



# **Food security in cultural pluralism: the impact of intergenerational conflict, family functioning and parenting on obesity among African migrants**

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# Background

Ten years have elapsed since the World Food Summit in Rome pledged to halve the number of undernourished people in the world by no later than 2015

**854 million people worldwide are chronically hungry and undernourished**

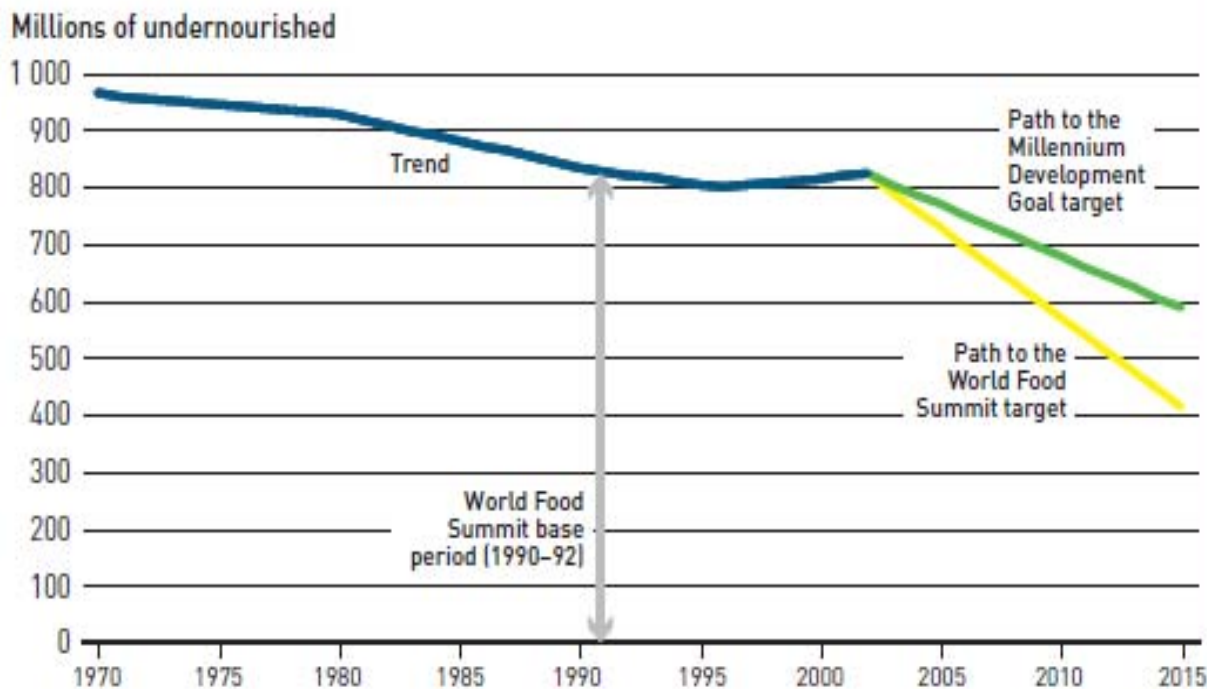
= 12.6 percent of the estimated world population of 6.6 billion



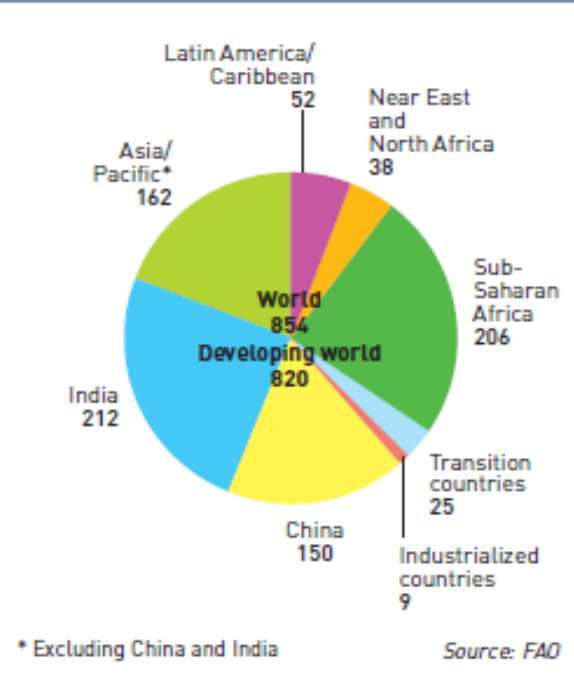


# Distribution of under-nourishment

Number of undernourished people in the developing world



Undernourished 2001-03 (millions)





