



FACT COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

UNPACKING THE RIGHT TO FOOD REPORT

Bonang Libuke

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for Economic Cooperation
and Development

(TMG)
ThinkTankforSustainability
Töpfer Müller Gaßner

 **FACT**
Food Agency Cape Town



Facts about FACT

FACT, Food Agency Cape Town (FACT) is a community led research organisation which emerged from different co-research activities in 2016, its members use food to unpack food injustices, to advocate for food agency, food security and people's right to food in Cape Town and its surrounds. Members include urban farmers, community kitchen heads, academics, artists and co-researchers. Many of whom have played an important co-research role in food security studies and other outputs.

FACT partners with TMG's (Berlin-based Thinktank) in its Urban Food Futures programme, along with other organisations and academic researchers. The Urban Food Futures is a programme that aims to fundamentally rethink urban food systems with a view of identifying, testing, and adapting concrete solutions for liveable futures in African cities. FACT's role in this partnership is to carry-out research projects of the Urban Food Futures.

Social Change Assistance Trust, SCAT is a South African based grantmaker that supports community-based initiatives and projects focused on social justice, human rights, and sustainable development in rural areas. SCAT has partnered with FACT to financially support and capacitate FACT to carry out and complete the URBAN FOOD FUTURES program.

Since 2020, these partnerships have achieved the production of formal and informal research outputs, as well as compiled research outputs, namely:

- Agency in South Africa's food systems (book)
- Fresh Offerings (poetry book)
- Pathways to Transform Urban Food Systems (book)
- Cooking up feminism (documentary)
- A pot of pap (porridge) at the end of the rainbow (Theatre of the oppressed play)
- Scoping phase report
- FACT dialogue digest

The partnerships have also:

- Realised the formation of a community kitchen network.
- Integrated food-sensitive planning and urban design into urban governance actions.

Disclaimer: This report solely reflects the view of the author and FACT. This report is produced as part of the Urban Food Futures work with TMG Research.

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HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY RIGHT TO FOOD IS?
HOW DO I EVEN START TO CLAIM IT AND HOW
DO I EVEN START TO CONVERSE WITH IT?

— NOMONDE BUTHELEZI,
(FACT)

MOTIVATION OF THE DIALOGUES

Post-Covid, the question at hand was how the communities in which FACT engages understood and participated with the agency to understand their right to food. The position of the facilitation was to unpack the constitutional right to food, how the constitution stipulates the right and the guidelines to how right holders can engage, understand, and exercise this right.

The FACT food dialogues underpin the facilitation of a principled and collaborative dialogue (process) between community members (inclusive of FACT) that are aimed at identifying key challenges, opportunities, priorities as well as action plans for more democratic and localised food systems. These dialogues build on FACT's vision from its previous Agency study and form a part of Pathway 2 of the Urban Food Futures report. This pathway titled mutual accountability seeks to progressively realise the right to food through collaborative decision-making processes that aim at holding role-players accountable to the process. It aims to enhance accountability by empowering role players to be participants in food governance decision-making processes instead of passive recipients.

This round of dialogues sought to address the right to food. FACT participated in training on the conceptual framework of the right to food which served to support the anchoring of a right-based approach that will introduce means of implementing and monitoring tools that will strengthen the work of mutual accountability. Furthermore, it would also empower the engaged communities to be conscious of their right to food and the necessary tools needed to engage this right, alongside identifying right holders and duty bearers.

Rights are about the individual, and how the individual can engage the state to uphold the rights. It is the case that the right to food challenges the state to consider how its citizens, without discrimination, have access to sufficient, nutritious food. It requires the state to have legislative and alternative measures to realise this right within the availability of the state's resources and dignity.

Along with the right to food in the constitution of South Africa, the state has also tied itself to other international agreements that force the state to see that its people have access to adequate food. The state's role is to ensure no obstacle between individuals and their agency to access adequate food and should proactively seek other means to strengthen this right.

Another aim of the dialogues was looking to see how role players exercise and engage mutual accountability with the idea of unpacking guidelines that speak to the possibilities of practicing a kind of collective agency that is corrective and binding by mapping role players' responsibilities. The dialogue process suggests that mutual accountability as a process needs to enable communication between role players (state and communities). Furthermore, this process is meant to consider representation of role players and the use of a language that allows all to exercise their rights to literacy, this also supporting their needs in articulating their respective voices as well as to report to communities the findings of the scoping phase and the results of the August 2023 food insecurity survey.

A participating community member shared that: *"I feel that the language that the right to food is stipulated in the constitution is an evasive kind that does not include tangible language that a citizen can point at to hold its government accountable to upholding this right."* [translated from IsiXhosa].

The vision for these dialogues was to understand how communities have since, post Covid participated in their access to food and the limitations found in exercising the right to food.



OBJECTIVES OF REPORT AND FOOD DIALOGUES

The objectives of this round of dialogues for FACT were multifaceted and far-reaching.

To facilitate a principled and collaborative dialogue between community members and stakeholders to understand and exercise their right to food, as enshrined in the South African constitution.

The dialogues sought to

- unpack the constitutional right to food
- explore how it is stipulated in the Constitution
- develop guidelines for the realisation of the right, and
- determine the roles and responsibilities of right holders and duty bearers.

This involved analysing the constitutional framework, international agreements, and existing legislation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the right to food. Furthermore, the dialogues aimed to identify key challenges and opportunities in realizing the right to food, particularly in the post-Covid context, and to develop action plans for more democratic and localised food systems.

The dialogues also sought to empower communities to claim their right to food, promoting awareness of the necessary tools and mechanisms for engagement, and identifying strategies to address obstacles and limitations. Additionally, the dialogues also sought to promote mutual accountability, holding duty bearers for realizing the right to food, and exploring guidelines for practicing collective agency, mapping role players responsibilities, and enabling communication between stakeholders.

This included examining the representation of role players, the use of accessible language, and the importance of literacy in exercising the right to food.

These objectives support the vision to strengthen the collective agency of communities and stakeholders in ensuring access to sufficient, nutritious food, and to inform policies and practices that uphold the right to food, in line with South Africa's constitutional and international obligations. While ensuring that the right to food is realised in a manner that is equitable, sustainable and dignifying.

The successful realisation of the right to food requires a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between food insecurity, social justice, and human dignity. By facilitating inclusive and participatory dialogues, FACT aims to create a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, and for communities to reclaim their agency in shaping their own food systems.

Through this process, we envision the emergence of transformative solutions that prioritize social justice, social cohesion, sustainability, and contribute to more equitable and food-secure futures.

THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The right to food in South Africa is embedded in the constitution, in Section 27 (1) (b).

The right to food is a human right recognised under international and national law, which protects the right of people to access food and feed themselves. Food can be accessed via production or by purchase.³ The right to food is intrinsically linked to one's right to life and dignity and requires that food be available, accessible, appropriate and adequate for everyone without discrimination.

It is important to understand that the full realisation of the right to food must encompass not just access to food, but should begin with sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices, must ensure peoples' access to sufficient nutritious food and that access to food must be sustained, particularly for people living in poverty, children and other vulnerable groups.

The realisation of the right to food is dependent on the realisation of associated rights such as water, land and social security, and is an enabling right for other additional rights such as the right to health, education and affects people's potential or capabilities. It is essential that people have access to nutritious food to ensure that their individual or household right to food is realised. The South African constitution states:

"Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water." This obligation is extended in section 27(2) according to which "the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights." According to the section 35(2)(e) of the constitution, prisoners and detainees also have a right to sufficient food, and section 28(1)(a) states that every child has the right to "basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services."

Furthermore, it states:

- a. Respect: for existing access to adequate food. Government cannot take any measures that result in the prevention of such access
- b. Protect: requires measures by government to ensure that no one deprives others of their access to adequate food
- c. Fulfil: means that government must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people's access to resources that can be used in securing their right to food. If anyone is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food, government must directly provide access to that right.



Hunger is a
SILENT EPIDEMIC.
Let's end hunger.

ACCESS FOR ALL
to Nutritious and
Healthy Food.

