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How the poor responded to the increase in the price of food?: a case study of Pimville, Soweto

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Abstract

This research report provides a case study on how the poor have responded to the increase in the price of food since January 2008 in Pimville, Soweto, using a sample of forty households. The respondent's behavioural responses to the increases were either 'offensive' survival strategies such as food protests or 'defensive' household-level strategies such as trying to cope by reducing food intake. The report argues that the defensive strategies are unsustainable in the long-run as they lead to decreased nutrition levels, hunger, a drop in the standard of living, debt, increased burdens on women to maintain their households and intra-household conflict. These strategies have resulted in a sense of isolation, neglect, disillusionment and anxiety, which, compounded with weak community-based organisation, is contributing to social fragmentation and social unrest in the community. The report concludes that the issue of increasing food prices needs to be harnessed and channelled into inclusive community-level strategies through which the poor can empower themselves.