# Issues of food availability (FAO et al 2002)

1. Although the world population has increased by 70 percent since the 1970s', the world produces enough food to feed everyone on earth without putting excessive pressure on food prices or environmental degradation
2. Agricultural outputs provide 17 percent more calories per living person today than it did 40 years ago
3. The global per capita dietary energy supplies will continue to increase for at least another 25 years

**Issues with the distribution of food and  
the resources with which to access it**





# Food aid – is it necessary?





# What went wrong? The dilemmas!

**Accelerating Globalization and Further Trade Liberalization**

**Sweeping Technological Changes**

**Degradation of Natural Resources/Increasing Water Scarcity**

**Health and Nutrition Crises**

**Rapid Urbanization**

**The Changing Face of Farming**

**Continued Conflict**

**Climate Change**

**Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Key Actors**

**(IFPR, 2002)**





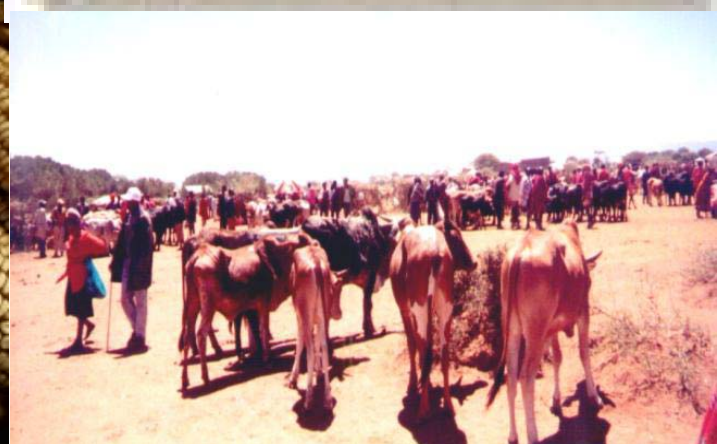
## African migration to developed countries

- Sub-Saharan African migrants constitute a fast growing cluster of the population in the developed world
- predominantly to the [Americas](#)- **Dispersal through slavery and lately through immigration**
- Then later to [Europe](#), the [Middle East](#), The Pacific (Australia) and other corners of the globe under different migration streams:
  - Skilled migration and the brain drain
  - Refugees and humanitarian entrants
  - Family reunion
  - Migration for educational attainment