PURE AND GENUINE RELIGION
IN THE SIGHT OF
GOD THE FATHER
MEANS CARING
ORPHANS AND WIDOWS
IN THEIR DISTRESS
REFUSING TO LET
G. CORRUPT YOU
1V 27

**REALISING THE
RIGHT TO FOOD**

#Zerohunger

#Potsandpens

#Righttofood

FOOD DIALOGUES: LET'S TALK ABOUT THE RIGHT TO FOOD:

Mitchell's plain, Seed

14 AUGUST 20, 2023: 09:00-12:30
& 19TH OCTOBER, 2023.

Discussions

This session led by Vuyani Qamata kicked off with community members urging for the implementation of findings by research papers. Community members said they were tired of researchers coming into their communities with questions they feel dig into their lives only for those researchers to be the main beneficiaries of the knowledge cultivated from the research.

Community members further argued that even in the case that research findings are published and made widely accessible, they find themselves still being unable to engage with the said findings because of language barriers. It was suggested that FACT, being a co-research-based organisation, needs to find itself collaborating with research implementation organisations. This connected the conversation to the introduction of new terms by FACT, namely **"duty bearers and right holders."**

These terms suggest in the response to crises, there is one obligated to respond in duty to right holders, however it is a responsibility for the right holders to hold these duty bearers accountable too. Suggesting a mutual accountability relationship, with significant emphasis on engaging right holders in conversations with duty bearers.

Participants felt that FACT's engagement with Mitchell's plain as a sample region was not enough. Asking "what is the next step for Mitchell's plain". They urged that they are in a haste need for their members to exercise their agency in the food system. Concerns were also that since the last time a research study was conducted by FACT in 2020, community members feared that the findings on that study may no longer be relevant to the communities' current circumstances which led to a call that FACT provides a delivery plan and a timeline thereof so they can know when action begins and are prepared to position themselves.

Due to the changes that community members felt had happened between the last study, they suggested that the sample region increases as the area is quite big. Other conversations that rose were the talk of division by racial identity. A participant felt that the constant highlighting of race in identifying role players could still be one of the things further dividing people and feeding into non-participation. While another responded to that view by arguing that being oblivious to race in role playing means turning a blind eye to South Africa's history, a history still unfolding more than it is finished. This participant further argued that because this history still finds itself unfolding, the time between unlearning old ways of leadership and realizing new methods of leadership is even longer and far-fetched.

The session ended with agreements on mutual accountability and collective agency highlighted as the essential recipe for achieving a society that responds timeously and dutifully to crises.

In the commencement of dialogue, Mitchells Plain found itself struggling with an audience. People are busy and have their lives to attend to alongside trying to be change agents.

Mitchell's Plain

15TH MAY 2024: 10:00 – 14:00

Discussions

The last round of dialogues wraps up in Mitchells plain, a morning in a colored-Muslim community. It is a 14-year-old community, fairly new for the other communities we dialogue with. Mr. V. ice-broke this session with conversations about food from a farmer's perspective, who and what FACT is, with Aqeela responding to some of the questions about the kind of work FACT does. The community present was a mixture of upper middle-aged people, the elderly and a few youth.

The session began with a co-analysis of the right to food poster. We paused to look at how people understood the word **access** to food. The responses were that people understood the word meant an openness and the convenient and easy availability to food. They supplemented their understanding with a comparison of a situation that occurred in their community during the COVID-19 pandemic, where only a few selected people were eligible to receive food parcels. Saying that was an example of inaccessibility. They further elaborated that inflation and its cause of high food prices meaning that affordability is not for everyone was another form of inaccessibility.

While on the talks of inaccessibility, community members mentioned that they felt that the state conducted inadequate inspections of inflation and food pricing. Saying that they believe retailers, public and private do not abide by regulations of food subsidies. They also mentioned that they felt an everlasting symptom of inflation is that once food-related pricing has risen, it never decreases. Even when economic statuses allow for a decrease. Saying the price of a bread, an item meant to be legislatively subsidized, for the past 7 years has not decreased and that the cheaper bread alternatives are either small, therefore not filling and not feeding a family or "low quality". Or many times, both.

We co-analysed the poster further and spoke of the ways in which the community felt the government was protecting, fulfilling, and respecting their right to food. The response was that they felt that neither facet of their right was being responded to. Responding that communities are hungry, and the plight continues to grow, and government intervention is very little. While on this track of government intervention, one community member elaborated and said they felt at some point state intervention becomes an obstacle as it makes communities depended on handouts and reduces the ambitions of becoming self-sustainable. She also shared that she believes that community integrity can be restored and rebuild through communities being self-sustainable.

We took a 10-minute breather before co-analysing the August 2023 study factsheet. Upon handing out the sheet, a first case observation happened. People were willingly reading the sheet without a prompt to do so from one of our facilitators. As we co-analysed the sheet together, a note of a high literacy rate came through immediately. From the eldest person in the room to the youngest.

We asked what it was that community resonated from the sheet. The first response was that they resonated with a high participation rate from women in the survey. Saying that an immediate depiction of that truth was that the ratio of men present at the dialogue was 3:17 women. Some members said they resonated with the average household income. Some refuting saying that it only accumulates to an amount close R 6 294.76 when all the income of employed persons in the household is combined. This track of the conversation saw statements saying that the pressure of some households is that even when there a multiple people working in the home, it is only one person's (household head) income who tends to the needs of the household. This being tough as some of the household heads present were pensioners relying on their pensioners grant as an income. Another confirmation of resonance was the statistic of 65% of households relying on less preferred and less expensive food as a coping strategy.

The community shared back that they did not agree with the statistic of only 15% of the sample data being severely food insecure. Sharing that they actively live with people who are not food secure, this including themselves.

Looking at the last segment of the factsheet. Looking at education. The disagreement there was that less people had their NSC or had graduated from high school. A point rose from one community member saying that she believes the education sector should make more spaces for skills development programs for the part of the population that fails at theoretic teachings or with pursuing tertiary education at a theoretical level. She also added that information on educational opportunities does not reach the communities they live in. We tied the closing conversation to the present- absence of men in their communities. We asked the first response to come from women as they continue to carry the brunt of absent men. An elder shared that the issue is that our communities we live in only have transactional relationships with men. Sharing that men are only present for financial transactions and procreation transactions then disappear thereafter. The only differently abled male present also shared that with his experience, he cannot practice presence as a male figure properly as he lives life always needing aid from his partner. Since the incident that saw him have to lose his legs, he also has not been able to be a provider for his household relying only on his disability grant as an income he brings to the home. To close the conversation the community members agreed that the societies we reside in continue to swallow and spit out men into negative behaviors further perpetuating male absence from their communities. An example was brought up. A middle-aged woman sharing the experience of losing her son to gangsterism.

Khayelitsha, Masakhane library

**16 AUGUST 20, 2023: 10:00-13:00
& 12TH OCTOBER, 2023.**

Discussions

Khayelitsha was blessed with creative youth engagement. Many of the sessions do not have this luxury. FACT finds itself dealing and engaging with a much older age group. One of the many goals FACT has, is to see regular intergenerational conversations happen in the spaces they hold for its communities.

The youth did not hesitate to ask what the ways they could find themselves regularly involved in this conversation were, furthermore, they expressed hopes of strengthening their participation on a long-term basis. One youth member stressed that one of the main reasons there is such a lag of youth involvement is the lack of the inclusion of art as a medium of translation and expression in research findings. This youth further expressed a need to create new knowledge systems that are in tune with the current world but are also art centered.

The argument here was that one of the ways known to best get youths attention was through creativity and innovation. The youth also said that the divide between intergenerational conversation is not only language and a different time zone but also thinking methods.

The room was filled with different kinds of livelihoods fostered by townships. There were garden owners, who often find themselves shying away from using the term urban farmers because they believe a more accurate identifying of a farmer is if they are large scale (commercial) farmers. These garden owners said, a lack of indigenous knowledge makes the process of them tending to their produce as due very difficult. They also complained that they find the information being distributed by commercial farmers about produce-tending to be conflicting. One garden owner then asked the question of whether produce that has been eaten by common insects or snails still counts as healthy and edible. There was a wide confirmation that produce eaten by common pests should illude that the produce is healthy enough. These garden owners also cried about not having seeds needed to maintain the status of garden owing. They said seed banking was a difficult practice to keep up, as they are either between having only so many seeds and planting them.

