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This paper reviews literature related to the gendered aspects of food insecurity in South Africa. In particular, the paper reviews research literature on food insecurity, and in particular, its gender impacts on individuals, families and communities. The paper also analyses the South African (and international) policy framework aimed at addressing food

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insecurity, particularly the extent to and ways in which it addresses gender inequality in food security in the country. From this analysis, some gaps, limitations and areas requiring further research are identified.

THE GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Vasu REDDY and Relebohile MOLETSANE

Gender and Development Unit

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THE GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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1. Introduction

"Poverty means hunger, thirst, and living without decent shelter. It means not being able to read. It means chronic sickness. Poverty means not finding any opportunities for you or your children. It is about being pushed around by those who are more powerful. It is about having little control over your own life. And it can mean living with the constant threat of personal violence." (Commission for Africa, 2005: 1010)

One of the key indicators of the lack of wellbeing in societies is the incidence of child hunger in households, which in turn, fuels the vulnerability of populations already rendered weak by disease, unemployment and poor development. Such a reality is usually precipitated in the context of poverty. Presently approximately 815 million people in less developed countries (LDCs) are undernourished, with approximately 20 percent being children under the age of five (Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO] of the United Nations 2002, 2006). As one of the key development issues impacting communities, child hunger by association cannot be separated from poverty and under-nutrition among women, particularly those in rural and other marginalised communities (Smith *et al.* 2003). Contributing to this international problem is food insecurity, the lack of "sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life" (www.faqs.org/nutrition/Erg-Foo/Food-Insecurity.html, *accessed February 27, 2009).*

This paper reviews literature related to the gendered aspects of food insecurity in South Africa. In particular, the paper reviews research literature on food insecurity, and in particular, its gender impacts on individuals, families and communities. The paper also analyses the South African (and international) policy framework aimed at addressing food insecurity, particularly the extent to and ways in which it addresses gender inequality in food security in the country. From this analysis, some gaps, limitations and areas requiring further research are identified.

The concept 'food security' can be traced to the critical literature in development in the 1970s when it referred to foodstuff availability in sufficient quantity at a national and global level. However, the concept of household food security is a recent development, traceable to the literature dating from the 1980s (Smith *et al,* 1993) when the emphasis shifted policy debate from food supply to food demand with its attendant relation to vulnerability, risk, and access (Maxwell and Slater, 2003). The FAO (2002: 1) defines food insecurity as "when people must live with hunger but fear starvation" in their daily lives (see also Kent, 2005). The central meaning then is that food insecurity is threat to physical well-being and normal social activity (Jenkins, Scanlan and Peterson, 2007: 826).

Extending the FAO (2001) definition, in the South African context, food security refers to the physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all people at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life (IFSS, cf. DAO, 2002). Food security is comprised of three key elements: food resource availability, access to those resources to ensure sufficient consumption of food and appropriate utilization in sanitary and nutritious manner (Hussein 2002, cited in Baro and Deubel 2006).

South Africa still experiences limited food availability due mainly to the (under) performance of the agricultural sector (see Presidency 2008). As this paper argues in the sections that follow, a key factor contributing to the food insecurity is gender inequality in families, communities and the society. Due to power imbalances, women are often denied access to available food, to food production activities (labour market) as well as to production spaces/tools such as land.

Within the household and intra-household context, the 2000 measurement of poverty by Statistics South Africa indicated that "35 % of the total population or 14.3 million South Africans are vulnerable to food insecurity. Among these, women, children and the elderly are particularly more vulnerable" (DoA, 2002: 22). The gendered aspect of food security is more apparent if the household structure is taken into account. To illustrate, the DoA (2002: 23) notes that:

> Nearly one third of all South African households are female-headed which are considerably poorer than male-headed households. Nearly 52 % of female-headed households spent less than R1000 per month in 1996, in contrast to 35 % of male-headed households that spent less than R1000 in the same period. Nearly 25 % of male-headed households spent more than R3500 per month compared to only about 8 % of female-headed households in the same quintile. The relative poverty of female-headed households who spent less than R1000 per month was nearly 80 % in the Eastern Cape, compared to 26 % of relative poor Gauteng female-headed households that spent less than R1000 per month. About 73 % of all households receive monthly incomes of less than R2500 in and only 27% receive incomes of more than R2500 per month. Almost half of South African households earn a monthly income of R1000 or less.

Another direct measure of food insecurity is an estimate of the adequacy of daily energy intake. Based on data for the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD), the IFSS (DOA, 2002: 23) makes another important assessment that confirms further vulnerability in respect of children under the age of 6:

> PSLSD estimated that 30 % of the population (14.8 million people) did not meet their daily energy requirements (2000 kcal/day). Compared to international ranges protein energy malnutrition, as measured by stunting levels, is a moderate public health problem in South Africa. The national stunting rate for young children ranges between 23 % and 27 %. This means that approximately 1.5 million children under the age of 6 years are malnourished. Among the ultra-poor (the poorest twenty percent of households) the rate is 38 %, while it is only 6 % among the rich. The highest stunting rates occur in the Northern Province (34.2 %), Eastern Cape (28.8 %) and Free State (28.7 %). In contrast, Western Cape (11.6 %) and Gauteng (11.5 %) exhibit low stunting rates by international standards. Whereas the three provinces of the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Northern Province house 52 % of the country's children, an estimated 60 % of all stunted children and two thirds of poor people live in these provinces. Anaemia and marginal vitamin A status are widespread micronutrient deficiencies, affecting between 20 and 30 % of young children. Children in rural areas and those of mothers with limited education are badly affected (DOA, 2002: 23)

Vulnerability to food insecurity clearly is gendered. To illustrate, in their report, the Department of Agriculture (1997) stated that about 48% of women as compared to about 43% of men live in poverty in both urban and rural areas. In addition, about 61% of female-headed households in rural areas are poor. Vulnerability groups often lack the power to

make decisions about how their household's resources are to be used and may lack sound information about food and nutrition. Statistically about 48% of women, as compared to about 43% of men live in poverty in both urban and rural areas (Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, 1997). Clover (2003) sees vulnerability to food security as factors that feed into the very risky behaviours that drive the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Women, children and the elderly as vulnerable groups in South Africa are the most affected. In South Africa, food insecurity rates were higher among households headed by females and the elderly (Rose & Charlton, 2002). A study conducted by Kapungwe (2005) in Zambia found that female-headed households had a much higher chance of being food insecure as were large-sized households and those headed by the elderly. This may be because of lack of or poor access to training as well as unequal pay between men and women performing the same tasks. Such women also have limited access to productive assets, organizations and social networks, credit, legal rights and a voice in political system (Kapungwe 2005).

To engage meaningfully with the issue of food is to recognise that nourishment, life and survival are inextricably connected to human development and public policy. As such, it is difficult to separate issues of food from the broader socio-political issues impacting on individuals and groups in communities. For example, access to water, land, and other natural resources, as well as effective waste management, have significant bearing on food security in families and communities, and with women shouldering the burden of care in these contexts, failure to address these brings negative consequences for them. In a recent formulation, Loots (2007: 85) cogently captured the core issues from a South African perspective:

> The politics of food are highly gendered. Women are often understood as the primary food managers in charge of purchasing, growing, cooking and consumption with the home or homestead. While gendered debates around challenging the 'rightfulness' of this social role that women play is important, the politics in Southern Africa are a reality. This means that any discussion around food and food security has to involve women in their various capacities. The bio-politics of food and the genetic engineering of food crops thus effects and affects women directly and, indirectly, the community around them.