# The African experience

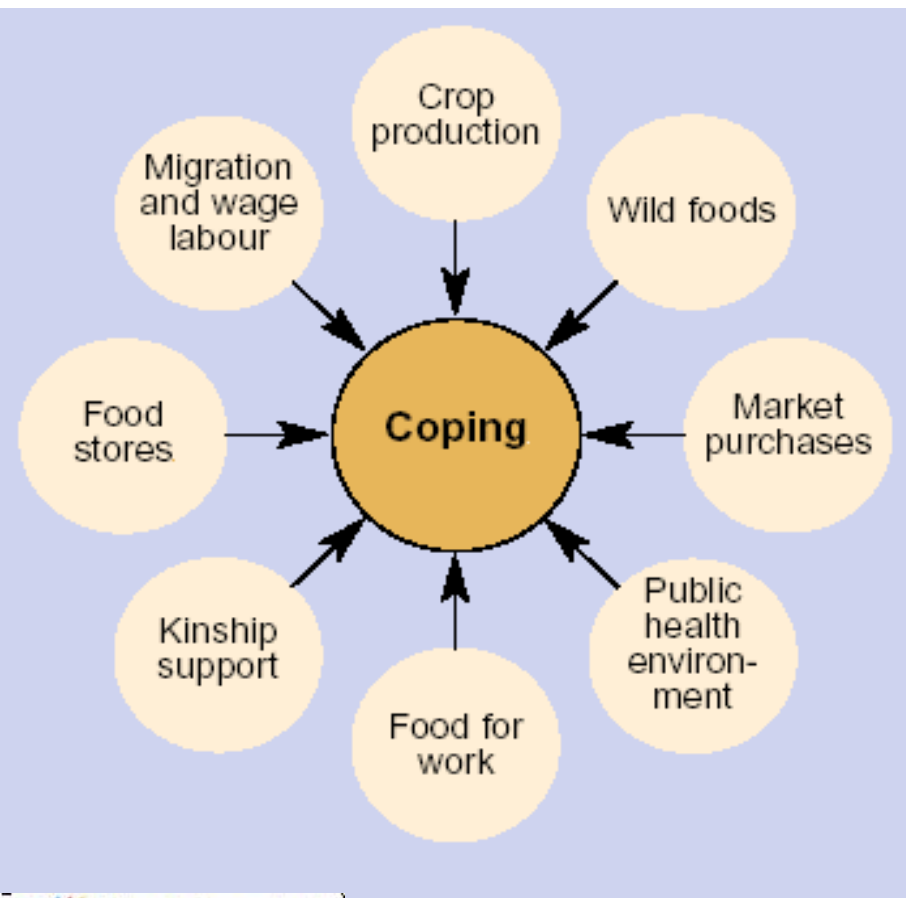




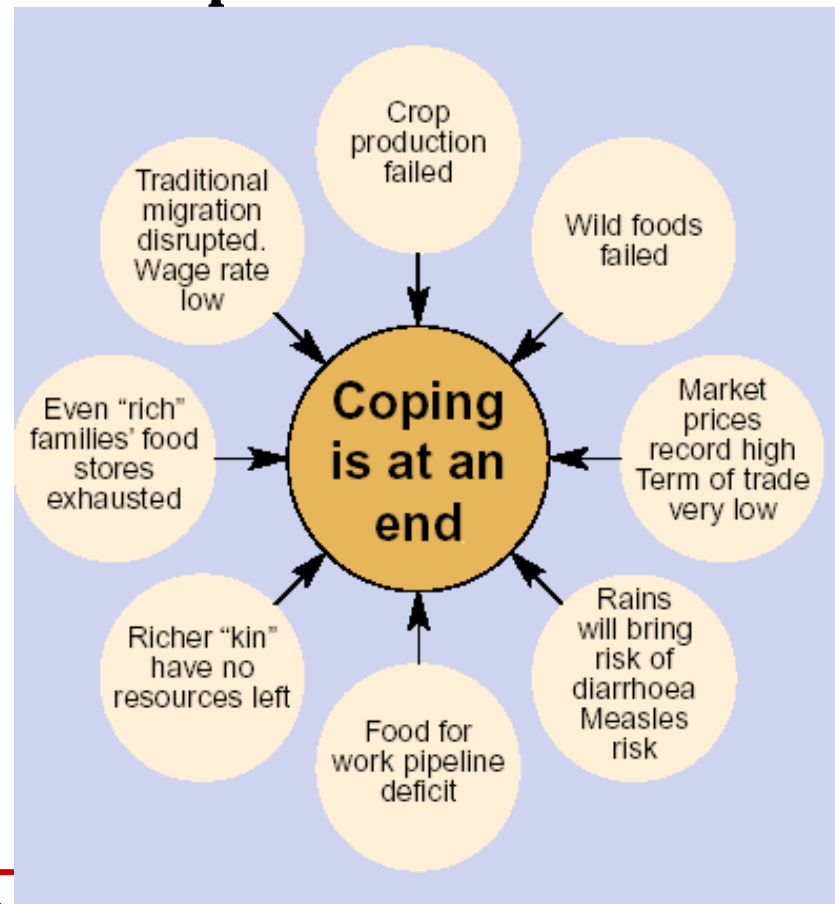


# Principle factors undermining coping strategies in Northern Darfur

## Normal livelihood patterns



## When livelihood is compromised



Source: Collins 2001





# Food availability and access= $FS$ ?

1. Food is one of a whole range of factors that determine why the poor take decisions. Assets preservation can effect the behaviour of the poor at times of food insecurity
2. Maxwell (2002): dilemma facing small farm households involves a trade-off between immediate subsistence and long-term sustainability.
3. Corbett (1988): Preservation of assets takes priority over meeting immediate food needs until the point of destitution, when all options have been exhausted
4. Oshaug (1985): 3 kinds of households:
  1. Enduring households: Maintain household food security on a continuous basis;
  2. Resilient households: Suffer shocks but recover quickly; and
  3. Fragile households: Become increasingly insecure because of their vulnerability to external shocks.





