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Food Insecurity and Health of Bangladeshi Workers in Singapore: A Culture-Centered Study

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Food Insecurity and Health of Bangladeshi Workers in Singapore: A Culture-Centered Study

Mohan J. Dutta

Migration in South-East Asia is increasingly clustered in the low-skilled and low-income segments of construction work, embodying an array of vulnerabilities ranging from workplace accidents to job uncertainty to communicative inequality in articulating the problems experienced by migrant workers. In most instances, flexible labour market conditions and job outsourcing, accompanied by the absence of infrastructures for workers to voice their needs result in workers having limited opportunities for voicing their concerns. Migrant construction work is integral to the economy in Singapore, contributing to building the infrastructure that is the

foundation of a strong economy (Bal, 2013, p.1). Nearly one million low-wage migrant workers live in Singapore, making up about 20 percent of the total population of Singapore. Most of them are employed in the construction, shipyards, sanitation services, manufacturing, and domestic work sectors (TWC2 2014).

Among this population of migrant workers in Singapore, more than 100,000 are Bangladeshi male adults (Banglar Kantha, 2014). Health of migrant workers is intrinsically connected to their work lives. Previous studies have documented the health risks that

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migrant workers face and vulnerabilities that are attached to the nature of the work (Chok, 2009). Moreover, studies document varying levels of access to health care among populations of migrant workers. Rahman and Lian (2005 p.77) note that migrant workers have access to an overall health infrastructure as mandated by policy, but have differential experiences in accessing this infrastructure. Moreover, migration places new health threats in the lives of immigrants as they move from one cultural context to another, being faced with new challenges of navigating structures, cultural contexts, and norms (Dutta & Jamil, 2013).

This study examines the notion of health as voiced by Bangladeshi migrant workers and the key challenges to health in their lived experiences. Drawing upon the culture-centered approach (CCA), the research study started with creating a discursive space for workers to voice their health needs (Dutta, 2008). Based upon initial ground-up conversations with Bangladeshi migrant workers, the issue of food emerged as integral to the lives of the participants and also as an area that they perceived as challenging in terms of meeting their health needs. Grounded in this initial objective of the advisory board of migrant workers to examine the problem of access to safe and healthy food as a challenge in their everyday lives, we embarked on a two-year multi-method research project

to examine the food needs of migrant workers, the linkage between food and health, the challenges the workers perceived with respect to access to clean and healthy food, and the solutions they proposed.

Drawing upon 65 semi-structured in-depth interviews and 500 surveys conducted with Bangladeshi migrant workers, this white paper explores the food needs and experiences of the workers. The voices of workers presented in this paper offer entry points for listening to the needs of the workers, as understood from their worldviews and lived experiences. Moreover, based on the conceptual framework of the CCA, the white paper re-presents the problems and solutions to their food insecurity as understood by the workers.

METHOD

In order to recruit participants, we utilized the theoretical sampling framework, with our initial selection of participants being shaped by the criteria of nationality (Bangladeshi), occupation (unskilled labor) and gender (male). We followed a two-step recruitment strategy. As a part of our ongoing immersed ethnography of health experiences of Bangladeshi construction workers, we approached participants at various public sites (such as Little India, Bangladeshi restaurants, MRT stations etc.),

striking up informal conversations with them. These informal conversations were followed by in-depth interviews that ranged from 20 minutes to 2 hours. The other recruitment strategy focused on collaborating with HealthServe, a Singapore-based NGO working with migrant workers, to recruit participants from a training space run by the organization. Community organizers at HealthServe helped us recruit advisory board members. The advisory board comprised of between 8 and 15 workers, and we conducted 12 advisory board meetings over the course of one year. In addition, we conducted 65 one-on-one in-depth interviews over a two year period from September 2012 to November 2014. We also conducted semi-structured focus groups, with 3-8 participants, resulting in 13 focus groups all together. Based on the in-depth interviews and focus groups, the advisory board collaborated with HealthServe and the NUS team to design and implement a survey. We conduct a survey of 500 Bangladeshi migrant workers, recruited from public spaces such as Little India, restaurants, shopping areas, grocery stores, and MRT stations. To present the themes in this report, we conducted a grounded theory analysis, going through the steps of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The codes were then compared with our journal notes from the participant observations. For the quantitative portion of the report, we conducted frequency analyses that are reported in

this white paper.