These views articulate what a gendered dimension of food security could imply: gender roles in production activities, access to land and other food producing spaces, an understanding of the multifaceted dimension of gender in terms of the social, political and economic context.

The following research questions frame the inquiry:

- What is the socio-political context of gender and food security in South Africa?
- What is the policy framework vis-à-vis food security and gender equality (national, regional and international policies, treaties, etc)? To what extent and in what ways does the existing policy framework address food insecurity and its related gender inequality problems? What are the gaps?
- What are some theoretical approaches to understanding gender and food security?
- How does gender inequality impact on food security and what implications does this have for: Policy refinement/development; Practice/intervention and for further research?

2. The Socio-political Context of Gender and Food Insecurity in South Africa

If we take the Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa (DAO, 2002: 15-16) definition of food security as the "physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South African at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life", then the African continent is the only region in the world that has not been able to achieve this (Rupiya (2004). According to Rupiya, since the mid-1970s, the continent has not been able to sufficiently feed itself and is unlikely to do so in the future unless radical policy changes are made to current practice. Rena (2005) outlines the case of Eritrea where malnutrition and transitory food insecurity is pervasive. In some cases, a shift to neo-liberal agricultural policies has also affected the non-market distribution of products such as maize in rural Zambia, including bartering for goods and labour, resulting in increased risks of food insecurity (Sitko, 2006). Vogel and Smith (2002: 315) have cautioned against an emerging food crisis looming in Southern Africa (with Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe possibly facing massive food crises) largely due to structural vulnerabilities (lack of resources and political instability), as well as through conjunctural factors (triggers such as droughts, flooding, pestilence). In the case of Botswana environmental and socio-economic factors also impact on food security (Lado, 2001).

South Africa faces the same plight of not producing and not having enough food available to feed its own population like other Sub-Saharan African countries (see also Presidency, 2008a). Food insecure households (i.e., those with low food spending and low available energy) accounted for 39% of the South African population in 1995 (Rose & Charlton 2002). Importantly, standing out as a direct impact of food insecurity is the reality of malnourished children as a result of nutritional deficiencies (see Rukuni, 2002). For example, approximately fourteen million people in South Africa are estimated to be vulnerable to food insecurity, while 1.5 million of children under the age of six years are stunted by chronic malnutrition (Presidency, 2008). In South Africa food insecurity is highest among the African population, but also affects a significant number of Coloured and Indian households (DAO, 2002).

Lean-Heng (2008) estimates that women presently constitute 75% of the world's poor. In South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, patriarchies (social systems of male dominance) prevail and women are subordinated despite their contributions to both economic and social life. Despite the South African Constitution's attention to gender equality and a non-sexist society, inequality and the sexual exploitation of women continues, and often not easily addressed by constitutional protections. For example, most recently, South Africa was ranked 20th in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index (Hausman et al. 2008). The index measures the size of the gender gap in 128 countries in four critical areas of inequality: political empowerment, economic participation, educational attainment and health and survival. South Africa is the only African country to feature in the top twenty. The Global Gender Gap Report praised South Africa, attributing the country's firm position to its performance on such criteria as political empowerment, and slight improvements in the participation of women in the labour market and a move to close the wage gap. However, the report also acknowledges that no country in the world has reached total equality between men and women in all spheres of life. Even in countries which have made the most progress, women remain generally dominant in the informal sectors and are therefore, subject to poverty. Thus, in spite of the representivity of women improving in the various institutions

that constitute South African society, true gender equality continues to be elusive. This is due to such factors as the rural-urban divide, relatively poor access to and low levels of success in education, skills development, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence and low levels of access to the labour market presenting challenges particularly for women.

2.1 The negative impacts of natural disasters

One explanation for the vulnerability of African societies to poverty and hunger is the negative impacts of disasters (natural and political). De Haen and Hemrich (2007), argue that in order to mitigate disaster impact on poor population groups, development policy and disaster management need to become mutually supportive. Focusing on challenges disasters pose to food security, the study proposes that in disaster-prone locations measures to improve disaster resilience should be an integral part of food security policies and strategies. Furthermore, the study expands the twin-track approach to hunger reduction to a "triple-track approach," giving due attention to cross-cutting disaster risk-management measures. Practical areas requiring more attention include risk information and analysis; land use planning; upgrading physical infrastructures; diversification and risk transfer mechanisms. Investments in reducing disaster risk will be most needed where both hazard risk and vulnerability are high. As agriculture is particularly vulnerable to disaster risk, measures to reduce this vulnerability (i.e., conserving agricultural lands and water and other assets), should get greater weight in development strategies and food security policies (De Haen and Hemrich 2007).

Perhaps also relevant are approaches that prioritize climate change, focused on environmental degradation which results in further undermining the food systems upon which food security is based. A major emphasis of climate change in relation to food security research in recent years addresses the agronomic aspects of climate change, particularly crop yield (cf. Ingram *et al.* 2008). In recent years, and given the enormity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Southern Africa, the critical literature has investigated famines as factors compounding food insecurity, through what has come to be termed the New Variant Famine (NVF). The study by Van Riet (2007) suggests that analyses focus on the underlying processes driving vulnerability and not on specific instances of "famine" or crisis.

But how do the above factors (climate change, HIV/AIDS, famines, for example) explain the relatively high rates and levels of poverty and food insecurity as well as the negative impacts thereof among women and children?

2.2 The impact of social forces

In his study of forest management, gender and food security among the rural poor (in Cameroon), Gbnetkom (2007) concludes that food security negatively correlates to forest resource depletion. His argument is that deforestation places major demands on women and children's time. For example, this limits children's opportunities to obtain an education and women's chances to undertake income-generation activities.

Quantitatively, there are significant differences, both in patterns of usage of the natural environment and in levels of food security, between households that have lost an adult and

those that have not. The association between mortality and household use of local environmental resources is further shaped by the gender of the deceased and the time elapsed since the death. A key conclusion is that the death of a male wage-earner, affects household food security. Time allocation is affected as resource collection responsibilities shift, and wild foods may substitute for previously purchased goods.

