

CHAPTER 3:

GENERAL AND SOCIO-

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

IMPACTING ON DIETARY INTAKE,

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY

AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS

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Introduction

Since one of the principal objectives of this survey was to identify factors impacting on food consumption of children, it was deemed necessary to obtain as much information about the household in which children lived and the children's immediate environment as possible. In this regard, only key selected aspects of the socio-demographic questionnaire are outlined in this Chapter. For more detailed information on this and other aspects of the questionnaires and the other questions asked, the reader is referred to the appropriate Appendices of the report.

Methodology

A socio-demographic questionnaire (Appendix: Questionnaires) was developed and used to obtain information related to household food security and care of women and children. These factors have been presented in Chapter 1: Introduction (Figure 1.2) and were explained under the relevant sections therein.

The questions that were asked pertained primarily to:

- The child's gender, age, religion and ethnic group
- The relationship of the caregiver to the child
- The household composition (number of people/ages)
- The employment status of the mother and father
- The education level of the mother and father
- The household income
- The amount of money spent on food
- Person responsible for food preparation and service
- The person making decisions regarding food purchasing and services
- The physical appearance of the child
- The presence of disability in the child
- The type of housing
- The availability of water and sanitation facilities
- The source of fuel used for food preparation

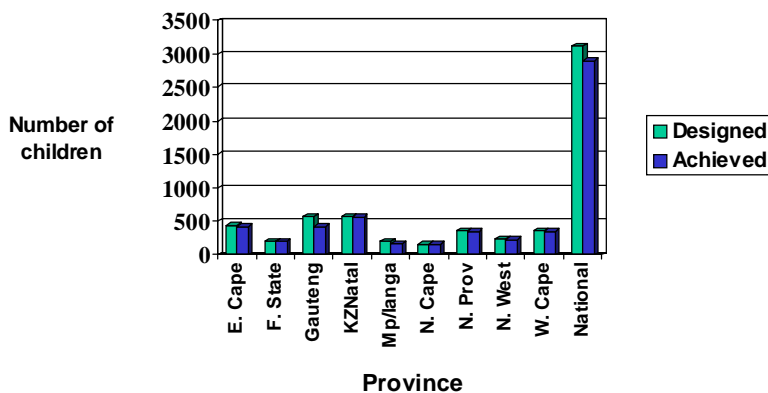
- The household food preparation and food storage equipment, and
- The type of communication media, e.g. TV and/or radio, available in the household and whether they were in working order.

Results

General

The fieldwork for the survey was completed between February and July 1999. Of the 3120 children that were originally designed to have been included in the survey, data was obtained for a total of 2894 children (Figure 3.1), which amounts to a 93% response.

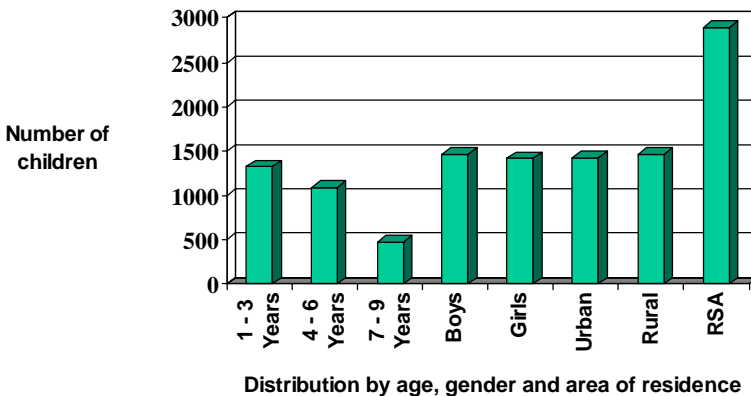
Figure 3.1 The total number of children in the survey by province: South Africa 1999



A fairly even distribution by gender and urban/rural area of residence was achieved in the survey sample (Figure 3.2). This was the case both at the national and provincial level (Tables 3.1 – 3.2). Regarding the age distribution of the children included in the survey, the highest number of children was in the 1 – 3 years age group ($n = 1320$), with the corresponding number of children for the 4 – 6 and 7 – 9 years groups being 1090 and 484 respectively (Figure 3.2). Furthermore, the smallest number of children represented in the survey lived on commercial farms and informal urban areas (Table 3.2). Additionally, there was a fairly favourable representation of households that were included in the survey according to home language, when compared

with similar data from the 1996 Census¹. Compared the Census data (brackets) the home language of 10.6% of the households was Afrikaans (14.4%), 4% English (8.6%), 6.4% N. Sotho (7.7%), 2% Ndebele (1.5%), 1.4% Swazi (2.5%), 11.8% Tswana (8.2%), 0.9% Venda (2.2%), 19.9% Xhosa (17.9%) and 23.5% Zulu (22.9%).

