

Bidirectional Loop Excerpts:

Transcript Excerpt #24. The 12-year-old boy from a nuclear family lived with his mother, who developed psychosis after starting the ARV medication. After that, the family became severely food insecure. His father, a carpenter, couldn't provide—he spent most days drinking local brew or smoking cannabis, and even encouraged the boy to smoke to suppress his hunger since there wasn't enough food. The older brother left school to look after the younger ones and their mother, who used to provide for them. The boy was mocked at school because of his mother's mental state. He grew more aggressive, started missing classes, and his grades fell from high to below average. It's hard to tell—sometimes the parents' mental health struggles lead to food insecurity, sometimes it's the child's own distress. Either way, it's all connected. (Female teacher, 36 years)

Transcript Excerpt #25. The 12-year-old boy from a nuclear family refused to eat after failing his exams, claiming he was unwell. His self-esteem decreased, and he became sad, isolated, withdrawn, and appeared depressed at school. His distress about academic performance and lack of appetite led him to miss meals, which further affected his mood and participation. Another boy, aged 9, also from a nuclear family, faced severe food insecurity. His mother, who headed the household, often drank local brew, and the parents eventually separated. The ongoing stress at home worsened as he frequently skipped meals and collapsed in class, eventually developing seizure-like episodes that caused him to drop out of school. (Female teacher, 47 years)

Transcript Excerpt #26. The 8-year-old boy living with his grandmother and aunt, both heavy drinkers, faced severe food poverty at home. The constant lack of food and household instability left him stressed and depressed. Peers at school rejected him after they discovered he often ate pigsty leftovers, deepening his sense of isolation. He frequently dozed off in class, stole other children's money, and struggled to concentrate. His worsening emotional state and withdrawal made it even harder to access support or improve his situation, leading to frequent absences and repeating classes multiple times. (Female teacher, 57 years)

Transcript Excerpt #28. The 9-year-old boy from a child-headed family once lived with his biological mother, who was an alcoholic and eventually abandoned her children. The distress and instability in the home contributed to severe food insecurity; he survived on cassava, the only food his older sibling could provide. He often begged and stole food, even licking the school saucepan. The household was severely food insecure, leaving him hungry for days. This constant hunger affected his behaviour—he fetched water for money, missed school, and struggled to focus, causing his grades to drop. However, when his grandmother, a peasant farmer, took over and provided regular meals, his performance at school improved. (Female teacher, 29 years)

Transcript Excerpt #29a. The 13-year-old boy lived with both parents, but the family struggled with food insecurity. The father, a logger, taught his son to smoke marijuana, saying it would help him eat less and cope with hunger. The boy began using marijuana at school, even encouraging classmates to try it, explaining that it suppresses appetite when food is scarce. As food insecurity persisted, the boy grew increasingly withdrawn, stopped bringing food from home, and relied only on marijuana to manage his hunger. This coping mechanism—born from household deprivation—affected his mental health and behaviour: he became indifferent to peer mockery and more isolated, focusing less on learning and more on survival. Food insecurity deepened his psychological distress, while marijuana use further undermined his well-being and academic performance, trapping him in a self-reinforcing cycle. (Male teacher, 40 years)

Transcript Excerpt #29b. The 13-year-old orphan girl from a nuclear family lived with her prostitute stepmother, who often used cannabis and deliberately forced her to have sex with multiple men in the village to earn money and buy food. Despite disliking prostitution, she did it to survive severe food shortages. She became traumatised, frequently feeling very sad, stressed, and depressed. Her ability to interact normally with peers, especially boys, was hindered, and her academic performance declined sharply. She withdrew from school activities and eventually dropped out. She faced intense mental distress and behavioural issues. Her only choices were to engage in sex work for food or go hungry. (Male teacher, 40 years)

Transcript Excerpt #30. The 13-year-old boy from a nuclear family lived in a household with moderate food insecurity. His biological father neglected him and did not contribute financially, which worsened the household's instability. The boy felt hopeless, resented other children's fathers, and was often lost in thought. Persistent hunger at school led him to frequently beg for food, causing him to become more withdrawn and struggle to complete his classwork or take part in activities. Over time, his emotional distress and ongoing lack of access to foods he desired—such as fish, beef, and soda—became overwhelming. One day, he attempted suicide by swallowing seven Panadol tablets. His food portions were always tiny and, being older, were never enough for him. (Male teacher, 34 years).