International organizations such as the FAO have recently embarked on critical responses to the gap in policy regarding gender and food. Since the Rome Declaration (hereafter RD) in 1996, there has been a lack of clarity with regard to understanding women's rights and especially women's rights to food against international conventions and declarations of which States have made pledges (cf. Rae, 2008). More specifically, with regard to the RD, the FAO (2001) identified gender mainstreaming as a gap in the RD with regard to food security, and initiated a process to (1) improve FAO's capacity to assist member states of the UN to achieve equitable and sustainable agricultural and rural development by mainstreaming gender issues into operational activities of the RD; (2) establish objectives for achievement of measurable and realistic medium-term goals for gender mainstreaming. Some of the issues that have been prioritized in respect of gender for food security purposes are:

- Gender roles and their relation to agriculture and food security
- Context of globalization; population dynamics (HIV/AIDS, rural-urban migration; rural ageing)
- Increasing pressure on natural resources and their use
- Urban and peri-urban agriculture
- Disaster-related complex emergencies Information and communication technology

2.3 Gender, race, class, rurality and food security

As is the case with other social challenges, gender interacts in insidious ways with other forms of identity, including race, geographical location and others to negatively impact on individuals' and groups' levels of poverty and food insecurity. For example, in South Africa, available literature indicates that poverty is negatively skewed against poor, African women, particularly those who reside in rural contexts. To illustrate, arguing that poverty cannot be divorced from politics, a number of scholars have linked poverty in South with apartheid policies, which they conclude, were responsible for disempowering individuals, households and selected race groups, especially those living in rural areas (see for example, Van der Walt & Morolo, 1996: 137, 138). In this regard, May, Woolard & Klasen, (2000: 47, 48) reveal the strategy of the introduction of homelands and the migrant labour system contributed to the unequal distribution of resources and to the negative skewing of poverty against African women in rural areas. Similarly, Wilson & Ramphele (1989: 193) detail the devastating impacts of the migrant labour system on family life with male migrants living in closed compounds and women left to fend for the family in the rural reserves. Mubangizi and Mubangizi (2005 cited in Manik, 2008:625) still note that years after the demise of apartheid 'there is a close correlation between living standards and race in South Africa with poverty being concentrated among the African population. Woolard (2002) for her part suggested that Africans account for 94%-95% of the poor in South Africa. Citizen, (1998) estimates that poverty reins amongst female-headed households at 60% in comparison with 31% for

male-headed households. Recent statistics by Mubangizi and Mubangizi (2005) indicate that this statistic has dropped to 48% of female headed households. As such, while post-apartheid policies have targeted these past injustices, it is becoming abundantly clear that their negative impacts persist, and strategies aimed at addressing them will have to take cognizance of the very complex and insidious ways in which communities have been impacted.

As stated above, the intersectionality of gender, race and class (and other forms of identity) impacts negatively on poverty amongst particular groups in South Africa. With regard to social class for example, seven years ago, Watkinson and Makgetla (2002, see http://www.naledi.org.za/pubs/2002/watkinson1.pdf) suggested that South Africa faces a crisis in terms of food prices and security citing the food price index as having risen to 176,7% in 2002. Using the example of maize meal prices having doubled in 2002, they asserted that maize meal prices have a severe impact on the working class who spend more than a third of their earnings on food. The case of the ultra-poor is more poignant with them spending more than 50% of their earnings on food. This growing crisis appears to be reaching epic levels at present with South Africans 'battling to come to terms with the grim reality of food price inflation that has made the most staple items such as milk, bread, fresh vegetables and a small portion of meat a luxury for many'(Sunday Tribune News, 08 March 2009:09). The article explains that a rural domestic worker on her minimum salary of R1097,40 per month would use 34,61% of her salary on food as opposed to an assistant store manager who earns R3542,93 having to spend 10,72% of her salary. The article quotes Efficient Group economist Dawie Roodt as concluding that poor people spend more money on food. Furthermore, the 'prices paid by consumers in low-income areas (informal settlements, townships and rural areas) are higher than in formal suburbs where large retail chain stores are available' (Watkinson and Makgetla, 2002).

Watkinson and Horton (2001) elaborate that the ultra poor are rural households with more than half the members being pensioners and supported by women. Hence the burden on women providing for their families in rural areas is greater. A consequence of an increase in the spending of the ultra poor on food translates to a higher consumer price index for the poor as opposed to higher income groups. To illustrate, the CPI in the year to June 2002 rose by between 11 and 14 per cent for households earning below R2030 a month, compared to 8 per cent for the very high-income group, and 9 per cent for the overall CPI in metropolitan and other urban areas (Stats SA, 2002 cited by Watkinson and Makgetla, 2002).

The majority of households in South Africa are dependent on food retailers and industries for the daily food requirements as opposed to approximately 600,000 households who farm to produce food for their own needs. Specifically, according to the September 2000 Labour Force Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2000), 'the percentage of households involved in farming for cash or food is highest in the lowest income category and then decreases steeply, from 39% of ultra-poor households, to 22 per cent of the poor, to 12 per cent, 6 per cent and 3 per cent of the wealthiest income group'. Farming for the household's own consumption in South Africa is a strategy by poor rural households to save income. The Labour Force Survey reveals that the burden of subsistence production falls on women, young people and very old people.

Women are known to be responsible for food selection and food preparation as well as caring and feeding of children. In rural areas the availability of time by women is also a key factor in the availability of water for hygiene, firewood collection and frequent feeding of small children. Since in many cases it is mostly women who are responsible for household agricultural production, any intervention that enables them to increase the productivity of their time spent on farming activities and to spend less time on routine households tasks, such as fetching water, firewood and groceries are likely to be most effective in increasing agricultural output (HSRC, 2004).

Similarly, in some cases, peri-urban areas affected with problems of food security are in low income and informal settlements. A study done by Van Averbeke (2007) found that in urban areas farming is often done mainly by middle-aged and elderly women. Furthermore, urban agriculture is limited to the production of crops which occurs in home gardens, open urban spaces and group gardens. Thus, interventions that promote urban agriculture should be geared especially to address the needs of women. Interventions may serve different functions to assist in socialization and building social networks, and this is extremely valuable for the women involved in these projects. The HSRC (2004) study points out that participation in small-plot agriculture is important to food security, with women taking major responsibility for it as one aspect of a multiple livelihood strategy.

2.4 The negative impacts of HIV/AIDS
In the era of HIV and AIDS it is also difficult to achieve food security because it affects people's ability to produce food, resulting in the reallocation and increase of household tasks, thereby increasing women's workloads. Household members with food insecurity and diseases typically care and feed their children less because of increased time spent on gathering food, fuel and water or feeling too weak and sick (HSRC, 2004).

Hlanze et al. (2005) in a Swaziland study point out that HIV/AIDS increases the nutritional demands in households, as HIV positive households' members require highly nutritious food to support an already weakened immune system. Clover (2003) also maintains that Sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest hit region with HIV/AIDS wide spread. In regions where women participate in agricultural productions food security at both household and community level is being seriously threatened. A study in Malawi found out that the impact of HIV/AIDS on food production depends on the patient's gender. For example, if a male head is sick and later dies, available field labour is reduced as family members are expected to take care of him and consequently, less food and cash crops are produced. However, when a woman is sick and later dies the effect on male labour is not as great, as males are not care-givers (Thangata et al., 2007).

In South Africa, HIV/AIDS has also been noted to be one of the greatest hurdles facing communities, with more than 5,6 million people within the age groups 20-45 affected (Oxfam, 2008). A consequence of gender inequality is that women are vulnerable in sexual relations and hence more prone to HIV infections than their male counterparts. Budlender (2000) contends that poverty, natural disasters, violence, social disruption and the disempowered status of most rural and peri-urban women in Southern Africa form a fertile environment for the transmission of HIV infections. Budlender (2002) further explains that people infected with the HIV are often unable to fulfill their work obligations and eventually

lose their source of income. In addition, medical costs are burdensome for the individual and household. There is also a clear link between addressing the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and adequate nutrition with people needing to sell off their assets in return for food and medication. Adequate and affordable nutrition is essential for HIV infected individuals and groups, including those who receive anti-retroviral treatment. In this context, some epidemiologists have raised serious concerns about the level of harmful toxins found in common food products (Dutton, 2001). With women shouldering the burden of care in the context of AIDS (Oxfam, 2008), poverty and food insecurity tend to impact negatively on them more than on other groups in families and communities.