FOOD, HEALTH AND WORK

In the articulations shared by the workers, health is intrinsically tied to the availability of food. The CCA foregrounds the voices of workers in collectively determining the problem they would like to address and the solutions that they seek. In the initial advisory board meeting with Bangladeshi migrant workers recruited by HealthServe at its “Training Center”, migrant workers shared the following, “We think that the food/catering problem is the most crucial one.” For another participant Mohammed, “For me, Health is the edifice of happiness. If Health is proper than everything seems good. For us Health is food. Is food is bad we don’t have energy to work and don’t feel well. If we get good, quality food, than our health seems good, then we can work properly.”

Food and health

Food and health are intertwined in the narratives. Karim shares:

...yes, food is crucial to us, if we eat good food our health will fare well, if we eat bad food it will not fare that well... we have some problems with our catering... the food is not clean and unhygienic (they keep the skin of potato

and even the Botu of a green chilli).

For Karim, eating poor food served by caterers results in loss of health. A number of workers share that they start developing problems because of the poor quality of food. For Massood, health is closely related to the food and in turn to one's capacity to work:

...like our everyday needs our body is very important because we are workers, our health and food are also very important because if we have energy we can work and it comes from healthy food... we may have to take medical certificates in working days because of bad food and feel uneasy in the work sites. Without good food we won't have good sleep and we may not be able to concentrate on work and face accidents due to lack of sleep.

Massood offers an explanatory framework connecting food to physical and mental health, which in turn are related to a worker's ability to concentrate on work. Lolon voices, "We feel weak at our workplaces; have no energy due to the food we eat. But we have no choice."

Here is what Rahim shares:

Gastric attack is common, we have sleeping and food problem here and those causes several types of physical

problems. We would not feel weak if food and sleep were okay.

For many other workers, gastric attack is a common problem. Saibal shares that having unclean food has resulted in him feeling sick. He shares:

When I first came to Singapore I cooked by myself for one or two months. Then I started taking food in the canteen. After that I took foods from catering services for the long three years. I went to my country in between several times. The main problem I found is gastric attack. And actually it is tough to feel the weakness due to the overwork at work place. Cause work takes all the concentration. And when we feel weak, we take 'Red Bull'.

In another narrative, we hear stories about workers being sick from the poor quality food they eat. Shares Aman:

Suffering by dysentery, diarrhea, fever, stomach ache, catching cold are a kind of normal disease for the workers. Do you know why we catch cold? When the stool is not clear, body become warmer and we catch cold. And vegetables make your body cool. When the workers work at the factory, a lot of water comes out from their body by sweating. When we are working, we cannot have proper water due to overlooking or neglect. If we could take some vegetables regularly, our

body would not have suffered due to the lack of water. Water alone cannot meet up the need of our body expectations.

Rasul attributes his poor health to the poorly prepared food:

Yes, sometimes due to bad food, I feel weak and shiver. But I cannot have more food as I suffer from gas related problems. I cannot have fried, oily food. Earlier, I did not have this issue earlier.

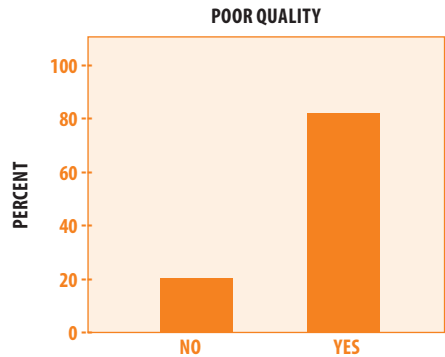
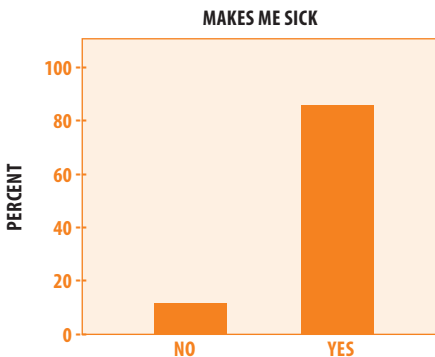
Interviewer: So you cannot have oily food?