# Food availability and access=FS?

De Waal (1989) :

During the famine period Sudanese in Dafur chose to go hungry in order to preserve their assets and thus their future livelihoods. They were quite prepared to put up with considerable levels of hunger, in order to preserve seeds for planting, or to avoid having to sell an animal





# Acculturation Strategies Framework (Berry 2006)

ISSUE 1:

MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

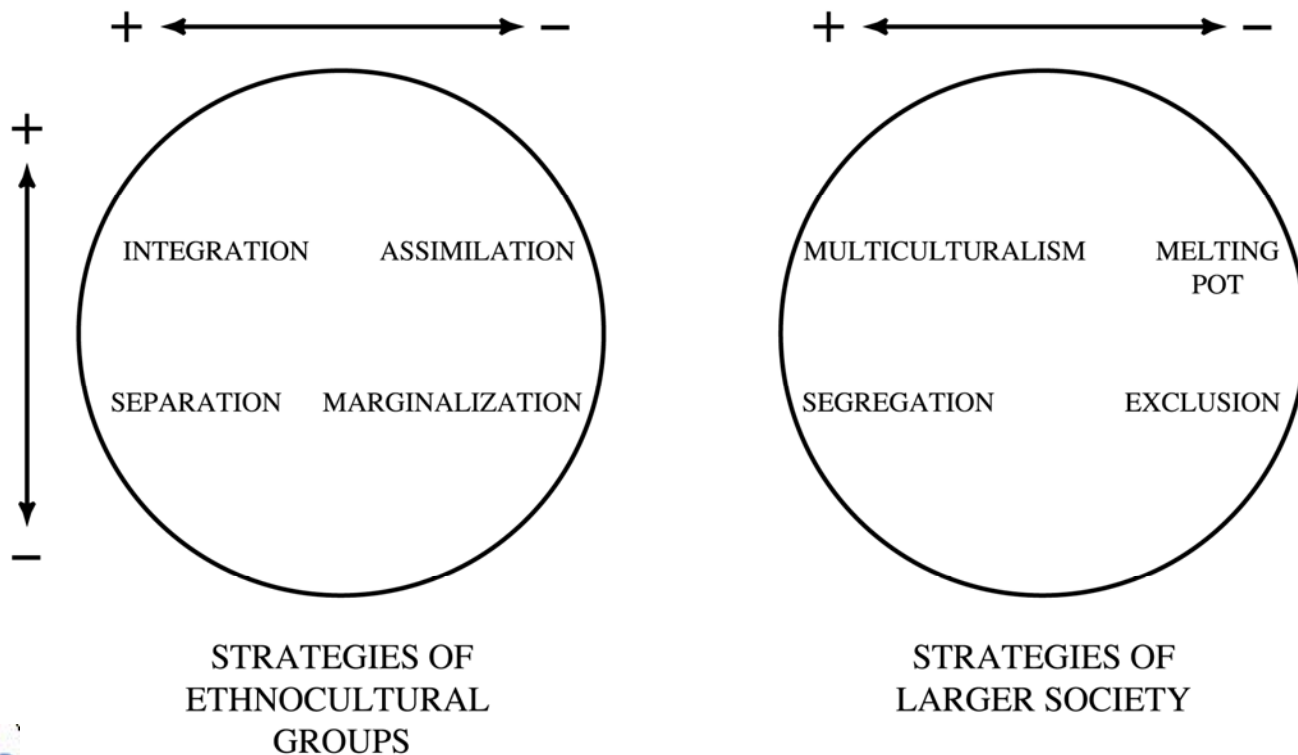
ISSUE 2:

RELATIONSHIPS

SOUGHT

AMONG

GROUPS





# Culture and food

1. Cultural constructs of healthy food
2. Body image
3. From substance farming/food aid to diversified daily food provision (Increased purchasing power)

## Paradox

1. Housing
2. Family size
3. Limited choices/ familiarity with food





# Modifiable risk factors for childhood obesity

Acculturation may affect:

## Familial factors

- parental overweight
- parental eating, diet
- ↑rapid infant growth

## Child feeding practices

- few fruits, vegetables
- energy dense foods
- food away from home
- sweetened drinks
- large portions
- frequent snacking





