

EDITORIAL

Urban-Rural Linkages in the Context of Covid-19 Pandemic

The seven articles in this SPECIAL ISSUE of THE HABITAT REVIEW JOURNAL VOLUME 18 ISSUE 1 are results of research that under Covid-19 Impacts on Food Transportation and other Commodities in Urban-Rural Nexus (Covid-19 ITFCURN) Project in Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria (Niger State), Senegal and Zimbabwe. University of Nairobi and UN-HABITAT collaborated in the project, focusing on studying role urban-rural linkages (URLs) functions can play in sustainable urbanization and territorial development.

The first article on *Urban Food Markets Dynamics and Livelihoods in the Context of Covid -19 in Harare*; focuses on effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the urban food markets' operations in Harare. Players in the urban food markets such as food retailers, informal food vendors and households were also affected by the pandemic in various ways. However, little is known about the dynamics that shaped the urban food markets operations during the Covid-19 lockdown period. Focusing on urban food markets in Harare, the study utilised a questionnaire survey administered through Kobo collect to collect data from key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations to collect data from urban food market stakeholders. The findings revealed that all stakeholders that include formal food retailers, informal food vendors and households in the urban food market chain were negatively affected by Covid-19 induced lockdowns. The major effect being shortage of some food commodities resulting in price distortions and uncertainty on the markets. It is therefore recommended that future policy making processes must be inclusive and sensitive as much as possible so that formal and informal urban food markets operations are not interrupted.

Role of Inter-Regional Linkages in Promoting Functional Development between Harare Metropolitan Region and Murewa-Mutoko Districts: Lessons from Covid-19 Pandemic article interrogates the food, labour and information linkages between nodal regions and the periphery through the lenses of trade factor migration and cumulative causation in the face of Covid-19. Open-ended interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and observations were utilised to collect data from key informants, farmers and traders selected through snowballing. Findings show the dominance of the nodal Harare Metropolitan Region on the food, labour and information flows from the peripheral Murewa-Mutoko Districts. Food produced in these two districts is largely sold in Harare, bypassing the Murewa and Mutoko growth points. As a node, the Harare Metropolitan Region presents a large market and buying power than the two district centres combined. In addition, labour movement from Murewa-Mutoko Districts prioritised working in Harare Metropolitan Region. Many farmers from these districts worked in Harare Region before resorting to farming after job lay-offs. Information flows between the node and periphery relays messages on the agricultural products required, the quantity and quality as well as the farm input requirements. As a result of these linkages, the Murewa-Mutoko Districts specialise in cash crop production for sale to Mbare Musika. In return, the Harare Metropolitan Region, through industrialisation and agglomeration, specialises in finished products and agriculture inputs that are sold to these districts. However, these synergies were impeded by travel restrictions and the resultant high transactional costs as farmers negotiated the Covid-19 restriction through bribes. The study recommends territorial development that reduces the dependence on Harare, and development of decentralised markets to decongest the Mbare Musika.

In the article *Role of Smallholder Farmers in Food Supply to Urban Consumers During Covid-19 Pandemic: Case of Kinale and Magumu Farmlands*; the authors present the findings from a study that analysed the role of smallholder farming in food supply while revealing the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on smallholder farmers as they complied with containment measures imposed by the government. Purposive sampling was used to collect data in Kinale and Magumu farmlands and the nearby Soko Mjinga Food Market. Findings show that smallholder farming produces food for own consumption and income from the sale of surplus produce to urban consumers. Nairobi Metropolitan region is the main destination of food supply from the farmlands with Mombasa, Nakuru and Kisumu being the other main food market destinations. Notably, Covid-19 impacted negatively on food production and urban-rural flows. The article concludes

that smallholder farming and food flow from the farms to urban consumers confirm urban-rural relations are critical linkages that sustain the interdependence of urban and rural areas. It recommends planning for urban-rural relations in terms of rural farmlands territories, food markets, sites and city spaces.

Impacts of Covid-19 Containment Measures on Informal Food Vending in Residential Neighbourhoods in Nairobi City County, this other article investigates the impacts of the measures on food vending in two adjacent residential neighbourhoods in Nairobi City County. The study was conducted to appraise the implications to vending businesses and the coping mechanisms adopted by vendors. Sourcing of food transported to urban food markets from rural areas and also directly from the farmers by the food vendors confirmed that vending is a continuation of urban-rural linkages. Enforcement and compliance with the containment measures disrupted the flow; causing loss of business hours, increases in the cost of vending operations, and escalation in the prices of food. These impacts threatened to destroy the livelihoods of the vendors against a backdrop of the challenges faced in coping with the pandemic itself. The article recommends the formulation of a municipal policy on food vending that aims to streamline the logistics of buying food at the urban markets; the transportation of food to vending spaces and to the sites in urban residential neighbourhoods. The article further recommends that the vendors adequately organize themselves into vendors' business groups that could aid them in mobilizing and accessing money to support their growth and for sustaining their food vending operations instead of solely relying on augment support offered by the government.