Rasul: Yes, I have Cholesterol now days. I did not have this (health condition) earlier. For the initial four years, I cooked food, for the past three years, I am eating catering food. Due to this I have fallen ill.

In the survey conducted with the Bangladeshi migrant workers, 431 (86.2%) of the 500 respondents noted that “the food I get from the caterer makes me sick.”

QUALITY OF FOOD

For a number of participants in our research study, quality of food is a key concern, intertwined with concerns about health. The participants define good quality of food as food that is safe to eat, food safety and security emerging as the key concerns voiced by the participants. For many of them, the food they receive from caterers is unsafe because of the amount of time that passes between the preparation of food and the consumption of the food (some participants noted that this duration can often range between eight and twelve hours). In the survey conducted with 500 Bangladeshi workers, 13 (2.6%) reported that they were “satisfied with the quality of food I get from the caterer.” Similarly, 40 (8%) respondents reported that “the quality of food I get from the caterer is good.” Among the 500 participants, 403 (80.6%) reported that “the food I get from the caterer is of poor quality.”



Unclean food

Participants point out that the food delivered by the catering services are often not clean. They discuss multiple instances where the food simply has not been cleaned properly.

Jamil shares that the quality of food such as meat and fish is often poor. He narrates:

It is not healthy as well. We eat the packaged fish. There is no guarantee when these fishes were packaged? We even do not know who from where has brought them in the market? We are eating fish stored in refrigerator that we do not even realize what are we eating, is it fish or grass? They are simply tasteless. We eat so that we live.

For Jamil, the taste of the fish suggests to him that it is old, having been stored for many months. He further shares how he has no way to know because the catered food does not offer any information. Another participant, Ishmail, notes that eating old fish has made him sick in the past. He also shares that he does not know the staff at the catering company so he could ask about the length of storage of the fish.

Similarly, many participants note that the food served is unclean, with peels of vegetable left on, fish offered with scales

on, and chicken not cleaned properly. Liyon miya shared the following:

The food we are provided with by catering- like bread in the morning is so tough that it is not possible to eat them. It feels like eating a tyre. So giving bread in breakfast is useless. They give it to show off; they are just maintaining a formality by providing it.

And if we talk about the lunch- they are more horrible than breakfast. So spicy it is. And they give huge chilies in them. They do not even peel off the skin of the potatoes and sweet pumpkin. The paps of the chilies are also not taken off. Actually they do not maintain cleanliness.

For another participant, Jiten, the problem of cleanliness is so salient that he skips multiple meals even after paying for the meals. He discusses that there are times where the only option for him was to not eat the meal because the food was unclean. Karim shares the following:

The pulses they give us do not show any pulse inside, it is like distilled water that is yellow in colour. You may find very few onion and garlic in there which could be counted on. No pulse at all. And someday you will get very thick pulses, not the water. Either you will get water or the thick pulse. You will not get the proportionate cooked pulse which

we used to have in Bangladesh.

Similarly, Masood notes:

If you cut ten eggplants, three or four will be found with insects. Insects in eggplants is a very natural thing. Vegetables like eggplants, cauliflowers will have insects inside. That is quite a normal thing. But the sad part is, they don't check while preparing the eggplants. They only leave the tip and the behind of the eggplants and cut it in the middle. They give that to us to eat.

This notion of food being unclean is also shared by Sharif:

There is a kind of bamboo they give here in Singapore. Without peeling off the skin, it is simply impossible to eat that. They give it. And it is hard to eat, does not matter how much you try to eat it. It is really tough. They don't peel off the skin of potatoes, sweet pumpkin, and ladies finger. Ladies finger, they cut it in the middle, and don't take off the tip and behind. It is so disgusting. They think everything is fair to put into fire and it is then edible.

Sharif shares that sometimes the food is inedible because it has not been cleaned properly. In the examples he offers above, the practices of cooking the unpeeled vegetable are diametrically different from the care with which

food is prepared in Bengali households. Similarly, Karim shares his experience of being offered unclean spinach, "they gave me 'pui shak' (spinach) few days back and when I put it into my mouth, I felt that the pottage is full of sand. I could not eat that and had to buy food with three dollars."

