



FOOD SECURITY FOR EQUITABLE FUTURES

Project Newsletter

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WHERE YOU CAN FIND US



wp.lancs.ac.uk/foodequity/



<https://bsky.app/profile/foodequity.bsky.social>



youtube.com/@Food_Equity



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**FoodInsecurity, FoodEquity,
Ethiopia, India, Peru, Vietnam**

TEAM SUBMISSION PUBLISHED BY THE UK PARLIAMENT

We are thrilled to announce that the project team's written evidence submission to the UK Parliament on *Innovation and Global Food Security* has been published!

Following key points were raised for the committee's consideration:

- Low-tech innovations must be designed and implemented with careful consideration of the socio-cultural contexts that shape adoption and effectiveness.
- Use of technological innovation in agriculture can exacerbate economic vulnerability for low-income households, thereby exacerbating inequalities.
- Uptake of technological innovations can contribute to indebtedness and loss of land for those who are land and credit poor, compounding food insecurity.
- Mechanisation in agriculture and use of heavy machinery can adversely affect farm ecology and hamper future yields, potentially threatening long-term food security.

The evidence is primarily based on fieldwork conducted in two Indian states (Uttar Pradesh and Goa) conducted over three extended visits from December 2022 to March 2025. The team drew their insights from the interviews and focus group discussions with farmers and their families.

The bigger question is whether the use of technology is the solution to everything?? This evidence emphasises that the policies have to be context-specific to increase the likelihood of adopting innovative and technology-oriented measures among marginalized communities.

[You can read full article here.](#)



PUBLISHED
29 Oct 2025

UK Parliament Written Evidence on Innovation and Global Food Security

Recommendations to better-tailor emerging technologies to the context-specific needs of Global Majority countries such as India:

1. Partner with country- and community-specific institutions on joint projects to develop low-cost, low-tech innovations that can be adapted to local conditions.
2. Develop policies to support research, subsidized access, and investment in community-level infrastructure for such technologies.
3. Provide funding for truly interdisciplinary evidence on food and agricultural related schemes, where technology developers are brought into direct conversation with the communities their innovations will serve.

Project website: <https://wp.lancs.ac.uk/foodequity/>
Bluesky: [@foodequity.bsky.social](#)

WHAT'S NEW ON OUR SOCIALS!!



Find us on [Bluesky](#). Our handle is [@foodequity.bsky.social](#).

We are thrilled to share with you that [Food Security for Equitable Futures](#) project has transitioned from X (formerly Twitter) to Bluesky.

Bluesky is a growing community and a huge network of academics, researchers, policymakers and people from all walks of life. It is similar to X (Twitter), but better!! It was developed by the same team that created Twitter, and Twitter users will find the interface very familiar and easy to use. Our team has also put together a Bluesky Starter Pack (recommended custom feeds and users to help communities find each other), and we would like to invite you to join Bluesky and follow our project's starter pack for an easy way to connect with a lot of great accounts. The pack includes all our team members along with some other experts working in the same research area.

And, if you're involved in research and/or policymaking on food and nutrition, we'd love to add you to the starter pack! The advantage with a starter pack is that it will help you build following rather than you finding followers on your own on Bluesky. This will also assist with enhancing visibility of your work. Please do get in touch to share your handle if you'd like to be considered for the starter pack.



The [Food Security for Equitable Futures](#) team, in collaboration with our amazing stakeholders, delivered a brilliant series of short courses for early career researchers in Delhi last year. The Short Courses Series is now available for you on our YouTube channel. It focuses on the right to food, measurement of food insecurity, links between food insecurity and the broader nutritional landscape in India, sociodemographic correlates of food insecurity and its associated outcomes, policy prospects going forward, and best practices for data collection and activism working with local communities.

Videos of the sessions are released every few weeks on project's [YouTube channel](#). The latest is from [Mr Biraj Patnaik](#), Executive Director National Foundation for India (NFI). Prior to joining NFI, Biraj was formerly the Principal Adviser to the Commissioners of the Indian Supreme Court in the Right to food case for close to a decade. He has been part of the right to food campaign in India since its inception. He co-founded the 'Mitani' community health worker program that trained and deployed 70,000 health workers in Chhattisgarh.

📺 You can find short courses [event highlights video here](#).

📺 You can also find a [video on participant experiences here](#).

Stay tuned for more!!

WALKING THROUGH THE FIELD: EVERYDAY JOYS AND PAIN

Fieldwork in spaces with very little privacy, where one-room homes open directly onto the street and much of life unfolds in public view, can be both engaging and challenging. These spaces allow for more informal and spontaneous interactions with participants, but they also make it impossible to not notice aspects of the private that unfolds in public. On some days, we walked into moments of tension or worry that families are navigating; on others, we were welcomed into laughter and celebrations.