# Consequences of unfamiliarity with food

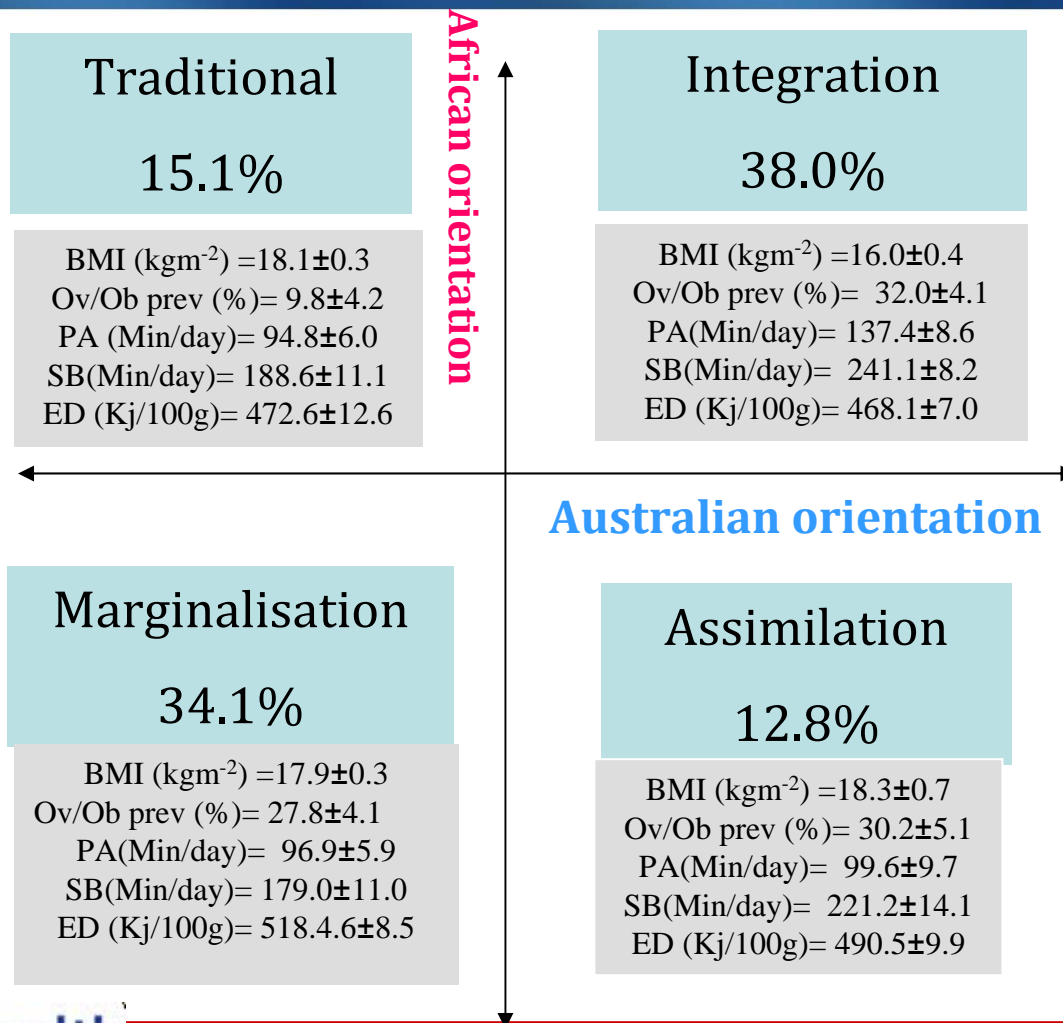
1. New foods adopted since arrival were pizza, breakfast cereals and fast foods, but also included new fruits and vegetables
2. Dietary acculturation characterised by three processes: substitution, supplementation/addition and modification of recipes

Renzaho and Burns, 2006





# Acculturation and obesity and its risk factors among







# Adjusted coefficients ( $\beta$ ; 95%CI) of BMI, physical activity, sedentary behaviours, energy density by acculturation (a)