Similarly, during a focus group discussion, a participant shared the following story:

It is about 2 years ago when I was working in another company ...they also used to supply caterers food which we were never able to eat fully ... so we were always hungry. It was in one of those days that ... that we were in remote work site where there were no food courts around. One of our brothers sat eating and he opened the packet for having food. He thought that there is prawn inside the packet as he saw two tentacles coming out of the packet. But it was not a prawn but a cockroach... after some times when we saw him eating it we asked ...what are you eating brother...? He said prawn... we told we did not get prawn in the lunch box...where did you get in from...take it out from your mouth and let me see it.... It was a cockroach. (Everybody laughs uncontrollably) like this you can find various kinds and types of insects in this food...

In response to the story shared above,

another participant recalled, “Particularly when they serve green leafy vegetables, we can find lots of insect in them.” According to a third participant in the discussion, “One of the guys would first pour water in the lunch packet to wash it and make the insects afloat, and then he would it ... that was a good technique.” Note in these stories the sense of collective negative feeling the participants felt toward catered food.

Other participants share their observations about how the food is prepared, often sharing that the caterers don't have adequate labour to cook the food properly. As a result, the food gets prepared in a hurry without really paying attention to the process and without focusing on hygiene. Here's Imon's discussion of the poor quality food in a focus group, where the eight other workers present agreed with his depiction:

I have seen how they chop the vegetables, they add all rotten vegetables together in the food when they chop it... they don't even see whether the place where they put the vegetables is clean or not, they just put water from the hose pipe on the vegetables once and they 'clean' it in that way... the spices that they add only Allah knows from where they bring it... the rice is ok but when they pack the food i.e. vegetables and rice 8-9 packets together.... The food

pack which is below becomes inedible because everything gets mixed and it remains like that till long hours...the 'Makan' paper pulp which is around it also gets mixed with the food and we can't eat that food anymore...in that case we usually travel for long to get a food court to buy food in higher price and eat it... as many construction sites have no cheap buyable foods around it... and the worst thing is the catering food is so bad if you put it in mouth ... it is automatically disgorged ... it comes out of the belly... its tasteless, stinky, fermented and badly cooked...the food is also cold...

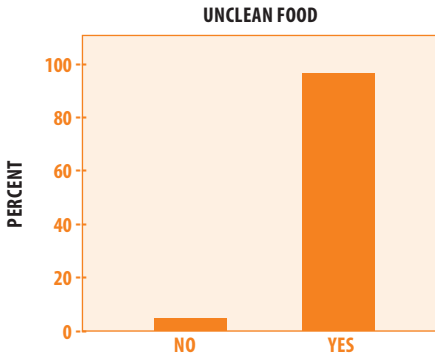
The perception of quality thus is tied to how the food is prepared, with many participants noting that the catering companies, and a large number of them are not legal, serve as many workers as possible in order to make profits. This sometimes translates into catering companies having to cook large quantities of food without having enough labour to prepare the food properly. As a result, restaurant workers are pressed for time and will often cut corners. Here is a conversation thread that emerged in a focus group:

Participant One: Another thing is I have myself seen caterers and their agents buying rotten bad quality vegetables for making food for workers because these are cheap.

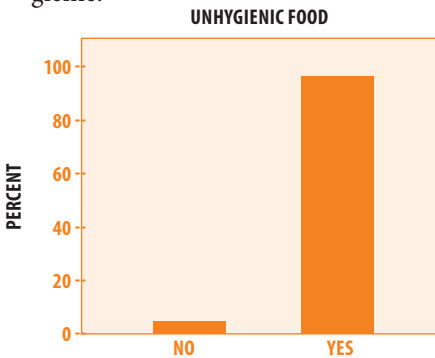
Participant Two: We have taken pictures of these foods before ... and showed it to the managers, no action was taken.

Participant Three: Perhaps these caterers are not preparing food for 500 workers at a time the number should be more than 3000.... If they have good intention they can provide us good food.

Of the 500 respondents, 467 (93.4%) noted that “The food I get from the caterer is unclean.”



Similarly, 470 (94%) of the 500 respondents agreed to the statement that “The food I get from the caterer is unhygienic.”



Stale food

Other participants discuss being served food that is stale after having been stored for a long time. Badal shares with us:

Another problem of catering is that when food is supplied the breakfast and the lunch are usually given together at the same time in packets...its cooked at around 12 in the night and we eat the lunch around 12 p.m. in the afternoon after 12 hours it is already stale.

