to relevant and related sources. In the present research, various books on food were thoroughly investigated, and the needful inferences

were thoroughly investigated, and the needful inferences were made. The data fed by the investigator in the present research is dependable and reliable.

### Global Hungry People

According to the 2018 report, about 815 million people of the 7.6 billion people in the world, or 10.7%, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2016. (20). They are in countries with limited agricultural capacities; such countries do not have the necessary technologies for agriculture. The existing conditions contribute to increasing migration from such countries (Maharatna, 2014). Therefore, the less developed societies, because of their poor economic conditions, are usually deprived of food variety. When countries become richer, they spend more on food items. In poor countries such as Zimbabwe in Africa with GNP per capita of less than \$ 1000 a year, per capita spending on food items is only \$ 400 a year (Kingwell, 2017). It is worth noting however that before political change in Zimbabwe, it was once called 'the breadbasket of Africa'

Because of cultural change of human populations, consumption patterns as compared with other species/ animals have to a large extent changed. Food culture is reflected in terms of religions, beliefs, attitudes and expectations (Niyinzigama, 2014).

Paralleled with such conditions, food prices are constantly increasing. Such increasing prices are impoverishing the poor and the hungry more than others, i.e. a situation that makes the poor of the world poorer and poorer, losing their purchasing power every day. The above scenario is on the agenda of many world organizations including FAO. If the situation is not changed, a dark and insecure future is waiting for such people. If pessimism continues based on the fact that earth does not have the capability to feed its people, that would be a tragedy. The world currently produces enough to feed everyone, but due to lack of arable land in some countries and due to politics, corruption, wastage and economic factors this food is not equally distributed. (21) Social, economic and geopolitical changes in the world in the past few decades in many stances have caused shortage of food, increasing prices and hunger, and that motivates some of the economic pessimists to declare that earth is not able to easily feed the hungry. But, in the meantime, some world organizations such as the UN have positively interfered, saying that through effective policies and more advanced technologies, shortage of food materials could be responded to, and in that way poverty and hunger are minimized. The food and agricultural sector of the UN offers solutions, and has a central role to eliminate hunger and poverty (UN,2017).

As projected, while the world population will reach 9.5 billion by the year 2050, more migration from rural to urban areas is under way, pushing the countries towards shortage of food stuff and consequently rising prices. While shortage of food is prevalent food consumption

is increasing in other parts of the world due to food promotion. Hence, economic sociologists need to pay special attention to the upcoming crisis.

Under such a scenario, new proposals and plans must be implemented to create more food security within the developing world. While due to socio-demographic change, lifestyle and life expectancy are also changing, planners and researchers need to operationalize balanced programs to be able to respond to the needs of citizens. Nowadays, those developing countries that have proceeded regardless of projections, are facing increasing economic and social challenges. They are at the same time facing food shortages.

Challenges caused by environmental limitations, shortage of farming lands, shortage of water resources, climate change etc. have all made food supply problematic. FAO in 2006 defined food security as when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (22) and sufficient water for human consumption and for agriculture.

Currently, African countries are facing such challenges which will increase shortage of food, and increase hunger in those countries.

### Increasing Demand

As projected, demand for food will double by the year 2050, which is the result of population increase by that year. In fact food materials will not increase in that scale and that will create shortages and challenges. Change in consumption patterns, increasing literacy, urbanization and optimistically increasing income all will motivate people to more food demand. Therefore, economic sociologists are ever seeking policies, methods and strategies to use to decrease the crisis. It is only the developed countries under their economic, social and cultural conditions that could be excluded from the food crisis by the year 2050. Similarly, social networks are highly affecting food demand in the years to come. Social networks joining the people together, will motivate them to consume more food items (Higgs, 2016).

### Past Food Production

Increase in food products occurred in the past due to agricultural (green) revolution which followed the industrial revolution. That somehow or other ended starvation and food shortage. The above situation also led to economic growth for many; such a process contributed to economic growth of up to five times more for many countries. Such a supply of food products led to better health and eugenics for some in many countries. The agricultural revolution followed by industrial revolution contributed to the availability of more food in the market; increasing the quality of food items, and leading to healthier generations (Gibbons,2012).

Studies associated with food and longevity in Japan indicate a balanced consumption of grains, vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, soybeans and the like within the population of age groups 45-75. That is, the materials that decrease the risks of death within the people (Gander, 2016).

During the recent past years as more advanced technologies have been exploited in agriculture, the economies of many developing countries have transformed; they have been able to have better yields from their lands, and thereby they have been able to have more benefits and surpluses. Due to more international trade and sale of agricultural products, many developing countries have earned more GNP per capita, and in this way they have more purchasing power. Such a transition has positively affected the citizens and placed them in a higher quality of life. Therefore, to obtain higher income, countries need to sustain their agricultural revolution, and thereby keep a considerable number of their citizens active in the agricultural sector. Such a process provides many nations with more guarantees such as food security, higher purchasing power etc. It must be noted that the industrial countries while giving the first priority to their industries, also keep active and sustainable their agricultural sector.

Despite the above facts, yields are not satisfactory in many parts of Africa and South Asia. In those areas people generally cannot exploit advanced technologies in the agricultural sector. However, many people in Africa and South Asia are facing insecurity of food needs (Pretty et al., 2000). However, the world must prepare and promote its food products by 2050 as with a world of over 9 billion people there will be shortage of water and land as well (Beddington, 2010).

