

What Causes Hunger in the Philippines?

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Abstract

Even though agricultural production continues to grow in the Philippines, hunger still remains a rampant problem in the society. The framework of hunger is nested within the larger framework of food insecurity. Food insecurity refers to the “condition characterized by the lack or absence of available, adequate, accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious foods that satisfy the dietary needs and food preferences of all people at all times for an active and healthy life.” The paper primarily aims to examine the occurrence and predictors of hunger using the Survey of Hunger Incidence in the Philippines (SHIP) conducted by the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics. Specifically, it aims to determine factors affecting hunger, to determine the extent of prevalence of hunger; and determine the knowledge of the citizens on government programs in alleviating hunger incidence in the country.

Key words: food insecurity, hunger incidence, factors of hunger

1. Background

Agricultural production, particularly for rice, has generally been increasing since 1999 (<http://countrystat.bas.gov.ph/>). Contrary to expectations, however, the Social Weather Station (SWS) surveys (<http://www.sws.org.ph>) indicate that hunger incidence have been increasing with an average of 14 percent of the population saying that they had experienced hunger. About 76 percent of them experienced moderate hunger and while 34 percent, severe hunger. Even so, the SWS survey on hunger incidence is only based on a few number of questions, hence, the government was unable to look into the factors that affect hunger.

Hunger can be classified according to SWS as moderate and severe. Severe hunger is experienced by those households that went hungry often and always while moderate hunger is experienced only once or a few times. In June 2006, the SWS recorded hunger incidence of 16.9 percent, of which 20 percent experience severe hunger. This prompted the Department of Agriculture to commission the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics to conduct the “Survey of Hunger in the Philippines (SHIP)” with a reference month of April to June 2006. The survey covered 78 provinces, two chartered cities (Zamboanga and Davao) and the National Capital Region.

2. Rationale and significance of the study

Food insecurity refers to the “condition characterized by the lack or absence of available, adequate, accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious foods that satisfy the dietary needs and food preferences of all people at all times for an active and healthy life.” (UNHR Factsheet #34, 2010). Hunger is a definitive example of food insecurity that should be

addressed to ensure a high quality of life for the citizens in the country. The study will examine the occurrence and predictors of hunger.

3. Results and Discussion

The survey recorded that about 70.6 percent of the respondents had a member of 15 years old and below (young dependents).

The average size of households nationwide is at 5.0 but this is higher for households with young dependents at 5.6 members.

Almost 80.0 percent of the household with young dependents are Class D and E households. Only 2.2 percent comprised the AB class.

About 15.0 percent of the respondents claimed to have experienced moderate hunger and 3.6 percent severe hunger. In comparison, 17.1 percent of those with young dependents in the family had experienced moderate hunger and 3.4 percent reported severe hunger.

The main cause of hunger was unaffordability of food prices although food items were available. This was reasoned out by 86.8 percent of the households who experienced hunger nationwide. About 7.9 percent cited unavailability of food coupled with their unaffordability to buy food. Some 2 to 4 percent mentioned food unavailability but can afford to buy and inaccessibility to source of food as their causes of hunger.

About 25 percent of the households were aware of government programs related to food supply and prices which were existing in their municipalities.

Feeding program and Tindahan ni Gloria and NFA Rolling Stores were the most popular programs with about 53 percent reporting.

The most recommended programs were related to lowering prices of basic commodities as cited by 30 percent.

Using logistic regression analysis, the factors considered in modelling hunger are: the highest educational attainment of the household; occupations of the household head; awareness of government programs related to food security; family income; and, household size

Results showed that the increase in income had the highest coefficient in lowering hunger incidence. Increase in the level of education of the household head also helps in ensuring that the household does not experience hunger

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main reasons for hunger are the low income and the unaffordability of food prices. Another is the low level of education of household heads who usually becomes laborers and unskilled workers and craft and traders.

To mitigate this situation, there is no other recourse than to advocate the education of the families in areas with high hunger incidence.

References:

Human Rights Fact Sheet No. 34 (2010), “The Right to Adequate Food”, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Right, 4

Acknowledgements:

Special thanks are given to the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics for allowing the author to use the data generated from their survey.

Table 1. Average household size by island grouping and socio-economic classification, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Socio-economic classification				Total
	AB	C	D	E	
Balance of Luzon	4.85	4.85	4.97	4.96	4.93
Visayas	5.26	5.19	4.90	5.24	5.06
Mindanao	5.52	5.09	5.05	4.97	5.04
National Capital Region	4.83	4.95	5.42	5.21	5.23
Total	4.93	4.97	5.07	5.09	5.05

Table 1a. Average household size with young dependents by island grouping and socio-economic classification, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Socio-economic classification				Total
	AB	C	D	E	
Balance of Luzon	5.91	5.42	5.64	5.62	5.59
Visayas	5.16	5.97	5.41	5.83	5.63
Mindanao	6.19	5.64	5.57	5.66	5.61
National Capital Region	5.23	6.02	5.66	5.81	5.73
Total	5.52	5.67	5.58	5.72	5.64