In the article *Covid-19 Impacts on Food Systems within the Context of Urban-Rural linkages nexus in Zimbabwe: Case of Harare, Mutoko and Murewa Districts* the authors examine the impacts of Covid-19 on food systems within the context of rural-urban linkages nexus between Harare and the districts of Mutoko and Murewa. This is against the background that the outbreak of Covid-19 and the containment measures taken against the pandemic, such as social distancing, lockdowns and travel restrictions, changed the way people live and interact, their livelihoods strategies, and movement between places. The consequential effects of Covid-19 pandemic globally include, among others, economic decline, reduced incomes, and constrained production, which all affected food production, distribution and consumption in the rural and urban areas. To achieve its aim, the study adopted a mixed methods research design that combined the use of questionnaire-based interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, to collect data from farmers and traders selected through snowball sampling procedure. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the data. Findings reveal that Covid-19 and the containment measures affected food production, transportation and marketing between rural and urban areas. These included reduced trading hours that translated into reduced the quantity of food traded; food losses that dis-incentivized farmers from further production; reduction of the farmers and traders' incomes; corruption and bribes at road block set up to enforce Covid-19 travel restrictions; and increased costs of operations to farmers, traders and food transporters. Within the stakeholder engagement framework, the study recommends that the national government, City of Harare, farmers, transporters and food traders form a dialogue platform that listens to the diverse interest of stakeholders in the management of the food markets, removal of middlemen, refurbishment and decentralisation of food markets within the Harare Metropolitan Province.

Vulnerability of food systems in the rural and peri-urban territories of Senegal to the test of COVID-19: Case of Lompoul-Potou (Louga region) and the Pikine's Trade Union market (Suburb of Dakar) Senegal presents dynamic city-rural relations marked by strong interdependence organized around the supply and distribution of food products and services. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the main sectors of national socio-economic and political life. Mobility restrictions and barrier measures have impeded the regular and traditional functioning of food production and distribution systems in rural and peri-urban areas. This paper analyzes the level of resilience and adaptation of food systems to Covid-19, through the Urban-rural linkages based on food systems (food supplies and market gardening, livestock and poultry products). Two representative sites were selected for this cases study: the Lompoul-Potou axis in the Niayes sector of Louga (a humid depression zone, large hub of market garden products in Senegal) and the Pikine's Trade Union located in the suburbs of Dakar.

The market is a focal point for the transport of rural food products. . It is the main vegetable and fruit market in Senegal. The methodological approach was based on the collection of data, testimonies and life stories from different stakeholders in the sector and summaries of field observations. Mixed surveys, both quantitative (on 150 people) and qualitative (on 20 people), were used to gather the opinions of different groups: food traders in urban and rural markets; rural households owning small farms; urban and rural households and informal urban food sellers. The main finding of the study shows that mobility restrictions have led to disruptions in the chain, from production to accessibility of food products. The pandemic has negatively affected the farmers' activities, operations and logics, as well as urban and rural markets. At the end it is obvious that food resilience comes from the adoption of public policies capable of promoting inclusive and sustainable economic, social and territorial development.

The final article on *Urban Food Security During Covid-19: Households Access to Food in High, Middle- and Low-Income Neighborhoods in Minna – Niger State, Nigeria* focuses on a cross-sectional study of access to food among urban households in high-, middle- and low-income neighborhoods in Minna - Niger State. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 households for the study while the data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Thematic analysis was employed on interview and observation data. In this study, findings revealed that only 43 % of the sampled households had physical access to food during covid-19 pandemic. The cross-sectional analysis revealed that only 10% of the households living in low-income neighborhood were able to accessed food during the pandemic compared to household 70 % and 50% in middle- and high-income neighborhood respectively. Findings also revealed that 100% of low-income households had no stable access to food sources during the pandemic compared to 60% and 40 % in middle and high-income neighborhood who claimed not to have stable access to their food source during the pandemic. This study indicates that the urban households in low-income neighborhoods were more exposed to the pandemic and threatened by food insecurity compared to the middle- and high-income households. Thus, this paper recommends a safety net program with a special focus on urban poor so as to ease the urban household food insecurity that arise from shocks of COVID-19 pandemic and another public health crisis and pandemics that may likely happen in the future.

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