One day, an old house with peeling paint and stains all over the wall was completely transformed overnight with a fresh yellow paint. When we asked our participant if it was for a celebration, she laughed and explained,



“they (the house she worked in as a domestic help) had thrown this paint because it had gone old, and I got that paint and made my old house new.”

She and her ten-year-old son had hand-painted the house in the night. She was happy to see how the plants that she had outside her house now can be clearly seen and looked fresh against the light colour of the walls. While experiencing moments like this was joyful, there were others we witnessed that were deeply painful.

One of our child participants in Goa had spent days telling us about her upcoming birthday and the cake-cutting event that her family had been planning. Her cousins and neighbours were just as excited to be part of the celebration. On the day of her birthday, the usually lively neighbourhood was silent. While we looked for the birthday girl to give her some chocolates, we found her washing utensils in front of her house, a household chore she did every day. On seeing us, she turned away in tears and did not make eye contact. Although we managed to wish her happy birthday and give her some chocolates, it was impossible to not notice the pain in her face. Her cousins explained that her parents found it very difficult to arrange the celebration she had hoped for, causing some tension in the family. What had seemed a joyful visit suddenly felt heavy with unspoken emotions.



Moments like these remind us that the “field” is not a distant research site but a living space, where participant’s happiness and disappointments unfold before us. We are eternally grateful to our participants for opening their homes and their lives to us, even in difficult moments when it would have been easier for them to keep the door closed.

'PLASTIC' RICE FOR GOOD HEALTH? THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OUTREACH FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

In 2022, the Indian Government passed an order to fortify all the rice distributed in its welfare schemes. As India is home to the largest anaemic population in the world, the goal was to supplement the most pervasive cereal in Indian diets with iron and b12 to address the nutritional requirements of the population. This is done by mixing fortified grain in the ratio of 1:100 with non-fortified grains. The fortified grain looks slightly different from regular rice grain: it is whiter than normal, and floats to the surface of the water when washed.

Our field research in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India revealed a parallel story. While talking about rice received through the Public Distribution System, one of our participants noted:

They mix some things and give. Like these rice they are giving, if I show them to you , you will realize they are not rice. They are adulterated. The ones they mix, they can be seen clearly (shouts out to the daughter, 'show her the rice') Everyone says these are plastic rice, if you eat this, there will be troubles in the stomach, but we eat it, we have no choice.

The women we spoke with were identifying the 'whiter' rice in government allocations as adulterations—specifically, as fake rice or 'plastic'. They were diligently putting in the additional labour of removing these grains before cooking the rice. People in some areas even complained of adulterations having increased in the past few months in the government allocations. We realised that the information gap about this seemingly minor tweak was not only rendering the policy futile for its aim of reducing micronutrient deficiencies but was also introducing a new detriment since people were discarding the portions of rice they would have otherwise used.

The case reiterates the importance of involving and engaging with the beneficiaries to ensure that policies achieve their intended results. In the absence of adequate public sensitisation and information dissemination, through e.g. media campaigns, local panchayats, government schools, even a well-intended policy like this can prove to be inefficacious.

MANAGING CARE RESPONSIBILITIES AMIDST ECONOMIC PRECARIITY

Families our team spoke with during fieldwork made dramatic adjustments to their everyday life to manage food and other survival needs amid low and uncertain incomes. These adjustments were disproportionately made by women. The narratives below of two women in urban Goa—the first working as a paid domestic care worker and the second providing unpaid care at home—provides two vital insights about how low income and precariously working families function.

First, the persistence of day-to-day unpaid caring work undertaken by women to ensure families are fed and cared for is time-consuming. It often keeps women away from the labor market despite the need to work to support the cost of living in a big city.

Interviewer: Why did you not go for work? Do you not like it? Or for what reason you didn't work?

Participant: My baby is small, right? Before this, she (other child) was small. So then sending her to school, then in the afternoon getting them back, then sending them to tuition and getting them back at 5. Then in the evening, 6.30, sending them to Arabi (learning Arabic) and then getting them back from Arabi. Then making food at home, get vegetables, in all this my time gets used (laughs). (Migrant woman, Urban Goa)

Interviewer: Sister, then you must have a lot of problems at the time of Corona? Means, at the time of lockdown, that time, monetary problems?

Participant: School was also closed. Good thing that the school was closed. Everyone says that it would be better if school was open, I pray that it was better that the school was closed. Because the children were at home, I got to go for work. Otherwise, how would I have done this, to drop and pickup the children from school, and then do this? There was a small child, how could have I done work and all? The daughter used to take care of him, Both the children. (Migrant woman, Urban Goa)

Second, women who have to take up low paid care work (mostly as domestic care workers) due to economic hardships often shared the need to forgo care or the inability to find time and resource to provide care for family (in this case looking after children's school and education related needs).