There is a significant link between poverty, violence and HIV/AIDS. For example, violence is a reality in the lives of women and girls in many households and communities. Lemke (2003) maintains that such a situation has dire consequences in terms of poverty as children may lose 'parents and become orphans in need of care and financial support. In other cases, extended kin take in orphans. This reduces the average available food resources in these households. This has led Watkinson and Makgetla (2002) to suggest special nutrition schemes for people with HIV and their families and more effective welfare grants.

Writing in the context of communities affected by war in north and northeastern regions of Uganda, Bukuluki et al (2007-2008, www.ifpri.org/renewal/pdf/RFbrief17.pdf, accessed February 16, 2009) maintain that there is a close relationship between food and nutritional security and high HIV/AIDS prevalence. He states that women and female children are particularly susceptible as gender relations dictate the interaction between food insecurity and HIV/Aids. The authors note the limited research on the influence of conflict and displacement on gender relations and food insecurity and how this can run the risk of HIV infection. He further comments on the inability of Uganda's policies and programs to address this and embarks on a study of 403 households in 8 camps to motivate for policy changes.

So, what have been the policy interventions targeting gender and food insecurity?

3. The Policy Context

Local policies that inform interventions targeting poverty generally and food security specifically in South Africa are influenced by policies at the regional and global level. These are discussed in the sections below.

3.1 The International Policy Context

At the global level, the World Food Summit held in Rome, Italy, 13-17 November 1996 resulted in the formulation of the *Rome Declaration on World Food Security*[1] of which South

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[1] All references refer to the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Summit Plan of Action (1996, abbreviated to RD), http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm, downloaded, 18/12/2008.

Africa pledged support. Organised under the auspices of FAO, the gathering brought together approximately 185 Heads of State and government, and their representatives to take stock of the challenges of food insecurity and the commitments of national governments to "achieving food security for all and to an ongoing effort to eradicate hunger in all countries, with an immediate view to reducing the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015". The central problem identified is that problems of hunger and food insecurity have global dimensions and are likely to persist, and even increase unless *dramatic* action is taken. The RD redefined food security as "food that is available at all times, that all persons have means of access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety and it is acceptable within the given culture".

Indicators of the challenge to food insecurity, motivated by the declaration refer to:
- access of food supplies despite the substantial increase in food supplies;
- inadequacy of household and national incomes to purchase food;
- instability of supply and demand;
- natural and man-made disasters;
- conflict and terrorism;
- corruption;
- environmental degradation; and
- poverty.

Accordingly, the declaration suggests that a peaceful, stable and enabling socio-political environment is the bedrock for enabling nation states to give priority to food security and poverty eradication. Such stability, an essential ingredient for sustainable development and food security, is dependent on solid democracy, as well as on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to equality and participation for both men and women, boys and girls

To facilitate achieving its targets, the Rome Declaration is underpinned by a call to action and for states to adopt policies that facilitate employment and income generation, the promotion of equitable access to productive and financial resources, and overall sustainable development.

The RD recognises the multifaceted character of food security, and that effective international efforts are required to supplement and reinforce national action. To this end, a number of commitments to be undertaken nationally and internationally were identified as including:
- Ensuring political, social and economic stability to create the best conditions for the eradication of poverty and for durable peace, based on the full participation of men and women to achieve sustainable food security
- The implementation of policies targeting the eradication of poverty and inequality to improve physical and economic access by all
- To pursue participatory and sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development policies and practices in high and low potential areas, which are

essential to adequate and reliable food supplies at the household, national, regional and global levels that combat pests, drought and desertification

- Ensuring that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security through an equitable and market-oriented world trade system
- Ensuring prevention of and preparedness for natural disasters and socially induced emergencies and to meet transitory and emergency food requirements that foster recovery, rehabilitation, and development
- Promoting optimal allocation and use of private and public investments to foster human resources, sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, forestry systems, rural development in high and low potential areas
- Implementing and monitoring a Plan of Action at all levels in cooperation with the international community

The above commitments were translated into objectives and actions called the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). The SPFS Plan of Action was reviewed in Rome in 2003 (5-9 May) and highlighted several gaps since the implementation of the RD (see "Summary of Actions Taken to Respond to Recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation", http://www.fao.org/Docrep/meeting/0006/y8966e.htm. accessed 18/12/2008). These included:

- Widespread misconceptions on the SPFS
- Lack of systematic impact assessment
- Insufficient systematic oversight of national SPFS projects
- Weaknesses in constraints analysis
- Insufficient application of participative approaches in SPFS design implementation
- Limited impact on national policies for food security
- Lack of clarity on scaling-up processes
- Insufficient targeting

One explanation for these gaps may lie in the conspicuous absence of any particular reference to interventions targeting gender inequality or improving the status of women as a strategy for addressing food insecurity. Gaps in the RD, in spite of the grand vision and objectives, reflect scant attention to gender. Without such focus, the route causes of food insecurity may not be understood and interventions may miss the mark in terms of their focus.

As a response to the RD, the South African government appointed a Food Security Working Group to investigate options to achieving food security in South Africa. *The Integrated Food Security Strategy* (IFSS) builds on the proposals made in a 1997 Discussion Document on Food Security (we return to this later in this section). Furthermore, the RD was reinforced a few years later with the Millennium Declaration on Millennium Development Goal One (MDG-1) which aims to halve the proportion of people suffering from both poverty and hunger by 2015. The MDGs have measurable targets that collectively aim to make definite improvements in the lives of the world's poor, and require coordinated action. An emphasis on the elimination of hunger, poverty, and maternal and child mortality requires an emphasis on promoting healthy, productive individuals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have committed nation states, South Africa included as a signatory, to ensuring, among others, through MDG 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and specifically, by 2015, aim to achieve three targets: Target 1 aims to "halve the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day. Target 2 is to "achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people". Target 3 is to "halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger". Complimenting MDG1 are seven others that also seek to improve the lives of communities across the globe. Among these are MDG 3, aimed at improving gender equality, and MDG 5, aimed at improving maternal health. As is evident in the preceding discussion, food insecurity is cited as one of the greatest obstacles facing Southern African Development Community (SADC) as all member countries, including South Africa, have populations experiencing malnutrition and famine. Key among interventions aimed at addressing this challenge is policies and programmes targeting food production and costs. While such policies are necessary, reports suggest that they tend to inhibit the very activities they target. To illustrate, reporting on the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Ifad) council meeting in Rome in February 2009, Kristin Palitza identified food insecurity and rocketing food prices as a function of two factors: food production and cost of fuel and other sources of energy ((Mail and Guardian, 27Feb-5March 2009:20). Furthermore, the author reported that agricultural experts commented that high oil prices, lack of investment in agriculture, unfair trade policies and inequitable distribution of produce were responsible for the present downward trend in food security (Mail and Guardian, 27Feb-5March 2009:20). Citing the Head of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, Dr.J. Schmidhuber, Palitza reported that the energy market dictates the price of agricultural produce and that the cost of energy to produce and transport food adds to the price of the produce, hence food prices are directly correlated with the global price of oil.