### Multiple Agricultural Revolutions

This concept indicates efforts and focuses on increasing yields. Though the agricultural revolution occurred centuries back, since then because of population increase and change in lifestyle, countries have always been following increase of agricultural products; so that it would be possible to respond to the nutrition needs of their people. In recent decades, through the application of modern technologies the agricultural revolution has ever been strengthened and even reached many traditional societies. While during the 20th century world population quadrupled from 1.5 billion to 6 billion, countries would inevitably adopt more advanced policies to respond to the newly-emerged nutrition needs of the people. Under the conditions of the agricultural revolution periodical famines declined, or were even eliminated within some nations. The agricultural revolution continued in this manner, and nations improved their production styles in scientific and specialized manners. Similarly, during the second agricultural revolution countries became more resistant against the environmental challenges, climate change, market fluctuations etc.

Therefore, during the past one hundred years the second agricultural revolution happened, and many countries could access more relevant advanced technologies, fertilizers, green house products and refrigeration to improve their mechanical productivity. The second agricultural revolution that made use of more facilities, improved and upgraded yields with special reference to the advanced countries (Retrieved, 2018). In this way, the quality and quantity of many agricultural products improved. Such a change, improved the per capita food access; that is an indicator improving the quality of life of many communities. Such a change improved life expectancy of many nations for thirty years or more. Though the second agricultural revolution increased the global volume of food, yet there is still more than one billion hungry people in need of food in the world. Therefore, societies in general, and the Third World societies in particular must apply more supervision on their population, their incomes, and their food expenditure. Access to food is among the pivotal issues to reach welfare, security and well-being (Zezza, 2017).

As mentioned before, countries in Africa can escape hunger and poverty through exploiting more advanced technologies, education and mechanization of agriculture. In the meantime, international support by WHO, UNESCO and FAO, can bring about considerable changes in the economic and social sectors of the African countries. Similarly, exploitation of land and water resources must happen in a way that next generations could use them too. Over-exploitation of forests, underground resources etc. will endanger the life of the next generations. Therefore, exploitation of resources must take place in a balanced manner. It is worth noting that industrial countries use their resources based on prediction, and in a precautionary manner, which is very different from Africa; they always forecast their needs for the their next generations as well.

### Food Security

Transition in food security is possible when investments can take place via public and private sectors. Privatization of many economic and agricultural sectors is currently taking place. Therefore, financial institutions such as banks must find the opportunity to invest in food industries. In this way, African countries will be able to experience some more growth in their food sectors. Not only the African continent, but many other developing countries are currently facing a food crisis. The Private sector plays a determining role to provide food materials with special reference to the developing urban areas. Increasing patterns of urban consumption is generally responded to by the private sector in various countries (Dubbeling, 2016).

Similarly, access to sufficient food will be achieved only when the political, scientific, industrial, communications and educational infrastructures are provided. So, those countries that do not have sufficient infrastructure, are suffering from a shortage of food and poor agriculture; a

process sometimes leading to famine for some people. Elimination of poverty and hunger also needs markets free of corruption and deviance. One of the difficulties of the developing countries is the commercial markets with corrupted agents and middlemen, and under such circumstances farmers do not earn the right benefits; they gradually leave farming and join the urban economy as laborers the economies that do not welcome such workers. In the meantime, to reach their objectives of food security and prevent hunger, the relevant countries must be able to face climate change. They should be able to obtain suitable strategies, technologies and other necessary means to face and remedy the new natural conditions. That is, the process which affects the economy of the countries in various forms.

Governments need to plan and improve strategies to develop their food production. Such a priority can create healthier generations that will positively affect next generations too. However, all the countries of the world, somehow or other are under the impact of malnutrition, and need to face it. Therefore, it seems to be the largest challenge of the world safety (WHO,2018).

## Conclusion

The paper enunciates how food production affects access to nutritional needs. Currently, the world is housing 7.5 billion people, and within three decades ahead it will reach 9.5 billion by the year 2050. While about 80 per cent of the world population will belong to the developing world, effective planning needs to be applied to produce the necessary food materials for those people in the course of upcoming decades. If not, the next generations will be badly affected too.

As far as the developing countries are concerned, many of the food producers, and those producing agricultural products and food items, are not equipped with sufficient economic and natural resources for producing agricultural products, the preservation of products and the like. Such a scenario contributes to food shortage in those countries. Therefore, dissipation of up to date information in the developing world needs to increase within the farmers and food producers as much as possible. Based on the real facts, hunger still includes one billion people of the world. After the passage of six decades since 1960, or the discoveries towards the green revolution, suffering from malnutrition, shortage of food and poverty are observed within a large number of people. Many people of the less developed world and Africa are suffering from daily food rations, i.e. what brings about food calories. This situation affects not only the present generations, but the next generations as well. Therefore, governments must prioritize strengthening and developing their plans of food production. In this manner, countries can have healthier generations. However, during the present century the world will experience plus 4 degree of heat rise, shortage of water and consequently food shortages will follow. The entire circumstances mentioned, will lead to a food crisis.

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