Transcript Excerpt #31. The 12-year-old boy from a single-mother household lived with his HIV-positive mother, who was on ARV medication. As the sole breadwinner, his mother later developed ARV-induced psychosis, and as her condition worsened, he began to go without food at home. The resulting food insecurity increased his misery and worry. Previously, he brought well-prepared cassava and bottled water to school, but eventually, he could only bring drinking water. He started begging for food from his peers and became miserable, sad, and extremely worried. His language skills declined, and his academic performance also suffered. (Male teacher, 42 years).

Transcript Excerpt #32. The 13-year-old orphaned and neglected immigrant boy struggled with severe food poverty after his father's death. He became homeless and wandered the village with no one to care for him. His daily fight to survive—collecting and selling grasshoppers—left him vulnerable to robbery and violence, which traumatised him and deepened his distress. This trauma, compounded by persistent hunger, caused rapid weight loss and a visibly thin frame. As his mental health declined, he lost interest in sports, became reserved and deeply depressed, further reducing his ability to seek food or assistance. His worsening emotional state led to frequent school absences and eventual dropout, trapping him in a self-reinforcing vicious cycle where food insecurity and severe psychological distress continually fed into each other. (Male teacher, 44 years)

Transcript Excerpt #33. The 12-year-old girl from a nuclear family undergoes severe trauma. She was sexually assaulted by her biological father, who also used marijuana. Meanwhile, her stepmother mistreated her, sometimes refusing her supper if she didn't finish chores on time after school. She became overly anxious, lost interest in hobbies, and isolated herself from her peers. Traumatised and depressed, she avoided home by staying late at school to escape abuse and neglect. To survive, she stole mangoes, jackfruits, and guavas from gardens, especially on her way home, which caused her shame as her peers called her a thief. Her absence from school increased, her grades fell, and she eventually dropped out. Her language skills also declined. She was trapped in a cycle where social and psychological challenges worsened each other, hindering her recovery. (Female teacher, 32 years)

Transcript Excerpt #34. The 7-year-old boy from a nuclear family grew up as a stepchild after his parents separated and was discriminated against by his stepmother, who denied him food while feeding her biological children. The family was moderately food insecure, and withholding food as punishment was common. This ongoing deprivation increased his emotional distress—he was mocked at school for stealing, often dozed off in class, and became absent-minded. His hunger worsened his ability to concentrate and be attentive, leading to declining academic performance and deteriorating language skills, which in turn deepened his social exclusion and aggression. These mental health struggles further limited his access to food and support, trapping him in a vicious, self-reinforcing cycle of food insecurity and psychological distress. (Female teacher, 49 years)

Transcript Excerpt #35. The 10-year-old boy came from an extended family and started living with his paternal grandmother after his biological father died by suicide. In this household, food was not shared equally. The adults and older siblings were always served meat, while the younger children received only eggplants or silverfish. One day, the boy stole the teacher's meat stew. When his classmates found out, they mocked him and isolated him from their group. He sometimes avoided going home because of the fear of being punished at home. Over time, his self-esteem went down. He became distracted in class, which led to a drop in his academic performance. Even after the teachers moved him to the front of the class to help him concentrate, he struggled and eventually had to repeat the same class. (Female teacher, 40 years)

Transcript Excerpt #36. The 11-year-old boy from a nuclear family lived with his biological mother. At first, his mother always packed him enough school food. However, she started giving him smaller food portions when his academic performance declined. The boy would go to school with only a few sweet potatoes. As a result, he was constantly hungry, dozed off during afternoon lessons, and lost concentration. He started begging for food from his classmates, but they sometimes bullied and mocked him. He became increasingly isolated, lost friends, and his motivation to learn dropped. Eventually, his grades declined sharply, and even his language skills worsened. (Female teacher, 29 years)