The stale food also results in the workers becoming sick. In another instance, we worker noted, “Another thing is the Dal (pulses) that it seems that the pulses that the caterers make...are never made afresh... they use the old stale food to mix with the new food so that there is no left over or throw away food, it is just inedible.”

Inconsistent food quality

Participants note that the quality of food is inconsistent. We also observed differences across the interviews in articulating the frequency of unhealthy food that the participants received. For some participants, the quality of food received is poor consistently throughout the month. In other instances, participants such as Ruman discuss the inconsistency in the quality of food received, noting that the quality of food is bad between two

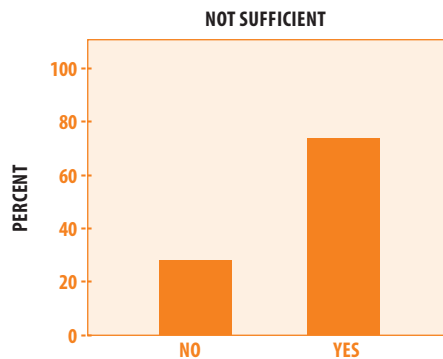
to three times a month. He notes, “The foods are not cooked same all the time. It varies from time to time. Sometimes it is good and it can be bad twice or thrice in a month.” On a similar note, Ashraf shares that the food is sometimes good and at other times, not good. The participants however differ about the number of occasions on which the food is of poor quality. In our focus groups and advisory board meetings, they make sense of this difference in frequencies of experience with bad food by noting that the quality of food varies greatly from caterer to caterer.

QUANTITY OF FOOD

Other participants discuss not having sufficient food to eat. In the voices of the participants, they at times go hungry because the food received from catering is not sufficient to meet their needs. Rashed points out for instance that the amount of food he receives is not adequate:

I took food from catering service for a month. The flour bread is like a strong kind of skin, cannot be torn to take in. And two pieces of bread are given to the workers. My nephew is two years old in Bangladesh. These two pieces of bread are not even enough for him. How could it be enough for the worker like me who works in construction? It is a hard job?

He shares that he often goes hungry because there is not enough food, and this makes him feel physically weak. Other participants point to the lack of adequate food, and often this becomes a problem, resulting in feelings of weakness and dizziness. In the survey, 432 (86.4%) respondents reported that they are “often hungry because I don’t get enough food to eat from the caterer.” On a similar note, 359 (71.8%) participants noted that “the amount of food I get from the caterer is not sufficient.”



SENSE-MAKING AND UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Sense-making refers to the ways in which participants understand the problem, offering insights into explanatory frameworks and causal mechanisms. Participants differ in how they make sense of this poor quality of food. For most of the participants, the poor

quality of food is a serious challenge that severely impacts their health and wellbeing. These participants note with desperation in their voices about the need for change. As notes Mazhar, “This can’t go on day by day. We pay one third of our salary for food and the food is so bad that it can’t be eaten. How can that go on?” Yet for Manash:

It is not the same all the time. You know the catering food, sometimes it is good and sometimes it is bad. As we do not cook it on our own or by our family or mother, we should not judge that. It is a foreign country and they cook for many people. So, we should not expect that from them.

Manash makes sense of the inconsistency in quality by noting the demands that are typically placed on caterers for delivering to a large number of people at a reasonable price.

The participants note a number of reasons for the poor quality of food. A number of them point out that caterers are often delivering to large numbers of workers and at the same time employing a limited number of workers in order to cut costs and raise profits. For others, The number of middlemen in the chain of food supply results in the poor quality of food. In making sense of the poor quality of food delivered by caterers, Jehangir shares the following:

There is a reason why the quality of food is bad here.... The reason is that the food comes in our hand through many hands /layers of the food organisation/ catering service. If somebody is the catering owner the food first goes in the hand of the manager, then it goes to the supervisor, and then it goes to the distributor, who finally gives the food to the laborer. The thing is all these people gets commission on the food packet (which is basically petty corruption/ bribe), so if the rate of food per month is 120, the catering owner gets 90 and the rest of the three have a share on the 30 SGD per person per month. This is one of the prime reason why the quality of food is going down here. If you give order for 10 packets, one packet comes free and additionally per person you get 5 dollar per month. So everybody gets benefitted in the chain. If the catering company directly delivers the food to us, then there will be no middleman dealing with us, we pay directly to the company and we will be benefitted from it. We generally pay 120-130 SGD per month for food.