Figure 3.2 The total number of children in the survey by age, gender and area of residence: South Africa 1999



The information for the completion of the questionnaires was in the greatest majority of cases provided by the mother (63%) or a grandparent (21%) of the child and can therefore be considered reasonably reliable, within the specifications of the methodology employed (Figure 3.3). This was the case for children of all age groups, in all provinces and in all areas of residence (Tables 3.3 – 3.5). Similarly, in all provinces and in all areas of residence as well as for children of all age groups, the same majority of household members were responsible for feeding the child (Figure 3.4; Tables 3.6 – 3.8) for the preparation of food (Tables 3.9 – 3.11) for food purchasing (Tables 3.12 – 3.14) and for how much money was spent on food (Tables 3.15 – 3.17).

Figure 3.3 The percentage of household members that provided the information on the child for the survey: South Africa 1999

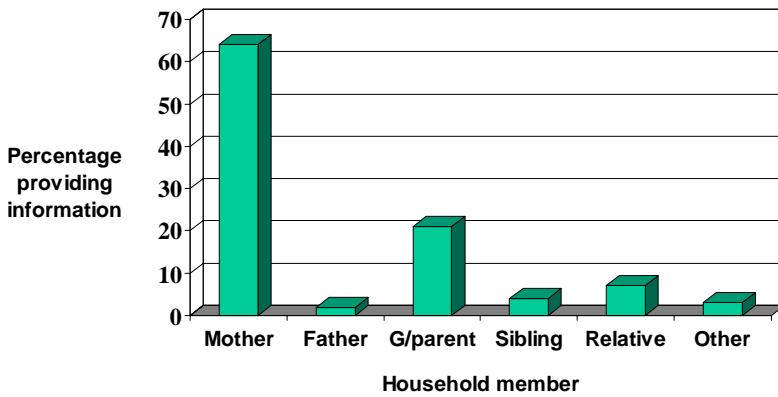
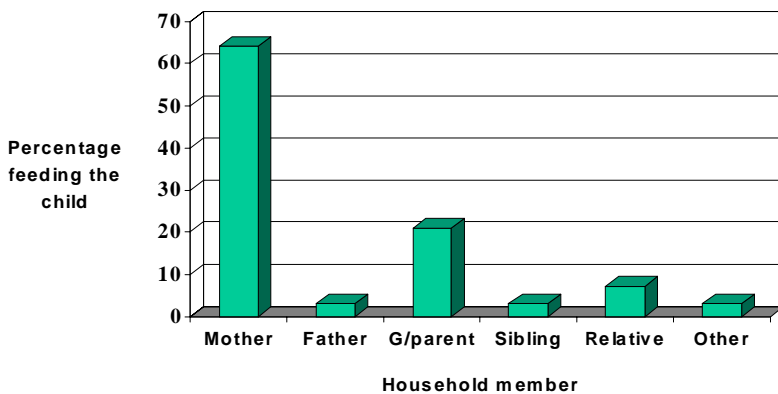


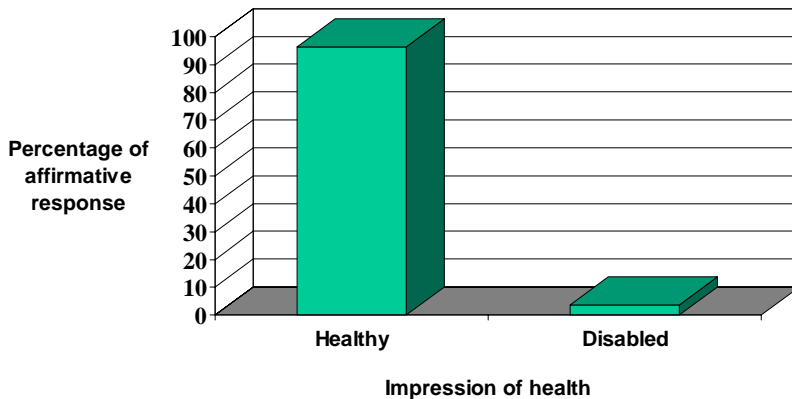
Figure 3.4 The percentage of HH members responsible for feeding the child: South Africa 1999



The fieldworkers' impression regarding the health appearance of the children was overwhelmingly positive (96%) for children of all age groups in all areas of residence, and in all provinces (Figure 3.5; Tables 3.18 – 3.20). Of the children that were considered not to look healthy, the most common reason given was that the child looked “thin, deficient or wasted” (Table 3.21).