Palitza's report further states that the Ifad council meeting concluded that whilst increases in agricultural production have taken place in developed countries, agricultural production in developing countries have risen by less than 1%. However, the value of agriculture to countries in southern Africa is significant given that it accounts for one third of the region's gross national product and 20% of total foreign exchange earnings. In this regard, Laurent Thomas, director of the emergency operations and rehabilitation division of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation suggests that small scale farmers and livestock owners require support in order to address the food crisis. Ides de Willebois, director of Ifad (East and Southern Africa) believes that African governments have hindered development in agriculture by imposing export taxes and restrictions and introducing import subsidies. He suggests that Southern African countries are at fault because by not re-investing sufficiently in agriculture, they only utilise 4% of their agricultural GDP whilst other countries invest as much as 10%. Specifically, such policies do not seem to target gender inequality, and as such are ineffective in addressing the challenges faced by the most vulnerable groups in societies: women and children.

Within this context, regional policies and treaties have been developed that address the specific local contexts and aim to ensure closer monitoring and evaluation of member states' progress towards achieving these targets. To illustrate, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which South Africa is a member, has put in place a policy frameworks that takes gender and gender equality as key to effective development

interventions in the regions. To illustrate, adopted by member states in 1997, the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development notes gender equality as a fundamental human right, and the "integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiative [as] key to the sustainable development of the SADC region" (p. 1). The latter is further confirmed in the Draft SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008). While both policy documents do not directly address food security/insecurity, the latter commits member states to developing "social safety nets", or measures to mitigate the effects of poverty, gender-based violence and other social ill. Arguably, food insecurity falls among these, and its gendered aspects need to be considered if individuals and groups are to benefit from interventions targeting sustainable development.

Drawing from this fertile policy framework in the region, individual member states have developed and implement contextually-specific policies and other interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of poverty more generally, and of food insecurity specifically. To illustrate, according to Bukuluki et al (2007-2008, www.ifpri.org/renewal/pdf/RFbrief17.pdf , accessed February 16, 2009). drawing on the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), its national planning framework, Uganda recognises AIDS and gender as cross-cutting issues in the eradication of poverty. The authors comment that while the "PEAP aims to reduce gender equality by improving access for women to agriculture and reducing land rights discrimination, it fails "to provide tangible strategies to strengthen food security in war camps" (p. 1).

In a similar vein, the Uganda AIDS Commission has guidelines on AIDS responses but there is an absence of discussion on food security. Bukuluki et al. (2007-2008) is surprised that the relationship between food security, gender and HIV/AIDS is overlooked. Furthermore, Uganda's National Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Policy displays recognition of the importance of nutrition for people living with HIV but again there are no distinct guidelines on integrating nutrition and food security into ART programs. This is despite evidence that 'women and girls were adopting behaviors and livelihood strategies such as transactional sex for money, food, and other basic necessities' (Bukuluki et al, 2007-2008: 2 www.ifpri.org/renewal/pdf/RFbrief17.pdf, accessed February 16, 2009)). The authors conclude that there is a lack of national policies in respect of internally displaced people as a vulnerable group and suggest a host of policy interventions to link gender, food security and HIV/AIDS. These include, among others, strengthening existing policies through:

- Developing comprehensive guidelines with clear indicators for addressing linkage between gender issues, food insecurity, and AID;
- Improving coordination and integration of services addressing AIDS and food security and gender-based sexual violence in conflict-affected settings;
- Special targeting of the most vulnerable households, especially those with the elderly, chronically sick (living with HIV), orphans, and the disabled;
- Using gender as a conceptual lens to integrate HIV prevention programs with poverty/livelihood security interventions rather than have them as stand alone;
- Conceptualizing food security as an HIV prevention intervention rather than only a social support intervention;

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- Developing HIV policies and programs that adequately address critical issues linked to access of HIV-infected mothers to alternative feeding of their babies; and
- Integrating gender analysis into policy/program development and implementation in IDP settings (Bukuluki et al, 2007-2008: 2, www.ifpri.org/renewal/pdf/RFbrief17.pdf , accessed February 16, 2009).

What is the nature of the policy framework aimed at addressing poverty and food security in South Africa?

3.2 The South African Policy context

In South Africa, there has been a consistent concern within government policy formulation about the connection between gender (as a social force which shapes the roles of men and women differently), gender inequalities (as an analysis of power between women and men in specific contexts), and poverty. Based on this, current debates and discussions on inequalities and policy strategies disclose a complex set of questions about how gender dynamics are integrated into the design of programmes targeting women and are understood as central to the economic and social deprivation experience by millions of South Africans. Evidence shows that access to electricity, sanitation, water and housing has improved but life expectancy has reduced (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005; Dorrington and Tootla, 2007). Add to this the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa (CICSSSA, 2002: 19); unemployment is at 29 % for the total population but at 36.4 % for African women. While more money is going into social spending, the inequality between resourced and those living under conditions of poverty is growing: measurements of inequality are higher in 2007 than they were in 1994 (Presidency, 2008).

Informed by the international policy framework, the South Africa policy interventions that target poverty more generally, and food security specifically are informed principally by the country's Constitution.

> It is vitally important that all structures of government, including the President himself, should understand this fully: that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression (Nelson Mandela, Iaugural Speech, 1994).

With regards to gender equality, the South African policy context is arguably informed by the *South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality*, otherwise known as the Gender Policy Framework (Office of the Status of Women, www.doh.gov.za/docs/policy/gender.pdf, accessed March 10, 2009). Guided by "a vision of human rights which incorporates acceptance of equal and inalienable rights of all women and men" (OSW, , the country defined and identified goals towards gender equality, an ideal that is a fundamental tenet under the Bill of Rights of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996).

For its vision, the Gender Policy Framework seeks "a society in which women and men are able to realise their full potential and to participate as equal partners in creating a just and prosperous society for all. The vision is that of gender equality"(p.40). As such, the framework offers guidelines for interaction among individuals and groups as well as for developing gender equality interventions in organisations and institutions. It proposes and recommends an institutional framework that facilitates equal access to goods and services for both women and men. It seeks to address such challenges as unequal gender relations, poverty, access to basic resources, access to employment, violence against women and access to land, among others. The framework advances several guidelines and principles for integrating gender in interventions aimed at transforming communities. Among others, these include ensuring that:

- there is equality of all persons and that non-sexism and non-racism be enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa;
- there is an understanding that women are not a homogenous group. This principle must inform all policies and programmes that will lead to the implementation of Gender equality. Distinctions according to race, class, sexuality, disability, age and other variables should not to be overlooked or taken for granted. However, similarities should also be used to strengthen initiatives designed to reverse past gender discrimination;
- women's rights be seen as human rights;
- customary, cultural and religious practices be subject to the right to equality;
- economic empowerment of women be promoted; and
- serious attention be placed on changing policies and practices which have hitherto hindered women's access to basic needs, the economy and decision making (National Gender Policy Framework Executive Summary, vi-vii)

Obviously, the Gender Policy Framework is intended to inform and permeate all other policies developed in South Africa, including those targeting poverty and food security. This is premised on the notion that the right of access to sufficient food is enshrined in section 27 of the South African constitution, indicating that every citizen has a right to sufficient food and that "the state must by legislation and other measures, within its available resources, avail to progressive realisation of the right to sufficient food". The RDP programme in 1994 also identified food security as a priority policy objective. An immediate spin-off of such policy resulted in increased social spending by the State in various spheres of government (school feeding schemes, child support grants, free health services for children between 0-6 years, for pregnant and lactating women, pension funds for the elderly, working water, and community public works programmes). Additionally, community food garden initiatives such as Kgora and Xosihindlala, land reform and farmer settlement, loan schemes for small farmers, infrastructural support and a Presidential tractor mechanisation scheme were initiated.