	BMI (kgm-2)		Physical activity (min/day)		Sedentary behaviours (min/day)		Energy density (kj/100g)	
	$\beta$	95%CI	$\beta$	95%CI	$\beta$	95%CI	$\beta$	95%CI
<b>Acculturation type</b>								
<i>Traditional</i>	(ref)		(ref)		(ref)		(ref)	
<i>Bicultural</i>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>(0.2, 2.1)*</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>(19.0, 74.8)**</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>(4.4, 81.5)*</b>	-14.8	(-52.1, 22.4)
<i>Assimilated</i>	1.2	(-0.6, 3.0)	-6.2	(-36.4, 24.0)	<b>57.5</b>	<b>(15.0, 100.0)**</b>	-5.6	(-49.8, 38.6)
<i>Marginalized</i>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>(0.4, 2.5)**</b>	1.1	(-24.2, 26.4)	7.3	(-31.2, 45.9)	<b>42.0</b>	<b>(1.0, 83.1)*</b>
	r <sup>2</sup> =0.185, p<0.001		r <sup>2</sup> =0.122, p<0.05		r <sup>2</sup> =0.184, p<0.001		r <sup>2</sup> =0.141, p<0.01	

(a) Model adjusted for household income, parental educational level, religion, child's age, child's gender, and length of stay in Australia. \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01





# Inter-generational acculturation gap

Relocation to another country affects all aspects of life.

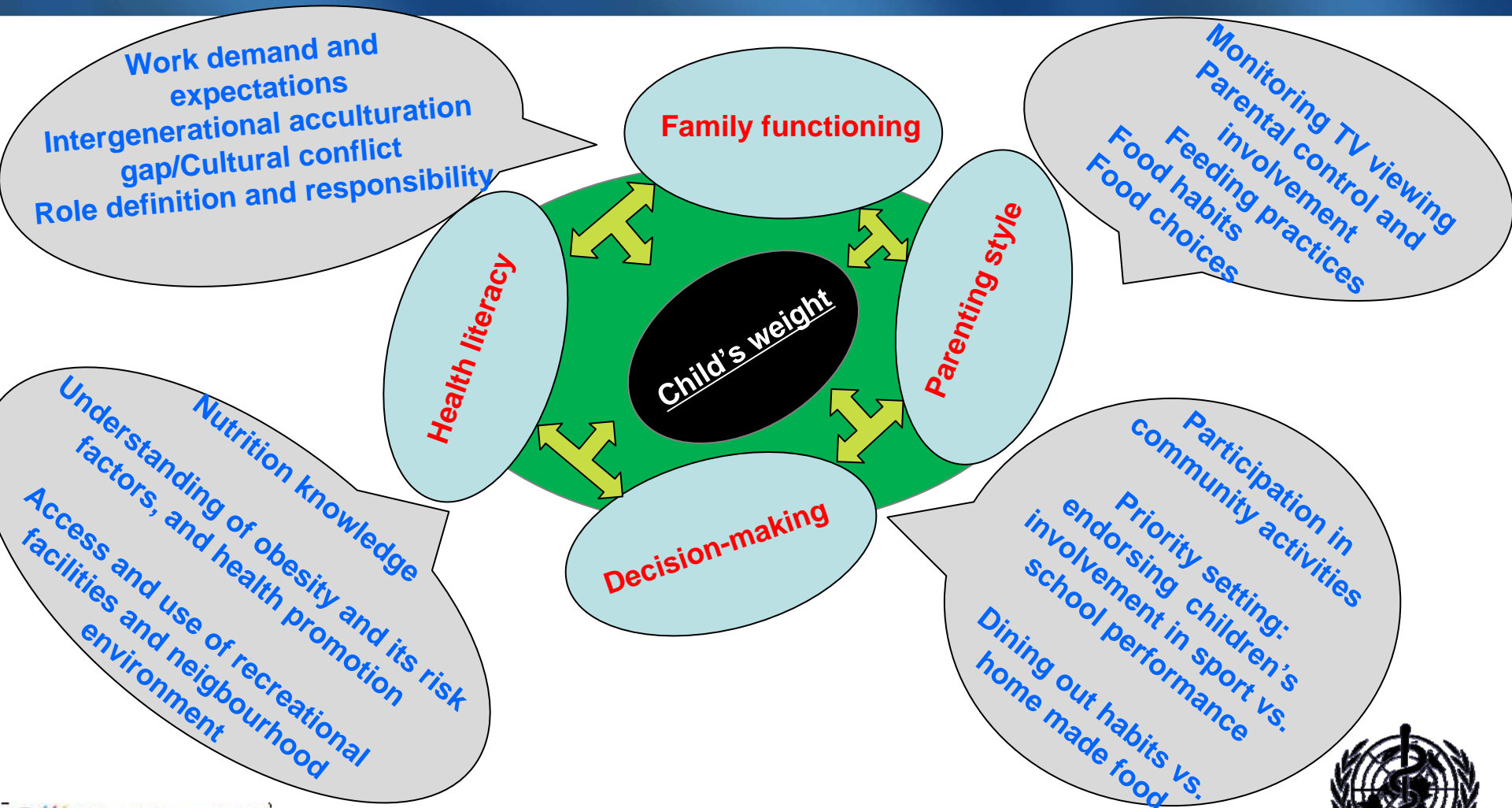
Acculturation:

1. **Affects values, perceptions, attitudes, language and learned behaviours that shape one's life**
2. **Erodes traditional beliefs and cultural rules**
3. **Facilitates learning of both acceptable or unacceptable new values**



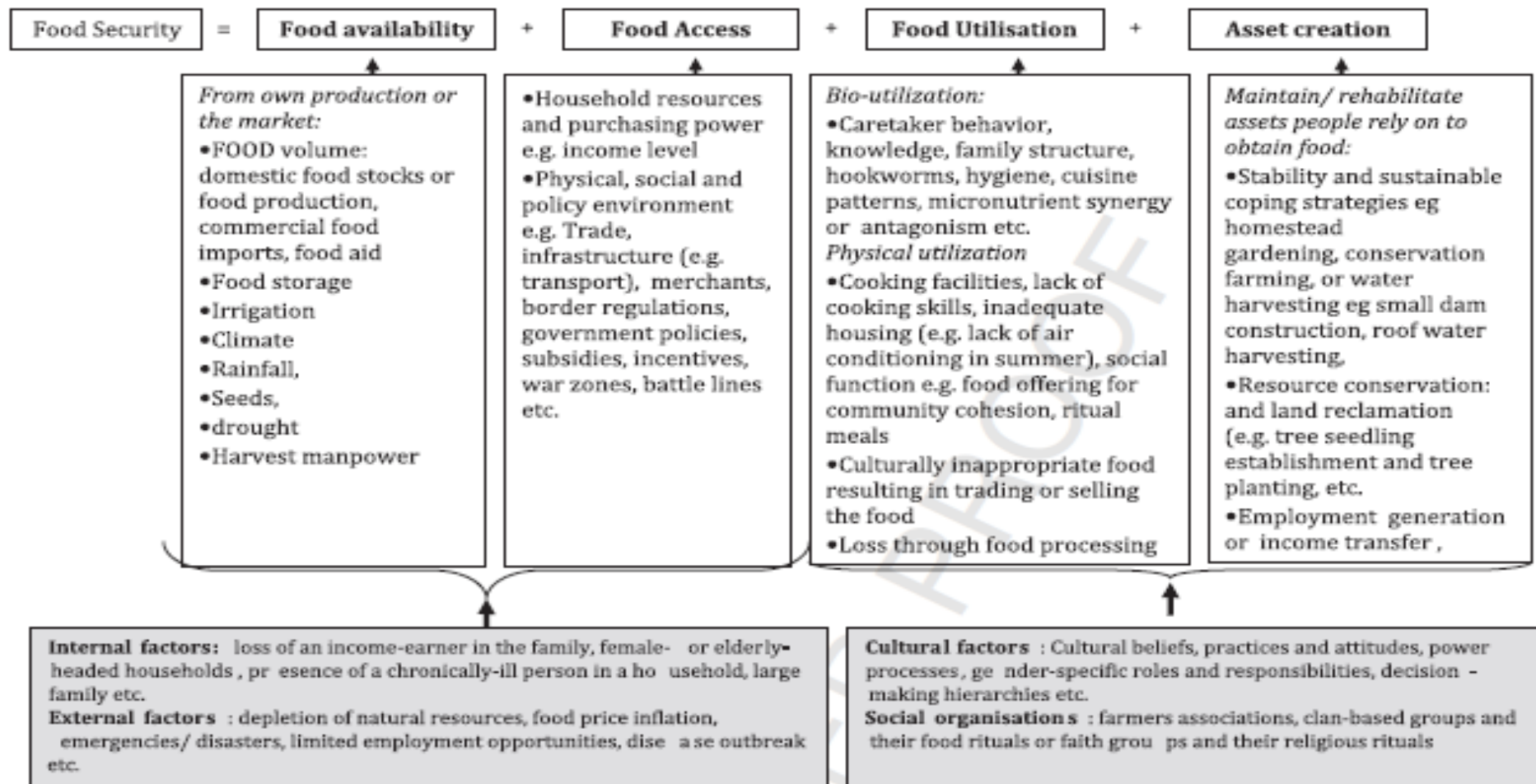


# Acculturation and obesity risk (Renzaho, 2009)





# Sustainable food security : African migrant (Renzaho and Mellor, 2009)





# Parenting and FS-# values (Renzaho et al 2009)

## *Food choices and consumption*

1. Parental preference for adopting traditional values for certain food groups and cooking methods
2. Limited access to fresh and organic foods
3. Easy access to junk food, **but also culturally valued**
4. Change away from community eating and engagement

## *Beliefs about food and health risks associated with unhealthy food*

1. Different beliefs between parents and children about importance of healthy lifestyle and healthy eating
2. Knowledge about health risks associated with poor diet





# Family functioning (Renzaho et al 2009)

## *Control of children*

1. Control of behaviour through strict boundaries around children's behaviour activities
2. Control of children's social development through close monitoring of interests, activities and friends

## *Low independence of children*

1. Close monitoring and involvement in children's social activities
2. Tight boundaries relating to children's daily routines
3. Lack of control for children's regarding food choice at home
4. Control of children's activities leading to boredom and sedentary behaviour





# Decision making (renzaho et al 2009)

## *Decision making*

1. Acknowledgement that parents have authority in making decisions
2. Children included in early stages of decision making

## *Mentoring/support*

1. Children taught cultural norms and expected to follow them
2. Gender dependent support (mum with daughter, dad with son)
3. Taught importance of family unit and adhering to rules of culture

## *Support for children's physical activity*

1. Concern about community environment in which children engage in activities leads to discouragement of incidental physical activity (eg., safety of playing in street)
2. Limited involvement in children's sporting activities





# Parenting style and obesity risk

- **USA: A study of 812 multiethnic children aged 54 months found that:**
  - Children of authoritarian parents had almost 5 times the odds of overweight in first grade, and odds of children of permissive and neglectful parents were twice those of authoritative parents (Rhee et al, 2006)