Additionally, less than 2% of the children nationally were considered disabled with the most common disability given as “inability to walk”.

Figure 3.5 The fieldworker’s impression of the health of the children included in the survey: South Africa 1999



Sociodemographic

Marital status

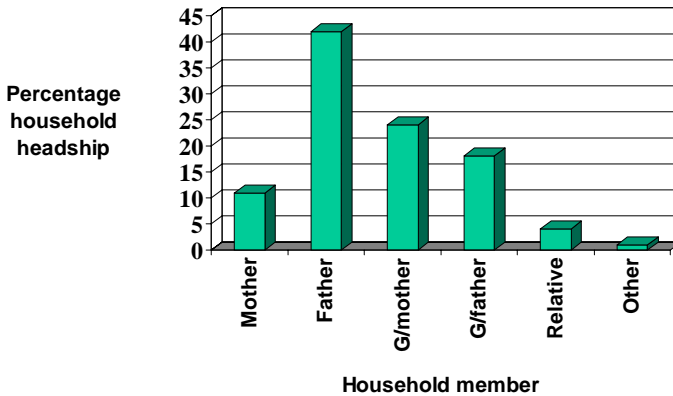
At the national level, approximately half of the mothers of the children included in the survey were married (Table 3.22). The mean percentage of married mothers of children living in rural, tribal and informal urban areas as well as those on commercial farms was overall lower than that of mothers living in formal urban areas. Moreover, a higher percentage of mothers of older children were married (Table 3.23). The Western Cape had the highest percentage of married mothers (60%) as opposed to the North West province where only 24 percent of the mothers were married (Table 3.24).

Household headship

Nationally, the father was the head of the household in 42% of the households (Table 3.25; Figure 3.6). In only 11% of the HHs was the mother the head and this tended to be more often the case in households in formal and informal urban areas. In the remainder of the households, grandparents, more commonly the grandmother, headed the household. The grandfather’s role as the head of the household decreased among older children (Table 3.26) and

in some provinces it was equally likely for either the father or the grandmother to be the head of the household (Table 3.27).

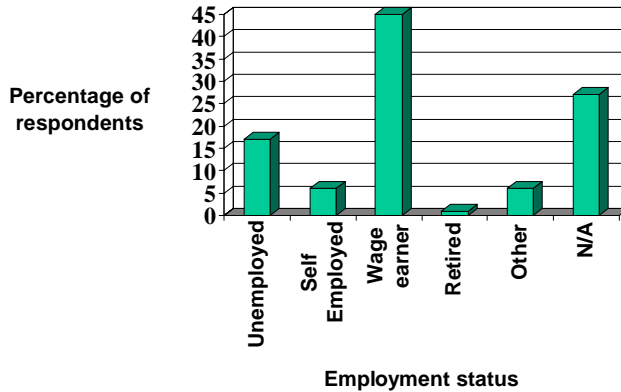
Figure 3.6 The distribution of the household headship: South Africa 1999



Employment

Nationally, in approximately half of the households the father was a wage earner (Table 3.28; Figure 3.7). In 17% of the households the father was unemployed. This was particularly so in rural, tribal and informal urban areas where one out of five households had an unemployed father. There was no difference in the mean percentage of unemployed fathers between the different age groups of children (Table 3.29). The Eastern Cape and KwaZulu/Natal had the highest percentage of unemployed fathers, whereas the lowest such percentage was recorded in the Free State (Table 3.30).

Figure 3.7 The employment status of the father in the household interviewed: South Africa 1999



One out of five mothers nationally was a wage earner of the household and one out of two was unemployed (Table 3.31; Figure 3.8). On average, 13% of the mothers were housewives by choice. This was the case for mothers of children of all age groups. In all provinces, except the North West and Western Cape, more than 50% of the mothers were unemployed (Table 3.33).