The introduction of the conversation of the right to food kicked off and from the response in the room one could note that the general public's understanding of "a right to food", is not what is necessarily stipulated in the constitution. This meant diligently unpacking the "right to food" poster. The poster says the constitution says each citizen, this including offenders, has the right to food. This, however, does not mean the government has to give citizens food, nor does it mean citizens can unlawfully acquire food. Instead, what it means is that the government of this country has a duty of ensuring that it puts in place rules and lawful regulations in place that allow citizens of all kinds of backgrounds to access food. Community members then argued that they have never felt that they have real tangible access to the kinds of food they want to eat, compared to what they must eat, mostly because of food pricing. They also said the current recession and the impact of covid has worsened the case. Thus, feeling their government not upholding its duty.

The participants further argued that language and its fancies not only cause understanding barriers but are also loopholes for duty bearers to in fact not carry forth their duties.

In the commencement of dialogue, Khayelitsha directed the conversation towards language barriers. Community members feel the language used in the stipulation of their right to food is evasive. There were also feelings that the language used is purposely written in diction not for the masses but for the professionals. They continued to air that because the language used is jargon, it refused them the ability to contextualize and understand the implications of the things stated about their right to food to the detail. They felt the supporting of shared knowledge systems requires the use of simple language, and if not simple language but other translations of information.

Mfuleni, eSmarties

**17TH AUGUST 28, 2023: 13:00-17:00
& 11TH OCTOBER 2023.**

Discussions

Emfuleni's dialogue was thick with landless farmer participation. In this session the farmers mentioned that they find themselves being unable to be instrumental in fighting food insecurity because in their personal capacity, they are also food insecure citizens. Which means they are almost subject to a reality of having to navigate two kinds of "non-existing" agencies. One being an average citizen subject to general obstacles to practicing agency in adequate access to food and another as an unseen farmer because they exist as small-scale farmers. They expressed further concerns with the incoherent structures they are in, as they do not have any real access to formal markets and exchanges which isolates them further. This part of the conversation was concluded with the farmers admitting that as role players, they cannot possibly alleviate food poverty.

It was then said that in the times they have found themselves trying to be active right holders (which is to be practicing farmers) the official structures that they must go through to exercise this, are not clear. Nor do they offer enough assistance to direct them to the responsible departments. They also cannot lean on things like policies to be of assistance because departments and their respective policies are conflicting. Furthermore, the language barriers used in these policies, do not allow comprehensive understanding. Farmers are looking for officials to hold accountable so they can formulate a way forward to a future that offers more prosperity to farmers and officials.

The room collectively came across an isiXhosa term "Ixanduva" meaning obligation in English, while engaging with the right to food poster. Collectively, the farmers agreed that the officials of the city have an obligation to establish what kind of resources they need to provide farmers with to help them become primary players in assisting alleviate food insecurity. As in turn they would also end up being farmers who are able to access markets, in turn accessing a livelihood.

In this session, emotions were at the core of the conversation. It was said that emotions involved with community members included jealousy. This jealousy has been the highlight of what has been keeping networks apart. The room agreed that networks of assistance thrive on unity and collaboration. The important point here was that the need for communities to be able to mobilize and speak in unity, or practice collective agency, these harsh emotions of jealousy, shame and others must be addressed first. A factor then reinforced

that one of the ways that FACT is assisting in this element is with the community dialogues it hosts because research is not just statistics but people's emotions too. Personal reflections suggested that crime like theft and violence even happens in the name of these emotions.

In the continuation of dialogue, Mfuleni saw an age-shift in the present audience as it consisted mostly of youth. Community members confessed that they eat what they can afford. The conversation unpacked the geography of food systems in relation to the actual geography of S.A. The observation by community members was that low-income areas are likely to be centered around supposed "affordable retailers" but the reality of cheap food pricing is that the quality of the food is not up to standard. While higher-income communities are situated around better retailers, therefore suggesting access to better, healthier food, this not coming cheaply of course, but affordable to the areas they exist in.

The conclusion was that retailers know who it is they are selling to, and it is unfortunate that people continue to be devalued. It was also said that low-income community members find themselves having to travel out community to access healthy food. Another limb of the conversation was government aid having the same devaluing principles. Government' gives out spoiled, poorly nourished food parcels to the same low-income communities. This suggesting that the constitutional right to food is not being honored.

Uphakanini community kitchen, Mfuleni

10TH APRIL 2024: 12:00-16:00

Discussions

An afternoon that began with the regular Cape Town wind bugging the sites of a township that is Mfuleni. We had a few community members pioneer the situations to gather and discuss the plights of their community. Amongst themselves, already the conversation was about food. Present was enumerators from the August 2023 study. Mama Haze's conversations have always been about child nutrition and bridging the gap thereof. The people present seemed agitated, immediately they were talking of how hungry they already are and could not wait for the session to end so they are served a meal. Nonetheless we continued and began the session. The Mfuleni Fact sheet from the August 2023 was what we jumped right into. Immediately concerns of literacy rates rose. I waived and explained as best as possible, with Mimi and Nomonde assisting where I could not bridge the language barriers. When we asked for feedback, like the previous dialogue in Gugulethu, instantly, the average household income was disputed.

The community [present share that the income they receive, wherever from does not even amount to R 2000. When the question posed why this was, they responded by sharing that as uneducated unemployed people, it is difficult for them to gather any form of income for their livelihoods. Sharing that their only form of guaranteed income is social grants.

The room was tense, filled with a lot of hesitancy, a kind that lived through the entire session. Noting this, we asked the present enumerators to step in and aid with an experience of what it was like to go home to home asking people questions that may have otherwise been invasive to their living situations. Nozi, an enumerator shared that in most homes, present were women and a few kids who did not seem to be in school. She shared that it was almost difficult for them to be welcomed, they could neither be offered, water nor any other form of hospitality as in many homes, there was no kind of food. With mothers spending a day trying to figure out what would be had as food. She also shared that in some situations she could sense when dishonesty or an omission of the actual situation happened. The subject of what people are eating is invasive, filled with shame and stigma, even when it is a conversation happening between members of the same community she added.

People's hunger is not a state of appearance, she added that she walked into homes that seemed well off, however with COVID19, a phenomenon that changed many people's lives. Things had changed, almost setting people's lives to a "back to square one" situation. She also shared the emotional tension within her as an enumerator, that in many cases she had to hold back an emotional state and/or tears.

We broke for a body break. It was during this break a young lady shared that she just arrived from a long walk from Home Affairs, claiming that in her adulthood she is still trying to get a birth certificated. She claimed that her mother was refusing to aid her on this quest because it would be upon her acquiring an identity that she became the right holder to the social grants of her children. I did not interrogate further, leaving space to privacy to the situation. She exited with her associates who were present with her at the dialogue to share a smoke of marijuana. Substance use is a common site in impoverished communities. I did however wonder how that, then would ponder the session as it was soon to begin.

We resumed, and as it was, the room was still tense, without much nor many responses to the dialogue present. It was mostly the factors talking amongst themselves. The only form of response we kept receiving was from an older woman, who at any stage of the session kept asking if there were any food vouchers available to take home. This woman had participated in the August 2023 study. To which she fell into what seemed a hopelessness after Nomonde confirmed that unfortunately the food vouchers were only a product of the study.

Another woman only added that she was hopeless. Hopeless that form of state intervention of the hunger plight was possible. Falling back into a sullen silence thereafter. When this statement rose, we asked if anybody present maybe registered for voting and none were.

There were men present who had remained unresponsive the entire session, even when one of our male factors tried prompting them from a male perspective, asking if really it is that they had zero input to the conversation that has happened.

This session only had the compensation of one woman participating much to reiterate what the factors were saying.

The right to food poster was brought out to conclude the session, even here. There was no participation. Not even when the factors asked if anybody understood their right to food. The only remedy was to elaborate on the poster, and so we did. The only conversation that began to bud was at the end of the session when meals were served, and it was amongst the community members themselves.