Jehangir lays out the many layers of middlemen (in this instance, manager, supervisor, distributor through whom the food gets delivered). Because these middlemen take cuts on the monthly payment, the caterer has a lower margin (\$90) to work with. The quality of food therefore is low as the caterer does not

really have a whole lot of economic resource to ensure quality. In another interview, Zaman shares the following:

...there is another level of corruption in food as well. There are always few packets of food which are nice and better than the rest packets, they are prepared that way. These foods are for the near and near ones of the dormitory owners and caterers, we cannot have that food only few can have that. Once I tried to take that food and have it and they behaved in a rude manner with me. There are in fact three levels of food a. high level b. lower level and c. lowest level. The lowest is for the workers which has gourd, potato and onion cooked together every day.

In this narrative, catering owners deliver different categories of food to different stakeholders, with the workers receiving food of the poorest quality. Another worker who has been in Singapore for eight years shares:

However we cannot get the food directly from the caterers because the people who are involved in it is a big network where many interests are involved and they will not let us enter. Their hand has become longer.

The catering network of middlemen has emerged as a powerful structure for governing the flow of food and money.

Evident in this narrative is the lack of transparency in this structure as well as the impermeability of the structure, ensuring that the specific exchanges of profiteering among middlemen go unchallenged.

SOLVING PROBLEMS WITH FOOD QUALITY

Based on the conceptual framework of the CCA, the participants developed a range of solutions addressing the quality and quantity of food. These solutions were integral to developing a food secure infrastructure for Bangladeshi workers in Singapore. Of the 500 respondents, 499 (99.8%) agreed with the statement “I am supportive of efforts to improve the quality of food delivered by caterers.”

DORMITORY INFRASTRUCTURE TO COOK FOOD

For the participants in the in-depth interviews, focus groups, and advisory board meetings, having adequate facilities and provisions for cooking their own food is one way to solve the problem with poor food delivered by caterers. For Shameem:

We can solve the problem if every dormitory has the cooking facility. Then we could stop taking catering food. If

there is cooking facility, the catering company will think about the quality of the food. As they then would want to run their business, to survive the business. May be they would charge 10 to 20 dollars extra, but the food they would provide would be quality. But if we don't have the cooking facility, they would not improve themselves. They would continue taking the chances of the situation.

Similarly, for members of our advisory board, this is the first solution to addressing the problem with quality of food. Advisory board members note that when workers have the opportunity of cooking their own food, they can group up in small groups of workers who pool in their money together to prepare quality food at a cheaper price. Rashed, an advisory board participant shared, "Yes I want to say something about this....the only way to combat this problem is if we can cook our food. But most of the dormitories don't allow cooking food."

In another narrative, Erfan shares the following:

I think all dormitories would be given the facility of cooking by providing them with gas and then nobody can really complain about food, they can take say 10 dollars more from our salary for providing this facility (they do take that

in relatively expensive dormitories)

Building infrastructures for cooking in dormitories is seen as a solution to the problem of poor quality food eaten by workers. In addition to facilities for cooking, participants suggested the need for appropriate refrigeration so food can be stored. Here is what Irfan [who lives in a dormitory with cooking facilities] had to share: "they [referring to dormitory] don't have refrigerator and hence we have to buy everyday and cook. We can't preserve raw or cooked food anywhere."

Participants also note that the provision of cooking one's own food will introduce competition for caterers as they will then have to compete for customers. Notes Delowar:

If gas and cooking facilities are introduced in the dorm automatically there will be competition among the caterers to supply good food to the dorm. Otherwise nobody will buy their food in that way we would not have to care about who gets what and the level of corruption here.

Of the 500 respondents on the survey, 452 (90.4%) agree with the statement "I should have an opportunity to cook in the dormitory."