Encompassing these, as mentioned previously, is the Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa IFSS (2002). The national food security strategy resulted from a Policy Review by the State in 2002 to better co-ordinate programmes by the State led to a cabinet decision to formulate a strategy to streamline, harmonize and integrate various programmes into what is now known as *The Integrated Food Security Strategy*, co-ordinated by the Department of Agriculture (DOA, 2002).

The grand vision of the IFSS (DOA, 2002: 13) is to achieve universal physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans and is underpinned by a set of key objectives that address trends where gaps and problems are identified to:

- Increase household food production and trading
- Improve income generation and job creation opportunities
- Improve nutrition and food safety
- Increase safety nets and food emergency management systems
- Improve analysis and information management system
- Provide capacity building
- Hold stakeholder dialogue

The IFSS identifies key trends in food security challenges in South Africa, shaped by two inter-related dimensions (DOA, 2002: 19). First, is the urgency to maintain and increase the ability of the country to meet its national food requirements is dependent on meeting the needs of domestic agricultural resource, import food items that cannot be produced efficiently. Second, is to eradicate inequalities and grinding poverty among the majority of households (fuelled by inadequate and unstable food supplies, lack of purchasing power, weak institutional support networks, poor nutrition, inadequate safety nets, weak emergency management systems and unemployment).

The vision for IFSS is to "attain universal physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (p.13). IFFS is premised on the fact that "food security is part of the section 27 Constitutional rights in South Africa" and that "[on] these rights, the Constitution states that every citizen has the right to have access to sufficient food and water, and that "the state must by legislation and other measures, within its available resources, avail to progressive realisation of the right to sufficient food".

Given the enormity of the tasks, the IFSS (DOA, 2002: 27-32) has identified a number of priority areas that include policy interventions to (a delimited summary follows):

- **Improve household food production, trade and distribution** (policy intervention targets access to resources such as land, technology, credit and training; promotion of irrigation and rainwater harnessing technologies; improving access to credit by the poor, *including women*; improving access to food production and food processing technologies, *particularly technologies for women*; enhance the ownership and exchange entitlement of the poor in the trade of agriculture and food sectors; improve household food security by commercialising agriculture to increase income and employment generation among food insecure households)

- **Increase Income and Job Opportunities** (policy interventions support job creation through local economic development; strengthen off-farm income generation; support skills training)

- **Improve Nutrition and Food Safety** (policy interventions include public education; *support targeted interventions (e.g. micronutrients, vitamin supplements) for the chronically vulnerable groups*)

- **Enhance Safety Nets and Food Emergency Management Systems** (policy interventions include the creation of cost-recovery programmes when services are provided by the private sector; strengthen the co-ordination and management of emergency relief operations at national and provincial levels; compile baseline information to assess the food insecurity and vulnerability situation of the country)

To achieve some of these goals the IFSS (DOA, 2002: 33-36) has identified a number of structures or units to support national and local initiatives that will work with a Ministers' Social Cluster made up of the following Units: National Co-ordination, Provincial Co-ordination, District Food Security officers, Local Food Security Action Groups. The implementation Plan is designed around a broad-based integrated approach to address food security problems at household and national levels, monitor and evaluate and to provide support to institutional and organisational development.

Despite the ambitious vision outlined in the IFSS (DOA, 2002), policy response in South Africa still has some limitations. Evaluation of the community based public works programme indicate that it has been well-targeted, employing predominantly Africans and high proportion of Women and reaches the poor in rural areas (Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, 1997). However, the off-farm income earning opportunity should be strengthened like specific public works programme service option for women should be made available such as day-mothering or running soup kitchens should be used to complement public works with employment which has also positive externalities and which are more likely to be ongoing as well (HSRC,2004).

As elaborated in IFSS (DOA, 2002) the South African government aims at increasing social spending on such programmes as school feeding schemes, child support grants and others. Although some are doing well there is still a need for monitoring and evaluating those programmes because some of them are not covering food or make food secure for individuals. Other impact is escalating food prices which also hamper vulnerable households.

As Hendriks (2005) points, out food insecurity is likely to increase with rising food prices, increased reliance on cash food purchases and the erosion of household coping strategy due to impacts of HIV/AIDS.

In terms of gender inequality, while the vision of the IFSS reflects noble intentions, it also reflects a gap in relation to the role played by gender in ensuring such access. To illustrate, on one hand, IFSS (2008:16), acknowledges that "within the household, food insecurity often affects the more vulnerable members of the family, namely children and women" and that the "costs associated with food-insecurity at the intra-household level relate to slow educational development (often of female children), stunting, etcetera". On the other hand, the programmatic and policy interventions it recommends do not particularly use gender as a tool for analysis and development. For example, while IFFS recommends improving household food production, trade and distribution, the policy intervention it suggests are

generic in nature, and do not take into consideration, the complex ways in which gender (race and class and other social identities) interact to impact on women's (and girl-children's) access to safe and nutritional food in households and communities, and as such, do not outline ways in which programmes might address the challenges brought by gender inequality in food production, distribution and access. In addition, while it refers to universal access to resources and to the need to eradicate inequalities, unless explicitly spelt out and a clear link is made to the Gender Policy Framework, these cannot be assumed to include addressing gender inequality.

To illustrate, in the Strategic Plan for South African Agriculture (Department of Agriculture, 2001), the list of aims includes food security and employment creation but no link to gender is made despite the fact that women constitute 51% of the population. Also, Watkinson and Makgetla (2002) conclude that the process of deregulation and liberalisation in the past decade has been too rapid. According to them, many farmers have limited capacity to adjust to such rapid policy and market changes. Furthermore, greater exposure to international competition has negatively affected their competitiveness, causing many farmers to leave the industry. In this much more competitive and open economy, small farming systems are also failing or finding it hard to become part of mainstream agriculture'. Strangely, the document fails to provide strategies to address the issues such as attracting women to adopt small scale farming methods which will at the heart of community development. After all, poverty and underdevelopment dominate rural areas and as main agricultural producers is often ignored (Watkinson and Makgetla, 2002), women are the mainstay of such communities. Poverty eradication that provides them with basic training in agricultural production, for example, should be central in interventions targeting food insecurity.

Writing on the spiralling food prices in South Africa, Watkinson and Makgetla (2002) conclude that in order to effectively address the food security problems, policies must address the underlying causes. These include gender inequality, which unless properly understood and addressed, will continue to impact negatively on food security as well as on efforts aimed at eradicating food insecurity.