Uphakanini community kitchen, Mfuleni

26TH AUGUST 2024: 14:00 – 17:00

Discussions

After a few minutes of waiting for the community, we begin the session. With us are a few men which we hijacked into the conversation when they came to fetch their food from the kitchen. We jump right into the FACT sheets, much of the conversation happens in isiXhosa, Nomonde leads. She introduces FACT. Mfuleni always has a different set of people present at a dialogue, so often we start over.

We go straight into the FACT sheets, and we ask what stands out after the analysis. One of the men shares concern over the employment status, that states 78% of residents of the sample are employed, of which 35% being employed in the formal sector. He says as a seasonal worker, he finds this hard to believe. He shares that him and his peer present, are seasonal workers and apart from the fact that their work as construction assistants is seasonal, when they apply for other jobs, they are rarely successful. Additionally, employment within the formal sector for them has only been a dream. Lastly, finishing by adding that what sustains many marginalized communities is the informal sector.

Before closing this conversation one community member shared that they also feel immigrants “steal locals’ jobs” his argument based on the fact that immigrants are more willing to work for very low income is what makes it more difficult for locals to work as they refuse to work for the wages that workplaces subject people to.

The subject of jobs and educational qualifications always follow each other. One member argued that south Africans are not as educated as they would like to be. Referencing that the sheets say 0% of the sample attained a university degree. Which means somewhere there is an obstacle that stops people from educating themselves. He shared that he has a niece that had the intention and dream of furthering his studies but never attained this dream due to a lack of funding.

We also spoke about the results of the severely food insecure only amounting to 9%. One of the members shared not resonation with that statistic. Saying from the days he feeds from the kitchen he rations his food and does not eat it in one sitting. Somedays he leaves his ration for his friend on days he couldn't get his own food because he had to work. This session ended on how most sessions in Mfuleni end, with a sigh and almost an underlying fear that tomorrow does not look good.

Gugulethu, Gogo's community kitchen

**18TH AUGUST 28, 2023: 13:00-15:00
& 11TH OCTOBER, 2023.**

Discussions

The pot was boiling in Gugulethu as it was the closing session to the dialogues.

What was bubbling in this session was how legislation is responsible for being an obstacle to people's agency. Community members were saying that national and provincial law seem to be in conflict, using the recent occurrence of a taxi strike in the Western cape as an example.

Community members urged it is important for them to know what the law is and is not. To avoid misunderstanding information, because it is in this strike that the country at large saw what kind of violence, violation that could turn into. Especially because it isn't just one crisis that people are responding to but many interconnected crises. While on the topic of legislation, a participant deviated but not too far and mentioned with legislation comes how relief structures are implemented in crises. She complained that South Africa has a tendency of turning relief structures into permanent relief structures.

Using the example of the R350,00 Covid unemployment grant that was supposed to have ended in March 2022 but now extended to March 2024. Collectively, the group agreed that these further shapes people's dependency on the government. A spoon-fed agency is one that is most crippling. She then said that half of the population dependent on the government right now, does not need to be in this predicament.

This directed the conversation to talking about structural reasons for food inequality. Where it was said that the current food system and its supply chain reflects the history of a discriminative government. People as agents in the food system still find themselves where they were positioned many years ago, with the same barriers still existing. Another community member spoke about the commodifying of food is a way of reinforcing these exclusionary structures. Lastly, the crowd agreed that superficial implementations of relief structures are not the solution to the systematic inequalities they face.

While unpacking the right to food poster, a community member asked about the need of formalizing collectives, informal shops etc. A factor argued that perhaps the government needs to look at other ways of formalization that does not always lead to taxes and auditing. Particularly because businesses in the informal sector do not have much money or have a hand to mouth relationship with their profits. This factor suggested hygiene and health standards could be as an aspect of formalization. A standardized health and hygiene policy being implemented in the informal sector could be a means of formalization. Assisting these businesses to access retailers through informative development programs was also suggested. The programs could create a network of informal collectives that provide standard retail service only merely operating from the informal sector. This could also see the sector realise recognition because an informal sector-retailer relationship means traceable transactions. This involvement could create a healthy relationship that allows mutual accountability between the parties involved realised.

Gugulethu, Gogo's community Kitchen

8TH APRIL 2024: 10:00-15:00

Discussions

Fresh offerings upon the new year as this years' dialogue sets off on a cold, rainy and misty morning at Gogo's kitchen in Gugulethu. The ice-breaking conversation amongst community members was centered around religion and its misinformation's, as well as how it has created barriers to how people engage with information. Better less said the argument soon broke and settled into an agreement to disagree.

As we meet, Cape Town is in the midst of its first climate outbreaks of the year. It is early days of Autumn, but the wind is far too harsh, Gogo has sheltered us under a tent that does little to shade us from the wind, some rain that gets blown to us with the wind, but we sit with eagerness. Present with us are the kitchen beneficiaries, a few community members an exact number of five youth and surprisingly, a cook who works in Gogo's kitchen.

FACT jumped straight into a pot boiling with facts from the study conducted in August 2023. We did a share back and checked if community members understood and it was a thumbs up. The question was what people present agreed, resonated, disagreed with or found to be new.

The first dispute that was tabled was the stated minimum household income of R3119.32. Community members said they have only ever dreamt of an income that "high". Arguing that even with the minimum requirement of attaining an NSC to get employment, has not helped them to attain any form of income. Furthermore, many of the lot agreed to be surviving on social grants issued by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). Ranging between the child support grant adjusted to R530, the childcare dependency grant at R2 190 and the foster care grant now at R1 180. These only eligible to children under the ages of 18. For each of these grants to be accessed, the requirement for the child support grants an income criteria is followed, the foster care grant accessed by a court order and the childcare dependency grant accessed by means of a medical assessment and income criteria. They also aired that in luck they may as well receive their pensioners grant which ranges between R1 600 – R2 180/R2 200. Saying that these amounts only sustain their households for a week until they must make way to the kitchen's feeding line. These monies, they say are spent sustaining the children who go to school and very little of it is fared towards food, as food itself is currently very expensive in South Africa. With recent consumer inflation data stating that the inflation rate saw an increase from 4.8% (August 2023) to 5.4% (September 2023) according to Statistics SA.

Another dispute was the stated unemployment rate of 39% and a 61% employment rate from the sample data. Arguing that in their lived experiences in their households of often 5 or more people per household it is likely that only one person is employed informally or if formally employed, they earn as little as a person informally employed. Testifying that they have neighbors five houses down from their homes all likely unemployed.

The highest education level completed data had the youth up in arms saying that even with NSC merits they find it hard to find work. They also said that there is a lack of skills information centers in their neighborhoods, this further roping them in a cycle of never improving learning areas nor finding opportunities.

One youth testified to have a long history of volunteering, he said the downside of this as a way to gain experience for him is that it came without pay, most importantly. He also said that even when the experience he gained volunteering was added to his resume it did not help him with yielding positive results for job seeking. The concern here was that non-profit organisations no longer prioritize the minimum standard of stipends when dealing with volunteers since many lost funding when COVID-19 happened. This leaving volunteers completely with any form of income they could spare as means of survival.

A conversation that bubbled up around unemployment was that the lack of state intervention in terms of job creation is what is inevitably what accounts for state-driven crime. Alleging that the thousands of youths that goes unemployment resort to crime and drug use as a way of surviving unemployment.

After a body break, together with the community we jumped straight into the right to food with four groups huddled at each poster. We looked at the sections cautiously and the first note was that people struggle with the terms and conditions that come with the word "access". The constitution of S.A. (section 24 (1)(b) states that: "Everyone has the right to have **access** to sufficient food and water." It further states:

This means that the state has the obligation to facilitated both economic and physical means for its population to access food. The community present argued that they do not believe that the state is doing much to eliminate barriers found between wanting to access food and accessing food. Further accusing the state of using escapist jargon to evade its obligations.

The agreement from the fact sheet was that 73% of the household relied on less preferred and less expensive coping strategy.