Level of education

One out of ten mothers of children of all age groups had no formal education. Three out of four mothers had attained a certain level of education, with 25% of mothers having had primary school, 27% high school and 8% tertiary level education (Figure 3.9; Tables 3.34 – 3.35). The provinces with the highest percentage of mothers who had no formal education included the Northern Cape (23%), Mpumalanga (16%), Northern Province (13%), whereas the Western Cape had the lowest percentage of uneducated mothers (3%), (Table 3.36). A similar picture emerged for the education level of the caregivers of the children in the survey, except that they overall achieved a lower education status and a higher percentage of them were uneducated (Tables 3.37 – 3.39). However, the attained level of education was unknown in approximately one third of the caregivers.

Figure 3.8 The employment status of the mother in the household interviewed: South Africa 1999

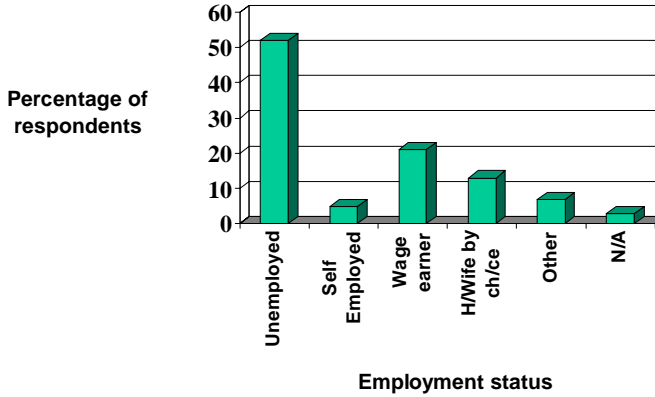
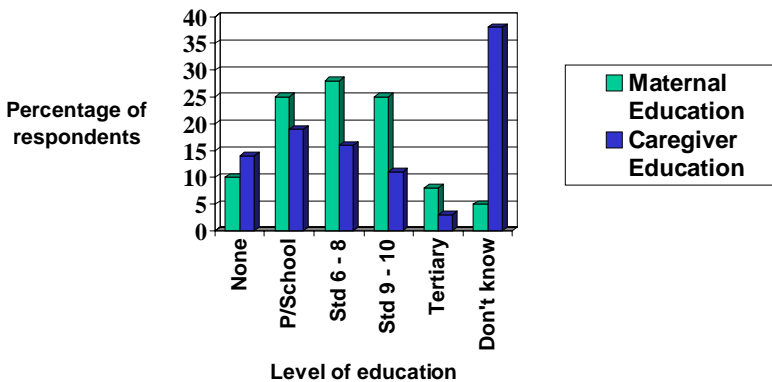


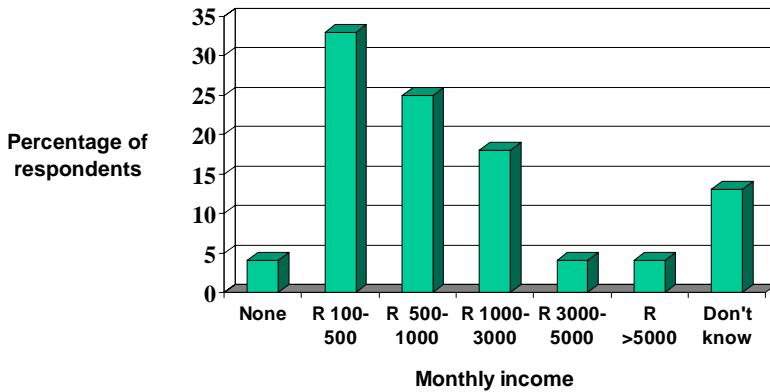
Figure 3.9 The percentage of mothers and caregivers with various levels of education: South Africa 1999



Household income and expenditure on food

Nationally, one third of the households in the survey had a monthly income of between R 100,00 – R 500,00 (Figure 3.10; Table 3.40). This income range was characteristic of households in rural, tribal and informal urban areas as well as of households on commercial farms.

Figure 3.10 Percentage of households as a function of monthly income: South Africa 1999



Only 4% of the households reported a monthly income range respectively of R 3 000,00 – R 5 000,00 or greater than R 5 000,00, with approximately one out of two households having an income range of between R 500,00 – R 3 000,00. This pattern of income range was the same for households with children of all the age groups in the survey (Table 3.41). The provinces with greater than 30% of households that reported an income in the lowest range included the Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu/Natal, Northern Cape and the North West Province (Table 3.42). In 61% of the households the reported income was earned by one household member only, and, in one third of the households the income was earned by two household members, a pattern that varied across the provinces (Tables 3.43- 3.45). In over 90% of the households the reported income was said to be the usual household income. Furthermore, the income reported had been more or less the same in the six months preceding the interview.