As suggested in the sections above, ultimately, the decline in agricultural food production will affect achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In respect of South Africa, the Human Rights Commission intended holding hearings to ascertain why so many South Africans are trapped in poverty after research suggested that there has been an increase in the levels of poverty and inequality in the last 10 years. These would have indicated whether or not South Africa is making any progress towards meeting the MDGs. Unfortunately, the hearings were cancelled due to a 'lack of response from state organs' (Mail and Guardian, 6-12 March 2009: 39).

The critical challenge for policy review is to foreground the daily struggles of ordinary people for basic resources and to ask questions about *how* the social relationships and realities of everyday experience match the policy promise around broad development, in this case food security (this is an overarching argument that is not fully extrapolated in this literature review).

4. Some Theoretical Approaches

As discussed in the sections above, it is now common knowledge that poverty and its impacts tend to be negatively skewed against women. One explanation for this lies in the dominant socio-cultural norms in the society. For example, in any society, social norms tend to influence men and women's work and in particular, the gender division of labour in families, communities, and consequently in rights and responsibilities between the two sexes. Starting from the family and extending into society and the workplace, certain tasks are considered more appropriate for men or women. This often means that women's responsibilities revolve around the home while men are expected to go out to work. Women therefore, tend to be excluded from jobs/positions, particularly those considered to be appropriate for men. Furthermore, due to these socially ascribed roles and responsibilities for men and women, motherhood, in particular, tends to limit women's access to the labour market and to progression within industry. It results in them leaving the labour market more frequently, as well as in lack of progression and skills development, leaving them prone to poverty and the consequences thereof.

In South Africa, post-apartheid policies have consistently targeted gender inequality and have sought to increase women's access in various spheres of society, including the labour market. However, inequalities persist and their impacts continue to be gendered in that they are negatively skewed against women and children, particularly girl-children. Available literature suggests that explanations for these trends derive from theoretical perspectives (mostly gender and feminist theories) as well as evidence from empirical research. This section reviews some of the possible theoretical explanations.

4.1 Socio-cultural norms

One explanation for the relatively high rates and levels of food insecurity among women lies in the dominant socio-cultural norms in the society. To illustrate, in any society, social norms tend to influence the gender division of labour among *men and women* in families, communities. Within this framework, women's responsibilities tend to revolve around the home while men are expected to go out to work. Informed by these norms, women are excluded from the labour market. Furthermore, due to these socially ascribed roles and responsibilities for men and women, motherhood, in particular, tends to limit women's access to the labour market and to progression within industry. This results in them entering and leaving more frequently, as well as lack of progression and skills development on their part. This puts them at risk of poverty and of poor or no access to food and nutrition.

In relation to food security and poverty, it is necessary to examine what so effectively maintains male domination and privilege. Policy and social science arguments have generally tended to focus on food supply, with the assumption being that hunger is simply an effect of scarcity of supply. Increasing food supply, stimulating economic growth and expanding food markets are assumed to result in a trickle down effect to reach more vulnerable populations such as women and children (Leathers and Foster, 2004:67; Quinn and Kennedy, 1994). This view often neglects the impacts of the dominant socio-cultural norms which exclude women from decision-making within the home and society, including how these resources are utilised. Taking this into account are approaches which point to entitlements during periods

of famine (food shortage which often brings with it severe hunger) for example, explaining that the problem is the differential access to scarce resources and power (Drèze and Sen, 1989; Drèze, Sen and Hussain, 1995; Kent, 2005; Sen, 1981 & 1999). Earlier formulations of entitlement theory (Sen, 1981; Drèze and Sen, 1989) focused attention on access to marketable skills and economic assets (e.g. tools, human capital, and land). Poverty underpinned the gap. In recent work Sen (1999) focused attention on political rights, access to health care, and gender equity. The assumption is that if the hungry have access to power and resources, hunger will be alleviated. This however, neglects the unequal power dynamics in decision-making regarding how the food is used and for whose benefit, once it is accessed.

Another argument in food policy arguments focuses on the "military famine" thesis which traces food insecurity and famine to the power of the military (cf. Cheatham, 1994; de Soysa and Gleditsch, 1999). Studies verify that military spending, arms imports and armed conflict contribute to hunger (Scanlon, 2003) and access to safe water (Carlton-Ford, 2005). The critical literature suggests that hunger and famine, and by extension, food security, is not necessarily an isolated problem but also an international security issue as effects of interstate and internal war. Also evident are postmodern conceptualizations and modernist applications to food security that maintain that while studies give attention to issues of perception and local knowledge in food outcomes, such studies are yet to engage in a systematic discussion of the role played by society in food outcomes (cf. Carr, 2006 for a discussion of why a theory of the social is preferred to lend broad, cross-contextual coherence to a study of food security).

5. Implications for Programmatic and Policy Interventions

As illustrated by the preceding discussion, the stark absence of gender as a specific focus in the South African policy documents and in spite of the existence of strong Gender Policy Framework (fleeting references are made to vulnerable populations such as children and women but never fully integrated into explicit policy interventions) highlights a gap in the scant attention given to gender.

Available research literature, although scant, engages more rigorously with gender in relation to food (see for example, Budlender, 2002; Bukuluki et al, 2007-2008; Lemke, 2003 and others). In these studies, gender is identified as an important factor in food insecurity because its impacts on women and men differ markedly.

Programmes targeting female-headed households can help improve their accessibility to food in times of illness and after the death of their spouse. In his Zambian study Kapungwe (2005) recommends that gender concerns should be among the key issues to be considered in planning, implementing and monitoring and evaluating intervention policies and programs intended for improving household food security. Furthermore, any policies that will ensure the mainstreaming of gender concerns in all interventions against food insecurity and poverty are therefore needed. Oniang'o (2005) motivates that there is a need for legislation that will increase access to and ownership of resources, including credit for women as well as services designed to target specific issues that face women and address inequities. This

section identifies some implications of the preceding discussion on policy and practice that target food insecurity in South Africa.

Based on a preliminary review of some factors (theoretical approaches, policy context) and gendered insights, it is reasonable to conclude that the full impact of the gender dimension on food insecurity has not been fully interrogated both in terms of the policy framework and in the scientific literature.

Food is maintained to be key to well-being (FAO, 2002), as a core human right (Kent, 2005) and as a core factor of human development (World Bank, 2006) and key to stable international relations (Bryant and Kappaz, 2005). In this literature review, gender has been indexed as a central factor to meaningful food security policy and research. The value of gender in securing and maintaining sustainable development is not in dispute. Its significance in interventions that aim to reduce hunger and by extension, poverty has been emphasized in several studies that highlight gender in different regions, for example, Africa (Das *et al.* 2005; Kerr *et al* 2005) and West Asia (Abdelali-Martini *et al.* 2008).