Gugulethu, Gogo's community kitchen

29TH AUGUST 2024: 14:00-16:00

Discussions

The proceedings are happening below the bask of the sun, present is the largest crowd so far. 23 community members with us. Present are mostly elderly men and women, a few youths and some middle-aged men and women. The proceedings are happening in isiXhosa, so Nomonde heads them. After a few formalities we jump right into the January survey. People seem observant. Its no surprise, by far Gugulethu has shown higher literacy engagement on FACT sheet and through participation. We view a few parts of the sheet, while trying

to direct the conversation to feedback, a community member takes it upon themselves to share their perspective. She shares that in black communities, it is rarely that one lives for themselves only. Someone is always taking care of another person, because poverty happens in such a way that living for yourself only is a selfish thing to do. She says there is always an uncle, aunt, brother, sister dependent on you. She says much of today's youth is still trapped in the cycle of inherited poverty as a result of apartheid. She gave an example of poverty in a lifetime, being born into poverty and eventually dying poor still. A heart break. She spoke about unemployment, saying she is a freelance working, seasonally she will be employed but even in the times she is employed, life is still too expensive. She also made an example that in a household, it is better for more than one person to be employed because a home with only one income is a home in danger of real-time poverty.

Chev's kitchen, Bridgetown (Kewtown)

17TH APRIL 2024: 10:00-14:00

Discussions

This morning began with delicious snacks prepared by Olivia, Chev's mom setting people's tastebuds just right for the session ahead. Present was mostly the elderly, and one differently abled elder which I deemed a blessing to the session because it was one of a few presences to grace our sessions. The youth that was there left before the session begun, which we nearly thought would disarm the conversation to be had for the session, but these elders were ready to participate and bless the session with liveliness and participation. These elders were also beneficiaries of Chev's kitchen.

The conversation begun with our due protocol, giving a brief history of FACT and jumping right into the fact sheet produced from the August 2023 study for Bridgetown, including Kewtown. We shared what was said in the fact sheet and immediately jumped into what it was the community felt did not resonate as a truth for their livelihoods. Yet again, up in arms, the elderly refuted that the stated average household income did not reflect their income. Saying that perhaps it may be true for those living in Bridgetown. Saying according to them they deem Bridgetown to be far better well off because it is where their much well-off relatives reside. Another alleging that the results could also reflect a falseness due to the stigmas and shame of hunger. They shared that like many of the communities, what they receive as income is their pension grant and childcare grant This because they were the right holders to their grandchildren's grants.

Very immediately they confessed to being household heads because their children are unemployed and are not around to raise their children because of unemployment and drug abuse or just complete negligence. One of the elders present described their relationship with how they acquire food/meals a "Food arm struggle". Saying that their income only affords them a minimum of a ten-day foods' worth and thereafter or immediately they must be at the kitchen to supplement their meal plans depending on how quickly their food runs out. She continued to share the emotional burden it is to be a head of house at her age, not only to herself, but the kids that she bore and the kids her children bore. Another aspect she mentioned that stretches the burden was that pensioners have no exemptions and therefore pay normal utility rates and tax rates.

As we moved on with the session, most of the elders present, mention that they mainly buy their food from the local spaza shops/mobiles. Confirming that, that part of the fact sheet they resonated with. They do this because the food sold at these shops is cheaper, but they are also allowed customer credit, recorded in a "bookie". However, this credit further deteriorates the use of their income because every end month they find themselves having to settle debt from the previous month therefore, yet again having to get more food on credit. A cycle that traps them in less money and less food. The elders also mentioned a reality of living off loan-sharks. These loan-sharks at times, keep their identity documents and/or bank cards and only release it to them when their money is due but must return it to them along with the money earned so long as they owe them. One aspect of their lives that keeps them without money.

One elder shared that the only way they also get nutritious food is through the kitchen. The kitchen has days where it packages some vegetables for them to cook at home along with the meals, they will prepare for the beneficiaries that said day. On days the kitchen does not serve they find themselves having to travel further to what is other kitchens for food. The kitchen right now only serves for two – days, previously they served for five days but have had to serve less days because they have resource strapped. They are currently exploring means of funds through donations and fundraising occasions. Olivia also shared that as a woman having to tend to her household as well and Chev working a day job, they find themselves staff-strapped and even serving only for two days is still burdensome. They struggle to find volunteers as they eventually cannot continue committing to the task of aiding the kitchen because they help goes without compensation.

Chev's Kitchen, Bridgetown (Kewtown)

26TH AUGUST 2024: 10:00-13:00

Discussions

The rain is pouring, for shelter we moved from Olivia's home to Stacey's House, a former enumerator. Present, are women in their middle-ages to really old, grey-haired elders. Olivia sets us off with some warm coffee and confections. We munch and ease into the day and the purposes of it. We begin in good spirit, we present everyone a sheet of the January, Bridgetown study. After the analysis we ask the community members what stood out for them. Many of them say it is impossible that only 0.3% of people are food insecure. They argued that as people living in Kewtown they witness hunger every day. They share that had it been the case that few of the community was food insecure, the Olivia would only have a few issues to deal with as a kitchen head. Furthermore, a mother shared that spatially there is a difference with how people living in "The Flats" and those living in a "normal house", even though sharing space in one community. The people living in the flats often have much more dire circumstances compared to those in normal homes. To account for this, they made a household average per household, saying that in the flat's homes, more than 9 people can be found in one household. Compared to the 5 in the normal household. Highlighting that none of the study happened at the flats, it all happened in the normal homes. This also finds its way through community relationship dynamics. Where neighbors feel that they cannot ask their neighbors for help because of shame and hard feelings. One of the suggestions by an elder was that the next study should investigate into including a birth rate or number of women with children below 5 because it may help highlight where the help needs to go with women with children. While this conversation was still hot one community member accused some women of bearing more children to receive more income through child social grants. A situation that one community member defended by saying that essentially women are always having to negotiate their survival.

We went into analysing the January study and asked for feedback and a commentary. Immediately a community member raised concerns about the statistic of the severely food insecure people, saying that it is near impossible that only 0.3% of people are food insecure. The rest of the community agreed sharing that way too many people, including themselves queue up for food at community kitchens. Another response looked at unemployment status saying that saying 94% of people residing in the area are employed is far from the truth because not only are they unemployed but their children too are unemployed. After we assessed the comparison of the two studies the community agreed that they felt the August 2023 study was a more accurate depiction of what goes on in their community.

Ubuntu, Klapmuts

8TH MAY, 2024: 13:00 – 17:00

Discussions

This session begun on a breeze filled day with community members already seated in a church. It was the first we gathered near a holy altar for a dialogue. I suppose bringing the presence of "God", who is mentioned in many dialogues closer that what I may have observed. This sitting did not begin with a prayer. We followed due introductory protocol and jumped right into the pot. Present with us were older middle-aged women and elders. The only men present were from the FACT team. Dylan and Mr. V. The conversation bounced from person to person until the word soup kitchen came up. Mr. V. intervened and spoke to the stigma of the word "soup kitchen". Immediately hearts dropped in the room. A defense of some sort. When given the chance to elaborate, community members spoke to why they continue using the word "community kitchen". One member saying the word has been there since her first memory. This apart from the fact that initially that is indeed what for a long while what was served at these community service outlets.

She also said she believes the word brings out the existing stigmas and prejudices people have about one another. The team introduced the word "community kitchen". Mimi elaborated on the concept of community kitchens of being hubs beyond just serving food. A kind of hub that caters to the community in many ways. Like many times, new and constructive words, however progression more than it is practical, takes years of cognitive acceptance. A kind rooted in unlearning normality's that otherwise are habitual. To complement this eagerness to take up new words. Community shared the many ways that the kitchens are hubs for community engagement. One mentioning an instance where their tasks include identifying GBV victims to assist however applicable. As some of the kitchen staff are GBV first respondents. One beneficiary shared how from time to time she seeks help from Aziza, kitchen head, with her SASSA grant. Agreed, the vision was recognized for these centers to house many things.

While on the track of discrimination, we spoke about how community members got discriminated against in the times they have gone to other kitchens they have been told they could not eat there because they were not from the community the kitchen is situated in. This happening on days they had to go feed elsewhere because their local kitchens have limited feeding days. Saying they would appreciate a sense of acceptance because hunger does not have geographical boundaries.