One out of four and one out of five households at the national level spent respectively between R 0,00 – R 50,00 and R 50,00 - R 100,00 on food weekly. Another 20% of households spent between R 100,00 - R 200,00 for the same purpose (Table 3.46). This pattern of expenditure on food purchase

did not vary significantly among households with children of different age groups in the survey (Table 3.47). Provincially, 5% – 41% of households spent less than R 50,00 on food weekly (Table 3.48).

Type of residence

Nationally, 67% of the survey population, irrespective of age, lived in a dwelling constructed with bricks or cement and the remainder lived in traditional dwellings or dwellings made of tin, plank/wood or other material (Tables 3.49 – 3.51). The lowest percentage of children living in dwellings constructed with bricks or concrete was found in informal urban areas (Table 3.49) and in the Eastern Cape (Table 3.52). There were, on average, 3.3 rooms per house with houses in tribal areas and houses on commercial farmhouses having the largest (3.7 rooms) and lowest (2.3 rooms) number of rooms respectively (Table 3.53). The mean number of household members who slept in the house for at least 4 nights a week was 6.2, the highest such number (6.9 members) being found in tribal areas and the lowest (5.2 members) in commercial farm households. Household members were, overall, equally distributed between the ages of younger or older than 18 years of age (Table 3.53). This pattern was not influenced by the age of the survey population (Table 3.54). Provincially, the most densely populated households (>6 members per house) were found in KwaZulu/Natal, the North West Province, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, whereas the smallest houses were found in the Northern Cape (2.3 rooms per house) (Table 3.55). Percentage-wise, children in rural and tribal areas as well as on commercial farms lived in more densely populated houses as compared with children living in urban areas (Tables 3.56 – 3.58).

Water supply and sanitation

Just below 60% (57%) of households nationally obtained their water from an own tap, whereas 28% of households obtained their water from a communal tap (Table 3.59). The remainder of the households in the survey obtained their water either from a river/dam or borehole/well or other sources. Communal taps were by far the most common in informal urban areas. The source of water did not differ by age (Table 3.60). The two provinces with the highest

percentage of households obtaining their water from a river/dam were the Eastern Cape (38%) and KwaZulu/Natal (21%), (Table 3.61). More than 30% of households receiving their water from a communal tap were located in the Eastern Cape (32%), the Free State (30%), the Northern Province (50%) and the North West Province (36%).

Only 42% of households nationally had a flush toilet in the house, whereas 43% had a pit toilet and the remainder used either a bucket/pot or VIP or other means (Table 3.62). Households in tribal areas had the lowest percentage with flush toilets. This pattern was age independent (Table 3.63). Pit toilets were very common in rural areas (Table 3.62) as well as in the North West Province (71%), the Northern Province (68%), Mpumalanga (67%) and KwaZulu/Natal (55%), (Table 3.64).

Household appliances

Nearly one out of two households (45%) used electricity for cooking, with paraffin being the second most commonly used fuel (Table 3.65 – 3.66). Wood/coal and an open fire were the other main fuels used for cooking (Figure 3.11). Tribal areas had the lowest percentage (18%) of households with electricity followed by rural and informal urban areas. Provincially, the Eastern Cape, Free State, Northern Province and North West had the lowest percentage of households with an electricity supply (Table 3.67).

Figure 3.11 Percentage distribution of the type of fuel used for cooking : South Africa 1999



