



## **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.

Key words: Drought, access, kaKhoza, Manzini,

## **Introduction**

Through the SDGs, the world has committed to ending all forms of food insecurity (and nutrition), however, food insecurity remains the most predominant visible dimensions of poverty in countries of the Global South, particularly in the African continent (Chan et al., 2019). One in four people in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be undernourished (FAO, 2015, 2017). Access to food, which is the ability to procure adequate food supply, remains a major challenge in most cities of the Global South and a serious concern for the kingdom of Swaziland, particularly in the context of prevailing drought conditions. Urban food security is primarily an issue of access rather than food availability (White & Hamm, 2014). In other words, food may be available in cities, but still inaccessible to some households since food availability does not automatically translates to access, more especially for poor urban households. Among the major and unresolved food security debates is whether the widespread hunger in countries of the Global South is a result of food shortage or lack of access to available food. In the light of this debate, Adair (2015) and Pereira (2014) correctly argue that there is actually more than enough food to feed the whole world, only that it is inaccessible to some households. This argument seems to best describe the situation on most households in cities of the Global South where some households still face difficulty in accessing food, even though food is available in larger quantities in supermarkets. In Crush and Frayne's (2011:528) words, “supermarkets are bursting with fresh and processed foodstuffs while on their doorstep poor households struggle to access enough staples to feed themselves more than once a day” in most South African cities.

Several factors account for this, which include high levels of poverty, high rate of unemployment, high food prices and climate extremes such as drought (Aragrande & Argenti, 2001; Frayne et al., 2010; WFP, 2016; FSIN, 2017). These factors collectively or individually compromise poor households' access to food in the urban setting. The pathway through which drought compromises individual household's access to food is very indirect and may be traced back from rural food production. Drought results to low crop yields, which in turn trigger food price increase (Bandara & Cai, 2014; Vargas & Porter, 2017). High food prices, to which poor urban households are most vulnerable, make certain food unaffordable and hence inaccessible. In an effort to access the highly inaccessible food, poor urban households are forced to increase their food expenditure (Crush & Frayne, 2010a; Abdel, et al., 2014), which further restrict their access to food and expose them to food insecurity. The high rate of unemployment and absence of stable income for poor urban households compound the problem of access to food in the urban environment where income is the key determinant of access to food.

This paper aims to contribute to the emerging drought and food security debate in Swaziland by interrogating the relationship between drought and access to food in urban spaces. Specifically, the study investigates how drought contributes to food insecurity in Manzini by limiting poor households' access to food in kaKhoza. The study will then draw various conclusions and make policy recommendations with regards to urban food security, particularly access to food in the context of prevailing drought conditions in Swaziland.

### **Factors compromising access to food in cities of the Global South**

Urban households in cities of the Global South continue to struggle in accessing adequate food to feed their household members. Several factors account for this which include high levels of poverty, high rate of unemployment, high food prices and climate extremes (Aragrande & Argenti, 2001; Frayne et al., 2010; WFP, 2016; FSIN, 2017). These factors restrict access to food in the urban setting in different ways. While poverty compromises households' access to food by cripples their purchasing power and making them to find it increasingly difficult to purchase food, drought on the other hand leads to decline in crop yield and trigger increase in food prices and make food unaffordable. These unprecedented shocks increase the vulnerability of the poor households to food insecurity as they seriously compromise their access to food.

A study conducted in urban Ethiopia found that over 75 percent of poor urban households were found to lack access to food and recorded high levels of food insecure. Kimani-Murage et al. (2014) in a study conducted in Kenya found that 85 percent (of 3000 slum dwellers) were food insecure due to lack of access to food in Nairobi. Maitra and Rao (2015) in their study which investigated the connection between poverty and food insecurity in urban slums of Kolkata found that poorer households have a higher exposure to food insecurity as a result of failure to access adequate food. These findings mirror those by Leduka et al., (2015) who found that the poorest households in Maseru make the majority (82%) of the severely food insecure as a result of compromised access to food. The same was found by Tawodzera in study conducted in Harare where he found that most households who lacked access to food and were more food insecure were the poorest households who did not have a stable source of income (Tawodzera et al., 2012). This was further confirmed by Maitra (2017) in a study conducted in urban slums of India where he also found that poverty levels of the head of household which may be due to lack of income or unemployment compromise household access to food and increases chances of households to be food insecure. This indicates that poverty is a major obstacle to access to food in urban spaces, hence poor urban households tend to be more food insecure than their counterparts due to high levels of poverty.