We asked what it is that the community resonated with and very immediately they said they agreed with the notion that more than 50% of the community accesses the community kitchen as a coping strategy and that more than 90% of households relied on less preferred and less expensive foods as a part of their coping strategies.

Like many of the course of the dialogues, community members disagreed with the average household income of R3 974.37. Saying they are social grants dependents. None of which ever amount to +- R2 500. Which is likely to only afford them two weeks' worth of food. With the second week of the two being the week they must return to community kitchens. The community members present also mentioned that none of them were working which means that if they do eventually receive additional income, it is usually in isolated cases, from isolated cases of work. Ranging from a days' worth of work to a week at the most. While on the conversation of work, we asked why it is they think they are not receiving employment. The response was that since they do not receive response from the posts they apply to. They cannot say. Others responding that their ages may have something to do with it.

A stronger personality in the conversation mentioned that looking at the statistics of the fact sheet it made no sense that only 9% of the sample data was severely food insecure, whereas 90% rely on less preferred food pricing and coping strategies.

When we looked at the right to food poster and asked for feedback after the reading of the poster. Community members said that the felt detainees received a more kind of assured care as citizens of the country. (because of the statement that detainees also have a right to nutritious and sufficient food in the constitution). Saying that receiving three meals a day and not having to worry what will be served nor how it would be prepared is a privilege they feel more worthy of.

This session was aided by a language mediator who had to translate many communications from FACT's side to the community members. Which spoke to literacy rates of communities. Not one just rooted in not understanding another language, but one also rooted in not having many words to express yourself in your own language.

Ubuntu, Klapmuts

19TH AUGUST 2024: 12:00 - 16:30

Discussions

The close of our dialogues in Klapmuts was graced by the first week of warmth and sun since the winter. The air was hot, thick with the fragrance of flowers and full with community members awaiting to be addressed. Nomonde began our gathering with due introductions, we recognized faces from our previous meeting and some new faces. Present with us was mostly elders/pensioners, middle aged women and a few young mothers.

The session kicks off with some laughter, as the introductions as a few women seem to share the same name, "Magdeline". We are jumping between English and some bare-minimum Afrikaans, already anxious that this language barrier will burden the session. As Nomonde jogs the memory of last meeting and proceedings. We are graced with the presence of Juanita Engelbrecht, our Klapmuts translator. She helps us elaborate to the community what English fails word over into Afrikaans. The goal of each dialogue is to have no one left out because they could not understand something.

I take over and take the community through the new (January) FACT sheets. The layout looks a bit different from the previous sheet. We go through the sheet and like usual we ask what it is that the community resonates with in the sheet. The first thing pointed out is a lady saying truly, they feel that it is accurate to say that 1% of the Klapmuts community is food secure, as she is aware as a community member that many people go without meals many days or that food (groceries) do not the last the month over. It was also expressed that she felt that this resonates with the 1% that earns R10 000+. Juanita adds to see the reflection of household income seems accurate because Klapmuts as a peri-urban area mostly has farm workers, who indeed earn between R1 000 – R3 000. We began talking about education, many people in the room had only completed High School, not furthering their education to many obstacles. Mostly financial issues, not being able to pay tuition fees. Some people were not able to have the privilege of being students without an earning, nor survive purely on bursary payouts so they had to leave school High School and begin working or looking for. A strong character in the room, an elderly woman, now retired. Shared with us she had a doctorate degree in ICDP, Integrated Community Development ... surely the must educationally qualified in the room. She had views to share about the youth and education. She says in her years of working with the youth and assisting them with applications for the admission into tertiary institutions, she has learnt that only about an estimated of 30% of youth eventually enroll into school. She shared that she noted that is due to fact

that a big part of South Africa's education system is imposed into individuals. Saying that for a long while the Edu system has not been amended in such a way that tries to investigate what it is that South African youth would like to study. Furthermore, she shared that the job market is so undiversified and outdated that it does not support the current youth's interests. To conclude she added in her years of studying and working, she has realised that even hard work does not necessarily guarantee comfortable retirement years.

We investigated what may the consistencies of the FACT sheets. The first one mentioned was the number of men who participated being low. Even in the room, to match the connotation of the FACT sheet, there were no men present at all. The employment/unemployment rate was more or less the same as the previous sheet. What was reiterated again in this dialogue was that community members felt that it was not an accurate reflection of the unemployment rate as more people are without jobs. Everyone in the room said they were without jobs.

To ease the tension in the room we broke for a snack pack chow and water. Thereafter we jumped right into an activity called "Pot of luck/n pot van geluk". This activity investigated the hopes of community members. Asking them to place in the pot of luck, wishes and dreams they have for South Africa pot/Food security. Once completed, this exercise uncanned well known truth of the South African state. Many cards spoke about the wish of employment, as we were exploring what this means really. A lady spoke up to say she is surprised that, work is what most people in the room are wishing for whilst people present are over 60. Asking why people over 60 still have to find themselves working. Many responding that for them, life does not get more comfortable for them after 60. A youth present, an enumerator of the study, spoke of community gardens, saying community gardens that have monthly stalls of harvest can be a way of selling cheaper vegetables to the community, while generating income to feed back into community kitchens. With another youth contesting that the state of urban planning has not afforded communities much space to garden or even pursue it. As most open spaces are state-owned or private-owned. A heartfelt closing card addressed being a mother, aunt, grandmother, and community member who really just wants to have enough to share with her community, children, family. It spoke of the heartbreak of being a community member that is unable to give back to her community. Saying that her wish is abundance, so the sharing of resources becomes a reality.

After this we jumped into a comparison of the previous and the new FACT sheet.

The community noticed that the amount of people who relied on less preferred coping methods increased. The number of people employed dropped by 2%. 1% less men participated in the study. Lastly, we asked which study they resonated more with and the community said the January 2023 study.

Hanover Park

19TH APRIL 2024: 10:00 – 13:00

Discussions

It was a sunny morning in Hanover Park. The day began with coffee and formalities. Community members speaking amongst each other, and us easing into the session.

We jumped straight into the conversation, asking what community members agree with from the survey. Many community members agreed that they have 5 to more family members in their homes. Saying that this causes a very big strain on space. With most homes in the area only having two official bedrooms. We spoke about the average household income, many people said that their social grants amount to R 2000 monthly. We spoke about social grants and how it is that it funds lifestyles. A community member shared that she believes one the ways that social grants become social ill enablers is by aiding people with substance abuse problems to purchase substances. With some sharing that many parents earning social grants on behalf of their children do not even use the grant for caring for the child but for their own needs.

Those with seasonal jobs say that's what they usually earn fortnightly. We asked that if this number is below the minimum wage, how do they survive or sustain themselves. Many people present shared that they usually only have groceries that last them a week if not only two. There after or to even sustain the grocery that long they feed from the community kitchens daily. Some shared that there is food credit at the local shops called "bookie". The bookie is a book held by shop owners that has a list of residents who owe them money for buying food on credit. The cycle of the bookie is that once you are on the book, you are likely to remain on the bookie a while because you pay off debt to make more debt because of a cycle of the shortage of money. A differently abled person shared that they felt the unemployment rate looks fair from the study, however he felt that living as a differently abled person has meant that much of the world is inaccessible to him. He says, furthermore, the job market mostly caters to fully able people forgetting that differently abled people also need to sustain their livelihoods too.

Hanover Park

30TH AUGUST 2024: 10:00 – 12:00

Discussions

We sit in the front yard of Avril's home. The sun is good. I walk in as Nomonde is introducing FACT yet again. We share that we are back with January's results. Some sips of coffee and some biscuits. Then we jump right into the basics, present with us is mostly middle-aged to elderly women. Some youth, usually always silent, with nothing to add or comment on, but presence counts, perhaps at some point the youth will be shaken to speech. A few grandmothers are already disgruntled. They are anxious, it is a Friday and soon would have to fetch their grandkids from school. We hand out the sheets, one aside the other for comparison. For some odd reason, people look disinterested. A few read.