The (in)ability to provide care for families varies across regions, support systems, economic and social contexts. Future work will provide deeper insights into how families are managing care (food, health, education, housing) amidst economic precarity. This will include how existing social policies can better support low-income families by recognizing care and reducing the precarity of arrangements that families currently rely upon.

PROF FLEDDERJOHANN PRESENTS FINDINGS AT TWO CONFERENCES

Prof Fledderjohann has recently published [work](#) on how food insecurity matters for the rights to have a child, to not have a child, and to parent with dignity in safe in healthy environments. These are core tenets of the reproductive justice movement, which is both a theoretical framework and a social justice movement founded by Black feminist activists in the US who were explicitly learning from women in Global Majority countries (that is, countries in the Global South). They based their work on international human rights frameworks, ensuring reproductive justice could be a useful framework in societies around the world. Prof Fledderjohann is also currently working to theorise the links between food insecurity and bodily autonomy, which is a more recent addition to the core rights under the reproductive justice framework.

The team is now applying this theoretical thinking to the interviews our brilliant field team conducted with food insecure families across 3 rounds in Goa and Uttar Pradesh, India between December 2022 and November 2024. Prof Fledderjohann has recently presented preliminary findings at two conferences: The British Sociological Association's Medical Sociology Conference, held in Newcastle, England in September, and the Fed Up 15th Annual Conference on Food Studies, hosted online and in Pretoria, South Africa.



Prof Fledderjohann's presentation from Fed Up 15th Annual Conference [available](#) through [our YouTube channel](#).

The team have identified several key issues linked to reproductive justice through examining women's narratives. First, women's own bodily needs were often in competition with the needs of their children, which often resulted in women making bodily sacrifices such as cutting back their food consumption to prioritise their children and undertaking harmful physical labour to save money. Second, women had to make 'choiceless spending choices' involving deciding between compromising on food quality and quantity versus cutting expenditures through, for example, less expensive housing which was insecure, unsanitary, and temporary in nature. Third, some women faced 'choiceless marriage choices', wherein young girls in food insecure households were married to reduce food expenditures in the household, but often faced equally precarious living conditions and received inadequate maternal healthcare in their marital homes. Fourth, some women reported experiencing intimate partner violence, and in some cases reported that food was being used as a form of coercive control.

PROF FLEDDERJOHANN PRESENTS FINDINGS AT TWO CONFERENCES

These situations compromised all four of the core rights under the reproductive justice framework. In her presentations, Prof Fledderjohann illustrated the links between food insecurity and each of these rights in the figure below. Lines in black represent the relationships theorised in her original paper on this topic, while the red lines represent further thinking linking food insecurity to bodily autonomy. Prof Fledderjohann emphasised that, although the team did not ask specific questions about reproductive justice issues, participants regularly raised relevant concerns without prompting, reflecting how food is closely intertwined with everyday experiences in our reproductive lives. The presentations were well received, and the team is looking forward to developing this work further.



DR CHARUMITA VASUDEV PRESENTED AT THE AGRICULTURE NUTRITION AND HEALTH (ANH) CONFERENCE



Promoting Just Transitions through Equity

24-26 JUNE 2025

The 10th Annual Conference of Agriculture Nutrition and Health (ANH) was held in Hybrid mode from 24-26 June 2025. Dr Charumita Vasudev presented the team's joint paper titled " Food management in households and disruptive events: Lessons from Covid-19" in the oral session on 'Diets and nutrition in conflict, protracted and/or humanitarian contexts'.

Dr Vasudev discussed how households in India managed food insecurity during Covid-19. The paper focused on the coping strategies of migrant and non-migrant households in both rural and urban contexts to understand the factors that shaped resilience at the household level. We find that coping capacity during Covid-19 was dictated by existing vulnerabilities including structural access to entitlements and existing social capital. Where households routinely cope with seasonal livelihood stresses and consequent food insecurity, they are chronically operating very close to resilience threshold limits, and a crisis in such cases can quickly give way to undesirable adaptive strategies that further erode the capacity to cope with future shocks. We argue that Covid-era decisions, like accumulating debts, withdrawing children from school, selling assets, and delaying medical treatments, can impair the long-term future earning potential of households, stressing the need for inclusive, context specific and targeted social protection.

The plenary sessions were especially very engaging, dealing with the issue of ensuring just and sustainable transitions in our food systems. They emphasized that sustainability efforts risk deepening inequalities both within and across countries if justice and equity are not placed at their core - giving a call for knowledge intensive solutions that prioritize and strengthen local food systems.

