

# FOOD SECURITY OF HOUSEHOLDS IN MARGINALIZED PHILIPPINE COMMUNITIES

*Catherine Q. Castañeda*

*Felicitas F. Bacos*

*Marilou R. Galang*

*Roman U. Zarate, Jr.*

*Wilma L. Molano*

Food and Nutrition Research Institute  
Department of Science and Technology  
Bicutan, Taguig City

## *Abstract*

*The study was conducted to characterize the households in marginalized communities, which are at-risk to household food insecurity; to explore and analyze the coping behavior towards food security of households, and to determine the association of selected socio-economic characteristics with coping responses of households. A total of 210 households in two selected marginalized communities each in the Cities of Baguio, Damaged, and Davao were randomly selected, interviewed and observed on their coping behaviors towards household food security. Results revealed that low household income and unemployment were the main threats to food security. Age and number of years of schooling of mother, and the household income were significantly associated with food security. In order to offset the economic shortfalls, the household displayed a variety of food-related and non-food related coping behaviors. Food related coping behaviors included elimination of some food items that were ordinarily served by the households, reduction on the quantity of food served to the members, or skipping of meals by one or all members of the households. Households spent first on food before non-food items. Even if the household did not have regular income, they still spent Php 679.00 for food, which is obtained through borrowing. Non-food coping responses included reduction on household expenses for new clothes, cut-down on electric consumption, and decrease in children's school expenses. Although seeking alternative ways to cut spending assured food on the table among the poor, the presence of nutritional and psychological problems associated with either parent working overseas were also reported. Household income was found to be negatively associated with the coping behaviors of the households. The results of the study depict the resilient character of the Filipino households in times of social and economic difficulties, particularly towards ensuring food is available on the table for consumption of household members. The data, particularly on the characteristics of the households likely to be at-risk to food insecurity, should be useful to social workers and nutritionists in the communities in identifying target households for nutrition and any relevant socio-economic intervention programs to protect them from against food insecurity and its consequences. The coping strategies mentioned in the study were not different from those that have been identified from previous studies. There is an urgent need for research on the health and nutritional consequences of coping behavior, by type of households, to serve as basis for promoting positive coping behaviors among target households.*

**Keywords:** coping responses, food insecurity, meal patterns, purchasing patterns, poor households, food behavior

## *Introduction*

In this period of social and economic difficulties, the concern for the problem of food security becomes more apparent especially among the marginalized households comprised of the landless lowland and upland farmers, small fishermen and the urban wage earners. Ensuring the household food security entails the physical access to food, which may be through one's own production or availability in the local markets or stores. However, it is not enough that the foods are available. The more important factor is the capability of the household to acquire such foods through own production or presence of some form of income. The sustainability in accessing food towards food security during times of severe difficulties remains a challenge to these marginalized households. They need to cope up through various alternatives and adjustments.