A Status Report of the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Task Team (IFSNTT) in 2006 (see DOA, 2006) provided a review of the IFSS and the gaps identified are cause for concern. Identified challenges refer to institutional arrangements (such as slow programme integration; contested meanings of food security amongst stakeholders; lack of institutional arrangements for the implementation of IFSS at provincial, district and local level). Over and above the institutional problems, the DOA (2006) identified a number of new challenges, some of which are pre-empted in the DOA (2002) IFSS:

- Increasing number of food emergencies resulting in an increase of dependency on direct food distribution
- Limited access to safe drinking water and poor sanitation increasing the occurrence of chronic diseases
- Increasing occurrence of HIV/AIDS aggravating vulnerability and food insecurity
- Illiteracy and low levels of education leading to a low level of awareness and access to information, as well as slow adoption of technology
- Poor transport infrastructure limits access to support services and markets
- Sometimes a limited access to sources of energy (especially electricity)
- General poverty leading to insecurity, discouraging small scale farmers to invest

In the DOA (2006) review no mention is made about the gendered dimension of food security but rather a generic review is provided. Similarly, a gender blind report (no mention is made about gender) commissioned by the Office of the Presidency (2008a) paint an even more alarming picture of possible failures with the IFSS, explaining that "despite interventions, there are signs that there is increasing food insecurity in specific places, largely poverty nodes in both rural and urban contexts, related to increasing unemployment, food price increases, HIV/AIDS, poor quality diets, adverse environmental conditions, and poverty in general". The tenor of the report suggests that the intention of the IFSS to be integrative has not worked, indicating that "a more integrated poverty reduction strategy" should create "positive synergies between social welfare measures on the one hand, and economic growth policies on the other". Gaps and problems identified in the food security

framework espoused by the IFSS result in findings against policy-specific goals and further recommendations to 2019. Some of the findings are (Presidency, 2008a: no page numbers):

- Prospects for future employment opportunities are encouraging (employment growth of 3 % *vs.* population growth of <1 %) but jobs are not being created in sectors where the majority of the poor will find employment
- Successes of AsgiSA are central to the higher rates of food security
- A lack of pro-poor focus economic growth will increase prevailing inequalities
- Food price volatility and HIV/AIDS is negatively impacting on the poor
- Chronic, structural food insecurity is prevalent
- Despite its role in regional and national food availability (including food pricing), agriculture plays a small role in South Africa's economy. Agriculture however plays an important supplementary role in household food availability in the former homelands
- Engagement in agriculture fluctuates due to constraints such as (inappropriate technologies, expensive inputs, HIV/AIDS, pressure on water supplies and climate change). Smallholders are also excluded from value chains and supply lines.
- Insufficient micronutrient consumption compromises diet and growth
- Subsistence agriculture and small enterprises require more support
- Food security should be integrated into government's integrated anti-poverty strategy that includes social grants, employment, agricultural policy, etc.
- The existing IFSS is promising but currently failing, in part due to a weak line of authority by the Department of Agriculture to implement the IFSS (the latter requires centralisation)
- The IFSS requires greater funding and greater participation by civil society with the recognition that food security is a human right
- Greater monitoring and evaluation of food insecurity is required
- Food prices and other inflationary issues are drivers of food insecurity

Flowing from the findings the Presidency (2008a) identifies four recommendations to honour constitutional commitments within the context of the current institutional framework:

- Pursue to develop an integrated policy framework for poverty reduction in South Africa that promotions greater cohesion to address: (1) pro-poor economic growth to achieve food security by strengthening employment and effective service delivery by the State; (2) affordable and sustainable social protection measures (particularly social grants) as safety nets against hunger
- Actively encourage agricultural development and allied non-farm enterprises to promote livelihoods of those on the periphery of the formal economy
- Strengthen and alter the institutional arrangements of the IFSS to transform it into a more enabling structure for state and non-state actors to address the overarching poverty reduction strategy
- Establish a well coordinated and well managed monitoring and evaluation and information system for food security

Despite overwhelming generic literature on food security there is little empirical and qualitative research addressing the political, social and gendered factors that affect food insecurity in South Africa. The gap in knowledge implies that women's status is central to achieving sustainable food security. Women are responsible for household food security, child rearing in LDCs there are fewer resources that increases vulnerability. Although freedom from hunger receives much attention as a fundamental human right (Kent 2005), the effects of gender equity through political and social rights on food security receive scant attention. Additional research on food security and its links to gendered development should be pursued to explicate the policy gap in explaining how 'food insecurity" has addressed the complexities of the gendered divide apart from a policy identification of women and children as a vulnerable group. As mentioned in the opening paragraph of the review, patriarchies prevail, because male dominance is sexual. Firstly, men sexualize hierarchy; patriarchy is one important system (through which social realities such rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse of children operate). These practices express and actualize the distinctive power of men over women. This approach identifies not just sexuality itself to be the dynamic of the inequality of the sexes. It is also argued that sexual difference is a function of sexual domination.

Second, male dominance appears to exist cross-culturally, if in locally particular forms. To explain gender inequality in terms of 'sexual politics' is to promote not only a political theory of the sexual that defines gender but also a sexual theory of the political to which gender is fundamental. In this context, the question of food security in its appropriate gendered dimension must be subject to the full spectrum of roles, responsibilities and social forces that shape the unequal distribution of resources, access and availability of food for women and children.

It is also noticeable that within the policy arguments in South Africa, and in the scientific literature, critical domains affecting food security (such as natural disasters, education, poverty, unemployment, ageing, technology, etc) have also overlooked other domains within agricultural production. For example, the biopolitics within the food debate, the politics around contemporary biology's genetic manipulation/modification of life forms (plant, animal, human) is also fast becoming an issue of global concern. Indeed, as emerging research is demonstrating, such issues are profoundly gendered as they impact on the lives of men and women living in the South (cf. Shiva, 1988; 2001). Of related concern, in the era of genetically modified foods, the question of public health risks and responsibilities are also central with regard to information for the public on food labelling (i.e. keeping people informed about potential health risks).

In summation, a gendered assessment of food security cannot take place without recourse to its multidimensional nature. In the South African context, indications are that food security is increasingly becoming aligned to the core problem of poverty (itself a social problem with a multifaceted dimension).

6. Conclusions

Based on the preceding review of the literature (theoretical and critical approaches) to food security, it is reasonable to conclude that the full impact of the gender dimension on food insecurity has not been fully interrogated both in terms of the policy framework and in the

critical literature. An understanding of gender in food security demonstrates that food insecurity is a multidimensional issue, i.e. it is shaped by poverty, resources, environment, disease, natural disasters and political context. This literature review identified the value and efficacy of a gender lens in understanding why food security is a gendered issue. It is gendered because food is both a human and social issue that concerns the well-being of a population and men and women are socially and culturally defined by their social roles in relation to producing, accessing and consuming food.

The international and South African policy context demonstrates a genuine bias toward prioritising gender in combating food insecurity. In the local context a broad suit of instruments exist (constitution and the IFSS) but there appears to be a gap between the policy promise and the implementation.

The scientific literature on food security is equally fairly generic, and scant attention is given to a fuller picture of the gendered dimension of food insecurity. The literature reviewed suggests that there are indeed gaps in the availability of disaggregated data on women and men in respect of food insecurity. Additionally, there is a knowledge gap as to how food security fully impacts on social roles of men and women. Meaningful future studies should assess how the 'voice' of women and men affected by food security could be incorporated into quantitative and qualitative studies to demonstrate what can be learned from 'experience' to target interventions.

A key conclusion is that a gendered lens to understanding food insecurity is able to provide a more integrated understanding of the gendered nature of food insecurity. Such a lens is therefore crucial to understanding how policy works, whether programmes are focused, and whether the scientific literature should pay more attention to this underdeveloped area of inquiry.

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