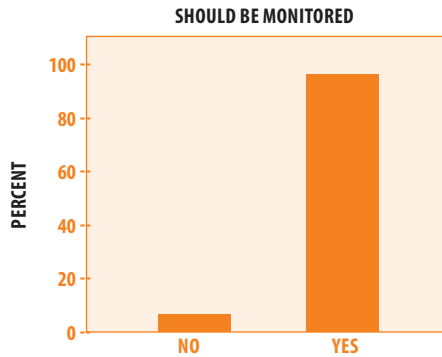
REGULATORY OVERSIGHT OF CATERERS

A number of workers discuss the effectiveness of laws in Singapore and note that they hold various organizations of the state accountable to monitor the performance of dormitory owners and caterers. Notes Shahzad:

To see that we get good and healthy food MOM can do a lot for us, for our health. They can raid the Caterers when they are making food and force them to give good food for us. In Singapore the rules and regulations are extremely strict and if they want to regulate the behaviour of caterers they can successfully do so. This is the first option

Regulating the behaviors of caterers are seen as an important step toward ensuring food safety and security. In our participant observations and ongoing conversations with civil society actors,

caterers, and dormitory owners, we learned about the large number of unlicensed operators that operate without accountability. These unlicensed caterers often work through middle men and are unable to control the quality of food. In a number of instances, we noticed the food being left outside of the perimeters of the dormitory in card board boxes for the workers to collect. In the survey, 497 respondents (99.4%) agreed with the statement “the quality of food delivered by caterers should be closely monitored.”



SHIFTING FOOD DELIVERY TO COMPANIES

A number of workers suggested the option of shifting food delivery to the companies so that the caterers are held accountable to the companies. Here is what one of the participants Rasul had to share:

..the second option is if the company supplies the food to us and ensure that since we will supply the food, we will provide you clean and nice food, the caterers will give the food to the company which is managed by the Chinese (Singaporeans) and hence the caterers will be afraid to give bad food. The company will first check the food and see if it is good then it will be supplied to us.

In this option, the food caterer is held accountable to the company, having to answer to the company for the quality of food. The food is managed by the company and this keeps the caterers accountable. The company takes over the responsibility of checking the food to ensure that it is of good quality, thus ensuring the health of the workers.

DISCUSSION

The voices of workers re-presented in this white paper draw our attention to the risks of migrant work that are connected with everyday lived experiences of health seeking. Adding to the existing literature that draws attention to the precarious nature of migrant work and the vulnerabilities that migrant workers experience, this white paper documents the risks to migrant health that are posed by the lack of access to

quality food. Quality is understood by the workers primarily in terms of cleanliness and hygiene. The voices of the workers in this project point toward the unclean, unhygienic, and stale food that they often receive from catering companies. They note the ways in which this unclean food adversely affects their health and their ability to work. Examining the problem of access to food, workers document the multiple mediators and corrupt networks that operate in the structures of food delivery, thus absorbing proportions of the \$120-\$130 that workers typically pay to catering companies. They note the adverse health effects of the food they consume, thus suggesting the urgency in addressing the infrastructures for the delivery of food.

LIMITATIONS

The CCA is locally grounded, emphasizing the contextual richness of narratives. As a result, the advisory board recruited for this project was put together by HealthServe from one of its service locations, with the community organizer playing a key role in recruitment through snowballing. The recruitment of participants for the in-depth interviews and focus groups was conducted at key public sites where workers are likely to hang out in the evenings and on Sunday,

as well as through the snowball sampling strategy. Participants were not recruited through randomization. Therefore, one of the limitations of the survey design utilized in this study is the use of a convenience sample of Bangladeshi migrant workers, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings. However, the depth of the conversations offer rich contextual insights into the experiences with food among Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the voices of the workers that emerged from the methodological framework of the CCA and drawing from the advisory board meetings, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and survey conducted with Bangladeshi male workers in Singapore, we suggest the following entry points for policies and program implementation:

- a. Greater monitoring and enforcement of food safety standards for male migrant workers. Particularly important are the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of food delivered by caterers.
- b. Greater monitoring of licenses given out to catering companies as well as greater monitoring of unlicensed caterers operating in the dormitories.
- c. Greater monitoring of food delivery processes so middle men can be removed from the processes of food delivery.
- d. Greater provisions for employing companies to directly interface with catering companies in providing food to workers.
- e. Building infrastructure for cooking and refrigerating food at dormitories that house workers.

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¹We have changed the name of the service center to protect the identity of the participants. Similarly, we have changed the name of the participants to protect their identity.