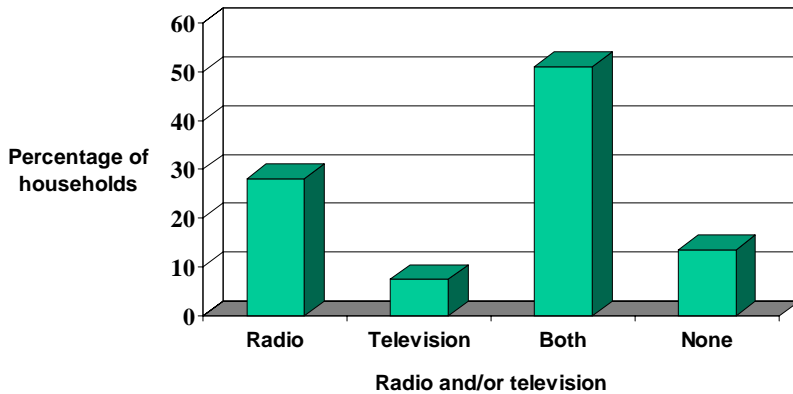
Almost half (48%) of the households in the country did not have a working fridge or refrigerator (Table 3.68), with households in the rural areas having the highest percentage of such households (66%). The two provinces with the lowest percentage of households that did not have such appliances were the Western Cape (21%) and Mpumalanga (29%), (Table 3.69). Approximately half (53%) of the households had a working electric stove for cooking, a percentage that was lowest (29%) in the households of tribal areas. One out of ten households had a microwave oven, with the Western Cape having the highest percentage (36%) of such households. One out of five households had a working hot plate, an appliance that was more commonly used in the Free State (28% of households), Gauteng (30%), Mpumalanga (24%) and the Northern Province (25%).

Television and radio

One out of two households (51%) had both a radio and a television set in working order, with the radio being the most common means (79%) of receiving information (Table 3.70; Figure 3.12). A larger percentage of households in rural (39%) and tribal (42%) areas had a radio as compared with households in the urban areas (17%). This was the case irrespective of age (Table 3.71), and particularly so for households in the Eastern Cape

(36%), the Free State (36%), KwaZulu/Natal (35%), Northern Province (37%) and the North West (29%).

Figure 3.12 Percentage of households with a television and /or a radio in working order : South Africa 1999



Discussion

As expected, on the basis of the sampling strategy employed, the number of children studied varied among provinces. Nevertheless, children of all the age groups selected are well represented in the study sample with the exception of the 7 – 9 year old children, the number of which was considerably smaller than expected. This may be due either to a consistent sampling error or alternatively to children in this age group having been replaced as they were more likely to have been at school at the time of the interview. The total number of children in the defined age groups of the survey does not vary significantly according to the data of the 1996 Census¹.

All provinces met their target number of children except Mpumalanga and Gauteng. The prime reason for these two provinces not reaching their target was the prevailing conditions of violence in the country at the time of the fieldwork and the proximity of the fieldwork period to the forthcoming national elections at the time. Additionally, in the case of Mpumalanga, the apparent

lack of fieldworkers compounded the problem to the extent that trained fieldworkers had to be imported from the Northern Province and Western Cape after they had completed the fieldwork in their respective Provinces in order to implement the fieldwork in that Province. Violence as a whole was also one of the main constraints for the whole survey, which led to a very significant over-expenditure and was the prime reason for having had to replace 13% of the originally designated EAs by the CSS for the survey.

The response achieved from the interviewees in this survey is a tribute to the interest of the parents in their children. It is also certainly an equal tribute to the admirable commitment of all role players in the survey, despite the immense cash flow problems that were encountered during the implementation of the fieldwork as well as the prevailing violence in the country. The response achieved certainly would indicate that the survey data are representative of the population studied.

The socioeconomic parameters determined in the present survey indicate that approximately one out of five households had a father who was unemployed, one out of five households had a mother who was the wage earner, one out of ten mothers had no formal education, one third of the households had a monthly income of between R 100,00 and R 500,00, six out of ten households had their own tap water, four out of ten households had a flush toilet, one out of two households had electricity, and one out of two households had both a working radio and a television set. Within the framework of the known limitations regarding comparisons of different studies, some of these socioeconomic parameters show a marked improvement when compared with those of the SAVACG² and SALDRU³ surveys in 1995 and 1994 respectively. Specifically, in the case of the former survey, for instance, two thirds of children lived in homes without electricity, and one third did not have access to own tap water. Furthermore, it must be clearly pointed out that the present survey placed special emphasis on the high risks segments of the population, and thus the ones likely to have a lower socioeconomic status. Unemployment, however, would appear to be at an unacceptably high level

and, if continued, is likely to impact adversely on the nutritional status of children.

In summary, a very significant percentage of the country's population still lives under adverse socioeconomic conditions. Although a trend towards an improvement in some of these conditions appears to be taking place, it is only the long-term socioeconomic upliftment of the population in conjunction with the government's Integrated Nutrition Policy⁴ that is likely to ensure the improvement of the nutritional status of the community at large.

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