Even though Hanover Park is one of the regions with higher male participation in the survey, none are present at this gathering. I ask where the men are, the women chuckle. I suppose that was the answer. We jump right into what it is that they are observing, the eyes jump to the severe increase in the food insecurity status, it went up from 23% from the previous study to 71% on the new study. We explored a few possibilities of cause. Some were saying the usual course of things is that in January things get financially tougher due to costs like "back to school" items, school fees, etc. After-all January comes after festivities of expenditure and spending can be a pleasure with consequences. We looked the percentage of food secure people, there was agreement in the room that its more or less an accurate depiction.

A community member shares her experiences of working as a cashier. She shares that being on the other side of the counter as a service provider and a human has conflicting emotions. Her place of work is in Rondebosch. A neighborhood comprising of middle class to upper class residents. As a person from a community where filling your trolley while shopping is a luxury, she shares that she observes too many trolleys filled to the brim, with some groceries amounting to R10 000. Envious she is.



REFLECTION

ACCOUNTABILITY

A participant asked a question, asking how accountability can be made understandable. Saying that is it a beautiful word because it perfectly describes the duty but how does one sit with the action of realizing it?

Does accountability and being held to it mean owning it? It was well evident amongst the circle that a fair amount of the participants could agree that they believe previous generations of governance consisted of accountable individuals. Saying "back then, our leaders did the things they said they would do!" Arguing that currently we sit led by a government that does not have accounting to actions as a part of their official order.

This a flawed observation as the previous government of South Africa had its primary caterings to the white minority. This suggests that many resources were directed to a minority that they could in fact cater to as the population was not too big. The introduction of a new government meant catering to all citizens. The current government is struggling, if not failing at this task. The country finds itself still experiencing structural inequalities that reflect the missteps of the previous one. In fact, the inequality gap has gotten greater under the current government.

A factor argued that it is possible that post '94 the only legislative document that was popularized was the constitution. This book mainly describes rights, duty bearers and right holders exercising of those rights and other neat details but fails to navigate a manual translating the understanding and validated interpretation of accountability. Nor the steps to be taken to realise it. This a factor because people individually, engage with accountability differently. This manual being included in the constitution would mean it binding. Carefully highlighting the expectation of carrying out accountability.

Furthermore, there are intermediary judicial bodies that investigate allegations of fraud and other kinds of malpractice in the public sector, including organs of state with the idea of practicing accountability as one of the founding principles. These bodies can only suggest solutions, and they are not binding. Suggesting that South Africa's government is not ready to implement all the steps to accountability. Could it be that South Africa is a democracy founded on a systematic delayed response to accountability?

An example that surfaced were relief structures that were a response to crises. e.g., The R350 youth unemployment grant issued at the beginning of covid-19.

The grant was meant to be distributed until March 2022, however, has seen an extension till March 2024. The question here was that will this grant become another of its kind to become permanent. Further questions were asking where this kind of a response to crises came or originated from. The crowd then said their observation was that they are living in a country that is constantly recovering from one crisis to another. This supporting the allegations that South Africa has a reactionary approach to responding to crises.

On the short side of this accountability, it was also observed that when speaking of mutual accountability, even then the participants did not recognize themselves as a part of the process.

ENGAGEMENT WITH INFORMATION

In a session in Khayelitsha the observation was that people were actively engaging with information in isolation. They could not imagine themselves as participatory agents on a micro and macro lens. Even in the case where the topic was about the state (the country as a whole) they still engaged in isolation. This observation had a few questions loom. Looking at the assumption that post '94 the idea of inclusive nation building became the heart of the state's agenda and may still be. How is it that people still feel that a state that has supposedly brought them liberation still carries forth the trauma of not being for its people? People are speaking about the government, capitalism, and crises as if it is this intangible entity in the air that somehow infiltrates their lives only to cause problems. Furthermore, they do not believe that any state law is created nor documented in their favor. When the right to food poster was presented. They argued that nothing stipulated was a truthful and just way to realizing this right. It seems that people do not even believe that they have rights. The question that bubbled up here was if these people do not see themselves as entities recognized by their government, that digging at their confidence as citizens. How does one even begin to inform them about agency, have it understood but also be treated as an instrument to realise accountability. On the short side of this isolation, it was also observed that when speaking of mutual accountability, even then the participants did not recognize themselves as a part of the process. It appears the only player or participant recognized was the government. It also appeared that this player was viewed as a giver and taker with no bridge to the people it serves.

Observing the take of role playing, in the case of power dynamics, when there is a party that feels it has no role, then immediately there is an abuse of power present. The result of citizens feeling that they have no role to play in the food system is why they depend on the state in accessing food. While engaging with information in isolation, community members confessed that they felt powerless, powerless to possibly influence structures of the food system too.

This explaining why they feel the relationship they have with the other role player being the state, to be one that just descends orders and never makes room for the other role player to be head. It is also the case that many times in the community dialogues FACT has had with the communities it engages, state officials were absent, even those invited.

Another kind of powerlessness that relates to information are community members' literacy rate. The amount of community members that can engage information are very low. This further isolating them as active role players.

The conversation explored the positionality of community members as role players in the food system and they felt that they had none. They argued that because they have no power, they cannot possibly have positionality. Here, they unpacked feelings of refusing to be role players as they no longer trust processes that involve engaging with the state as there is an extensive history of their trust in the processes being broken. As a result, further downsizing agency.

Another arm of the conversation that occurred, was how the youth and elderly understood the state of their positionality differently from each other. An example here would be how for the youth, in their pursuit for employment, are seeking self-employment by means of entrepreneurship. While the elderly felt it was the responsibility of job creation to be that of the public and private sector and not any other sector that is able to equip one with the agency of not only being economically participating members but those who can access food how they wish.

TRUST

The term trust translates to a firm belief in the reliability of something or someone. Which alludes free of doubt. Mistrust is a cliché of the time we are living in. Community members have immense doubt that any processes that includes the state fairing to abide by duty will indeed be seen through.

Attaining mutual accountability and collective agency is a process rooted deeply in both role players trusting not only the process but themselves to be accountable to the process. Not only does trust dictate a portion of the resulting outcome, but it also guides the process from beginning to end. Processes conducted without trust can see a lack of transparency in communication and produce a lack of responsiveness to changing conditions. The question is how to remedy trust, so processes do not suffer non-participation due to the lack of trust. Looking at trust as social capital means looking at how legislation can not only state policy but state how to trust policy. What surfaced is that community members do not trust the state because they believe the state lacks empathy, aside a positive action-based response that follows established rules and norms.

Trust must be an attribute to the relationship between social actors because it is concerned with how decision-making processes become successful.

A PLACE FOR MORALITY IN ECONOMICS AND SYSTEMS

The nature of economics is that it faces a lot of scrutiny for a lack of morality and just ways of conducting systems (processes). Another truth is that these socioeconomic systems were founded on the roots of injustice. The systems in place to maintain the economy are not founded on equity and equality. South Africa currently wears the badge of the most unequal society in the world, which in opinion is fertile grounds for systems(processes) to fault and fail, because it simply means that there are parts of its society that goes/is unseen. These systems do not reach all its populous, which dares the suggestion that the right to food is not one that interacts with all of the S.A. demographic.

From the gathering, the notion of morality being integral in economics seemed to be a new-age thought, as though those in charge of normative systems have never considered that systems and their respective chains should have tributary flow that reaches all its streams. Moral principles bear issues concerning and informing policy. Dissecting the ethical character of economic activities and its relations shapes dimensions of mutual accountability and collective agency. It assists in role players being able to deal and co-operate with failures. Welfare economics should be the future.

ON THE NOTE OF WHAT IS MISSING FROM PROCESSES

People and communities feel hopeless in the world they are currently living in, while living off the means of a survival that only seems to strip the masses further into hopelessness, no citizens dare to imagine greener pastures for their respective nations. In opinion this is what is missing from processes. Not, hope, not accountability but the enthusiasm to imagine wealth that reaches all people in South Africa

NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US

The notion of citizen-led action as a response to an inadequacy to state response seems to be the current answer, however in arguments sake, if citizens are surviving under resourced environments, likely so their initiatives to combat the issues faced will eventually meet the fate of being under-resourced. The truth is that for a successful approach to dealing with social issues, the effort of the state and citizen-led action needs to be working together.