- **Australia: a study involving 4983 children (-5 years) and their parents found that:**
  - Mothers' parenting behaviors and styles were not associated increased risk of obesity in children.
  - Higher father control scores were associated with lower odds of the child being in a higher BMI category.
  - Compared with authoritative style, children of fathers with permissive and disengaged parenting styles had higher odds of being in a higher BMI category (Wake et al 2006).







# Family functioning and obesity

## Wilkins et al (1998) found that:

- Higher score on poor family functioning scale were associated with higher child BMI among US children.

## Chen and Kennedy (2005) found that:

- Poor family communication contributed to increased body mass index in Chinese-American children

## Beverley et al (2006) found that:

- Obese girls rated their families lower on Cohesion and Expressiveness. Obese boys did not differ from normal weight boys on any of the measures.





# Summary

- Migrants undergo different levels of acculturation once they relocate to another country
- Acculturation affects many facets of life related to food availability, access and utilisation, hence pre-disposing them to obesity
- Food security programs and frameworks need to be rooted in traditional values and habits in order to maintain and reinforce healthy traditional practices





# Areas of attention

- **Promotion of intergenerational congruence**
  - Minimise intergenerational conflict
  - Maximise child-parent agreement in values and behaviours
- **Acknowledging cultural differences as the key to tackling obesity**
  - Interventions need to be customised and culturally tailored. Intervention content and the setting are more important than the duration of the intervention
  - An understanding of the meaning and use of the concept of food security and obesity within varied cultural contexts should be used as a stepping stone to promoting healthy eating





# Getting right for migrants-way forward

- 1. Investing in Human Resources.**
  - The Victorian Coalition for Migration and Health**
- 2. Improving Access to Productive Resources and Remunerative Employment**
- 3. Improving Markets, Infrastructure, and Institutions**
- 4. Cultural competence and cultural capital in food programming**





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