

MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT, POVERTY AND ACCESS TO FOOD IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES OF THE CITY OF MANZINI, ESWATINI

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The New Urban Agenda acknowledges the centrality of food security and nutrition in our quest for Sustainable Cities in this fast-urbanizing African continent, and more so, if our efforts towards achieving the SDGs of the United Nations are well directed. Climate events such as droughts and floods with persistent poverty and now Covid-19 continue to pose a great challenge to sub-Saharan food systems. Like its neighbor South Africa, with no official measurement of food insecurity in the Kingdom of eSwatini (formerly the Kingdom of Swaziland), the ongoing threat to food systems continues to heighten the difficulty of accessing safe and nutritious food for majority of the population, and remains a challenge to measure and monitor. This paper contributes to the urban food security debate by exploring how missed different data sources can be employed to maximise the ability at national level to monitor the effects of drought, poverty and access to food on low income urban households in the economic capital city of Manzini.

By arguing that the rich insights from sub-national statistical surveys remain a largely untapped resource for understandings of the contextual experience of food insecurity, drawing from data collected from 145 households in the kaKhoza informal settlement, this paper isolates common and some less common indicators that help to monitor the effects of drought, poverty and access to food on low-income communities of eSwatini by comparing some of the emerging factors contributing to food insecurity in low income urban spaces. These include reducing the quantity and frequency of free or low priced rural-urban food transfer, reverse food flows from urban to rural areas and the economic impact of the drought-food price cocktail on businesses and job security of people at Manzini.

The paper further argues that while different measures of food insecurity confound a comparative analysis of food insecurity and attempts to demonstrate through its own household survey, the need for the identification of a common set of indicators to measure, monitor and evaluate the impact of drought, poverty and food insecurity in a country of just over 1, 3 million people. The paper recognises the missed opportunities for policy insight caused by food security gaps and attempts to make a contribution towards a data-sound urban food security policy framework that will recognize the role and importance of the informal sector in enhancing access to food and to regulate food prices in the informal food outlets.