Table 2. Number of households by island grouping and socio-economic classification, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Socio-economic classification				Total
	AB	C	D	E	
Balance of Luzon	142,619	1,704,951	3,238,029	1,415,085	6,500,684
Visayas	42,003	760,864	1,753,650	932,018	3,488,536
Mindanao	37,391	565,291	1,937,966	1,075,832	3,616,480
National Capital Region	228,840	790,113	1,791,755	1,187,456	3,998,163
Total	450,853	3,821,218	8,721,400	4,610,392	17,603,863

Table 2a. Percentage distribution of households by island grouping and socio-economic classification, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Socio-economic classification				Total
	AB	C	D	E	
Balance of Luzon	0.81	9.69	18.39	8.04	36.93
Visayas	0.24	4.32	9.96	5.29	19.82
Mindanao	0.21	3.21	11.01	6.11	20.54
National Capital Region	1.30	4.49	10.18	6.75	22.71
Total	2.56	21.71	49.54	26.19	100.00

Table 2b. Number of households with young dependents by island grouping and socio-economic classification, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Socio-economic classification				Total
	AB	C	D	E	
Balance of Luzon	73,366	1,006,544	2,303,831	1,053,173	4,436,914
Visayas	11,501	434,544	1,305,808	731,696	2,483,548
Mindanao	28,340	384,121	1,413,565	818,479	2,644,504
National Capital Region	154,201	406,975	1,419,547	876,724	2,857,448
Total	267,408	2,232,183	6,442,750	3,480,071	12,422,414

Table 2c. Percentage distribution of households with young dependents by island grouping and socio-economic classification, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Socio-economic classification				Total
	AB	C	D	E	
Balance of Luzon	0.59	8.10	18.55	8.48	35.72
Visayas	0.09	3.50	10.51	5.89	19.99
Mindanao	0.23	3.09	11.38	6.59	21.29
National Capital Region	1.24	3.28	11.43	7.06	23.00
Total	2.15	17.97	51.86	28.01	100.00

Table 3. Number of households by island grouping and severity of hunger, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Severity of Hunger		Did not experience	Total
	Moderate	Severe		
Balance of Luzon	771,762	188,525	5,540,397	6,500,684
Visayas	441,783	117,536	2,929,216	3,488,536
Mindanao	656,573	102,402	2,857,505	3,616,480
National Capital Region	769,633	226,166	3,002,364	3,998,163
Total	2,639,751	634,630	14,329,482	17,603,863

Table 3a. Percentage distribution of households by island grouping and severity of hunger, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Severity of Hunger		Did not experience	Total
	Moderate	Severe		
Balance of Luzon	4.38	1.07	31.47	36.93
Visayas	2.51	0.67	16.64	19.82
Mindanao	3.73	0.58	16.23	20.54
National Capital Region	4.37	1.28	17.06	22.71
Total	15.00	3.61	81.40	100.00

Table 3b. Number of households with young dependents by island grouping and severity of hunger, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Severity of Hunger		Did not experience	Total
	Moderate	Severe		
Balance of Luzon	571,329	125,449	3,740,137	4,436,914
Visayas	367,575	87,725	2,028,247	2,483,548
Mindanao	507,425	76,672	2,060,408	2,644,504
National Capital Region	681,393	134,605	2,041,449	2,857,448
Total	2,127,722	424,450	9,870,241	12,422,414

Table 3c. Percentage distribution with young dependents by island grouping and severity of hunger, Philippines, April-June 2006

Island grouping	Severity of Hunger		Did not experience	Total
	Moderate	Severe		
Balance of Luzon	4.60	1.01	30.11	35.72
Visayas	2.96	0.71	16.33	19.99
Mindanao	4.08	0.62	16.59	21.29
National Capital Region	5.49	1.08	16.43	23.00
Total	17.13	3.42	79.46	100.00

Table 4. Regression Output

Multinomial logistic regression			Number of obs = 16409306			
			LR chi2(10) = 968178.35			
Log likelihood = -9130464.4			Prob > chi2 = 0.0000			
Pseudo R2 = 0.0503						
severity	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf.	Interval]
Moderate						
hh_size	0.299	0.001	325.340	0.000	0.297	0.301
g1_progra~01	0.001	0.002	0.560	0.576	-0.002	0.004
hh_head_occ	0.189	0.000	576.150	0.000	0.189	0.190
hh_head_ed~2	-0.128	0.000	-340.100	0.000	-0.128	-0.127
incgroup	-0.786	0.005	-166.720	0.000	-0.795	-0.776
_cons	1.575	0.028	55.540	0.000	1.519	1.630
Severe						
hh_size	0.121	0.002	69.720	0.000	0.118	0.125
g1_progra~01	-0.067	0.003	-22.540	0.000	-0.072	-0.061
hh_head_occ	0.237	0.001	351.130	0.000	0.236	0.239
hh_head_ed~2	-0.212	0.001	-276.810	0.000	-0.213	-0.210
incgroup	-1.392	0.005	-265.550	0.000	-1.402	-1.382
_cons	4.140	0.032	129.950	0.000	4.078	4.203

(severity==Not experienced hunger is the base outcome)