The only thing that has been re-written since a democratic South Africa is the constitution, not the state of its citizens. The question now is how to remedy the rights recognized by the constitution with the reality of lives of South Africans.

BIRTH CERTIFICATE – INVISIBLE CITIZENS

The problem of birth certificates for children and adults was a subject that was brought up many times in the dialogues. Birth certificates in South Africa are registered with the Department of Home Affairs. Upon the birth of a person, an abridged birth certificate is issued for free on registration of the birth. Which begged the question of how it is that people gave birth, and their births were never registered.

The history of South Africa is that the registration of births was used to codify discrimination during the apartheid regime. However, since the new administration, one would assume that it is only in the best interests of a citizen's birth to be registered. The period in which births must be registered is 30 days. After this, the registration is considered a late registration. The process of a late registration is more tedious and requires additional documentation that may make the process of registration a tedious one.

No birth certificate can mean no access to social services, employment opportunities, educational opportunities and more.

How birth certificates increase access to the following rights for South African citizens

- A right to a nationality/identity which entails having a name. Without this there is no way to prove nationality nor regional identity.
- It also entails a right to basic education. Nationwide, schools are becoming stricter with the necessary documentation to enroll kids into basic education. Without a birth certificate, children forfeit the right to education.
- A right to public healthcare, without a birth certificate and residential address, children also forfeit to access basic health care.
- It also a pre-requisite to applying for an Identity document. For being included into the National Population Register.
- It is also a requirement to the application of SASSA social grants. Even though other means of proving identification in the absence of B/certificates are present.

Aside the above mentioned, as a child grows, the absence of a birth certificate continues to deny an individual many kinds of rights and access. Therefore, diminishing agency and the urgency to be citizens participating in their own country.

THE ABSENCE OF MEN FROM SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

The organisation of a family is at the heart of carving positive outcomes of societies. South Africa has an exceptionally high number of men absent/passive presence in society. This absence is tied to many historical, economic, and social contexts. It is also seen as a factor contributing to many social ills. While one of the main sources of absent fathers remains the separation of parents, in South Africa the economic landscape has long played a large influence in this phenomenon. Historically, the apartheid era saw many men of color move to urban areas for employment without their families. Pass laws also prevented spouses from accompanying book holders (person called for employment) in these urban areas or place of employment. The absence or passive presence of men in societies can have a profound impact on food insecurity. In many patriarchal societies, like South African men hold significant power over resources, including food. When men are absent or unable to fulfil this role, women and children may face difficulties in accessing food, exacerbating food insecurity. Furthermore, social norms often indicate that men are primary providers of food, when men fail to meet these expectations, it can lead to social exclusion, stigma and increased food insecurity.

The serious economic implications of the absence of men from societies are that household incomes are reduced, which reduces buying power, etc.

The feminization of poverty is a direct result of absent men. This phenomenon leaves women who are already disproportionately poor, even poorer. The absence of men also disrupts social networks and support systems.

SOCIAL GRANTS

On the 23rd of May, News24 reported that 50% of South African households are now beneficiaries of social grants. The report by Statistics SA's annual General Household Survey (GHS) showed that households benefitting from social grants increased from 12.8% (2003), 30.9% (COVID period – 2019-2021) to 50% over the same period. This leap is largely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic social distress grant, the same report also stated that after salaries, social grants was second most important household source of income.

The South Africa Social Security Agency (SASSA) is a national agency of the South African government established April 2005. It was created to administer a social security system which included distributing social grants on behalf of the Department of Social Development. SASSA has various social assistance grants for citizens, these include:

- Grant for older persons – (R2180 > 75 yrs. R2 190)
- Disability grant – (R2 180)
- War veteran grant – (R2 200)
- Care dependency grant – (R2 180)
- Foster child grant – (R1 180)
- Child support grant – (R530)
- Child support grant Top-Up – (R260)
- Grant-in-Aid – (R530)
- Social Relief of Distress – (R370)
- COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress – (R370)

The conversation during the dialogues resonated with the report above as many community members shared that in the case of unemployment, social grants were their main source of income. The issue that came up here is that households fail to fully support themselves solely on the social grants, regardless of how many beneficiaries there are in a household.

Some community members argued that if their government issuing this kind of support to its population, it becomes a disabling agent in the case of encouraging populations to be working agents/self-dependent. Some arguing that the hefty budget allocated for these grants could be directed elsewhere.

Some of the solutions that community members felt would assist, would be the government boosting awareness on family planning, increasing employment as child pregnancies are a symptom of unemployment. Supporting this by saying that social grants do not necessarily improve the lives of beneficiaries, therefore government needs to look at more favorable routes to alleviating the symptoms that make 50% of the nation dependent on social grants as a means of income.

GOVERNMENT DRIVES CRIME

A lack of services from governments can drive crime in several ways, creating an environment conducive to criminal activity and perpetuating cycles of violence and food insecurity.

INADEQUATE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUSTICE SYSTEMS

When governments fail to provide effective law enforcement and justice systems, citizens may feel compelled to take the law into their own hands, leading to vigilantism and increased violence. Inadequate policing can also create opportunities for criminal organisations to flourish, as they may see the lack of effective law enforcement as an invitation to operate with impunity.

INSUFFICIENT SOCIAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Governments that fail to provide adequate social services, such as education, healthcare, and social welfare programs, can create an environment in which crime can thrive. When individuals lack access to basic necessities like education and job training, they may turn to crime as a means of survival. Similarly, inadequate healthcare and social welfare programs can exacerbate mental health issues, substance abuse, and other underlying factors that contribute to criminal behavior.

POOR URBAN PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Inadequate urban planning and infrastructure can contribute to crime by creating environments that foster anonymity, isolation, and disorder. For example, poorly lit and maintained public spaces can provide opportunities for criminal activity, while inadequate waste management and sanitation services can create an environment conducive to disease and social unrest.

LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Governments that fail to provide economic opportunities, such as job training programs, small business loans, and infrastructure development, can create an environment in which crime can flourish. When individuals lack access to legitimate means of earning a living, they may turn to crime as a means of survival. This can perpetuate cycles of poverty and violence, as criminal activity can further undermine economic development and stability.

THE IDEA OF REALISING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH FOOD

Realizing social accountability through food, particularly by addressing food insecurity in South Africa, requires a multifaceted approach that involves various stakeholders, including government, civil society, and local communities. Social accountability refers to the process of holding those in power accountable for their actions and ensuring that they are transparent and responsive to the needs of citizens. In the context of food security, social accountability involves ensuring that government and other stakeholders are accountable for addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable food systems.

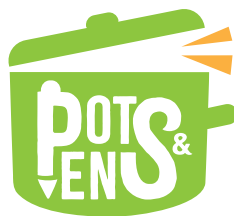
STRATEGIES FOR REALIZING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH FOOD

1. **Community-Led Initiatives:** Community-led initiatives, such as community kitchens and gardens and food cooperatives, can provide a platform for citizens to hold government and other stakeholders accountable for addressing food insecurity. These initiatives can also promote community engagement and participation in decision-making processes.

2. **Advocacy and Activism:** Advocacy and activism can play a crucial role in realizing social accountability through food. Civil society organisations and community groups can mobilize public support and pressure government to address food insecurity and promote sustainable food systems.
3. **Participatory Budgeting:** Participatory budgeting involves citizens in the budgeting process, allowing them to prioritize spending on food security initiatives. This approach can ensure that government spending is aligned with the needs of citizens and promotes accountability.
4. **Food Policy Councils:** Food policy councils can provide a platform for stakeholders to come together and develop policies that promote food security and sustainable food systems. These councils can also ensure that government is accountable for implementing policies that address food insecurity.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation are critical components of realizing social accountability through food. Independent monitoring and evaluation can ensure that government and other stakeholders are held accountable for their actions and that food security initiatives are effective.

NOTES

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69 Main Road | Mobray | Cape Town | South Africa

admin@foodagencycpt.com