Poverty is closely related to income and purchasing power, which are major determinant of access to food in cities. As such, poor households with inadequate purchasing power are usually vulnerable to high food prices which compromise their access to food (Crush & Frayne, 2010). Atkinson (1995) observes that low income exposes poor urban households to food insecurity as it compromises their access to food since in urban areas, income and food prices are key determinants of food access. Lack of access to food among the poor urban households is compounded by high food prices which are also inflated by extreme weather events such as drought. The reason why poor urban households' access to food is compromised by extreme weather events such as drought is because poor urban households usually lack adaptive capacity and hence more susceptible to shock of any form which may include food price and weather related shocks such as drought and storms (Armar-klemesu & Ahiadeke, 2000; Carrão, et al., 2016; WFP, 2016a).

Drought results to a decline in crop yield which usually result in food scarcity and increase in food prices (Salazar-espinoza, et al., 2015; Gautier et al., 2017). The 2015/16 drought resulted to an estimated crop loss of 75 percent which triggered steep increase in food price in Angola, leaving 1.4 million of the total population lacking access to food. the same was experienced in Somalia where due to the 2015/16 drought, over 6 million people (50% of total population) lacking access to food following widespread crop failure and steep increase in food prices (FEWSNET, 2017). The same drought resulted to a steep increase in maize price (approximately 100%) in Mozambique resulting to a million people lacking access to food. Zimbabwe experienced 27 percent decline in maize which resulted to 38 percent increase in maize price restricting access to food of over 4 million people (42 percent of the population) (FEWSNET, 2016). In Lesotho, over 510,000 people (36% of the total population) lacked access to food as a result of drought-induced food steep increase. South Africa also experienced an steep increase in maize price (104 percent increase) following a 49 percent decrease in maize yield as a result of the 2015/16 drought (PPME, 2016).

### **Drought and access to food in Swaziland, an overview**

Drought has become a major hydrological disaster which is held responsible for the ever rising levels of food insecurity in Swaziland. Drought, which has become more recurrent (occurred in 1983, 1992, 2001, 2007, 2008 and most recent one in 2015) (Manyatsi et al., 2010; Manyatsi & Mhazo, 2014) has led declining trends in maize production pushing thousands of the Swazi population to hunger and food insecurity. The first documented drought of 1983 resulted to over 500 people losing their lives following widespread crop failure and food shortage which left more than half of the Swazi population lacking access to food (Oseni & Masarirambi, 2011; Manyatsi & Mhazo, 2014). In the same year, about 66 per cent of the population was unable to meet basic food needs, while 43 per cent were left in chronic poverty. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) had to feed over 243 000 Swazis - around a quarter of the population - during January due to food shortage. When drought hit Swaziland in 2004 and 2005 more than one quarter of the country's population was left without access to food and required emergency food aid.

In the 2015/16 farming season, drought caused a 64% decline in maize production (from 93, 653MT in 2013/14 to 33, 460MT in 2015/16 farming season) and death of 67, 120 herd of cattle (SVAC, 2015). Due to the decline in maize production in the 2016 crop season, at least 300,000 people were left without access to food and in dire need of food assistance (SVAC, 2015). This follows an already observed decline in maize production from 84,000 ha in 1990 to 52,000 ha in 2009, and the maize harvest which fell from 88,000 to 62,000 tons over the same time period leaving majority of the Swazi population in need for food (Oseni & Masarirambi, 2011:389). The shortfall in maize production resulted to increase in maize prices as the maize deficit had to be met through imports (MoA, 2016). While prices of some food items such as maize meal became abnormally high and unaffordable, other food items such as vegetables were in short supply and hence extremely expensive and unaffordable for majority of poor households. Needless to say, due

to high food prices and food shortage resulting from the remarkable 2015/16 drought, some people could only afford to buy bread (WFP, 2017: 5).

High food prices, which drought has compounded in Swaziland, are a major concern particularly for poor urban households who usually lack purchasing power and are more vulnerable to a slight increase in food prices. According to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), the 2015/16 drought has largely contributed to the very high maize prices experienced (for the first time) in the country. In the peak of the drought, for instance, food prices were very high. The World Food Program notes that food prices, particularly maize meal was at its highest at the peak of the drought season (January 2016) and was even more expensive than rice, however, it showed a slight decline in January 2017 when the drought situation was normalizing (WFP, 2017:3). High food prices in Swaziland exacerbate the food insecurity situation of poor households and increase their vulnerability to poverty by forcing them to spend most of their income on food.

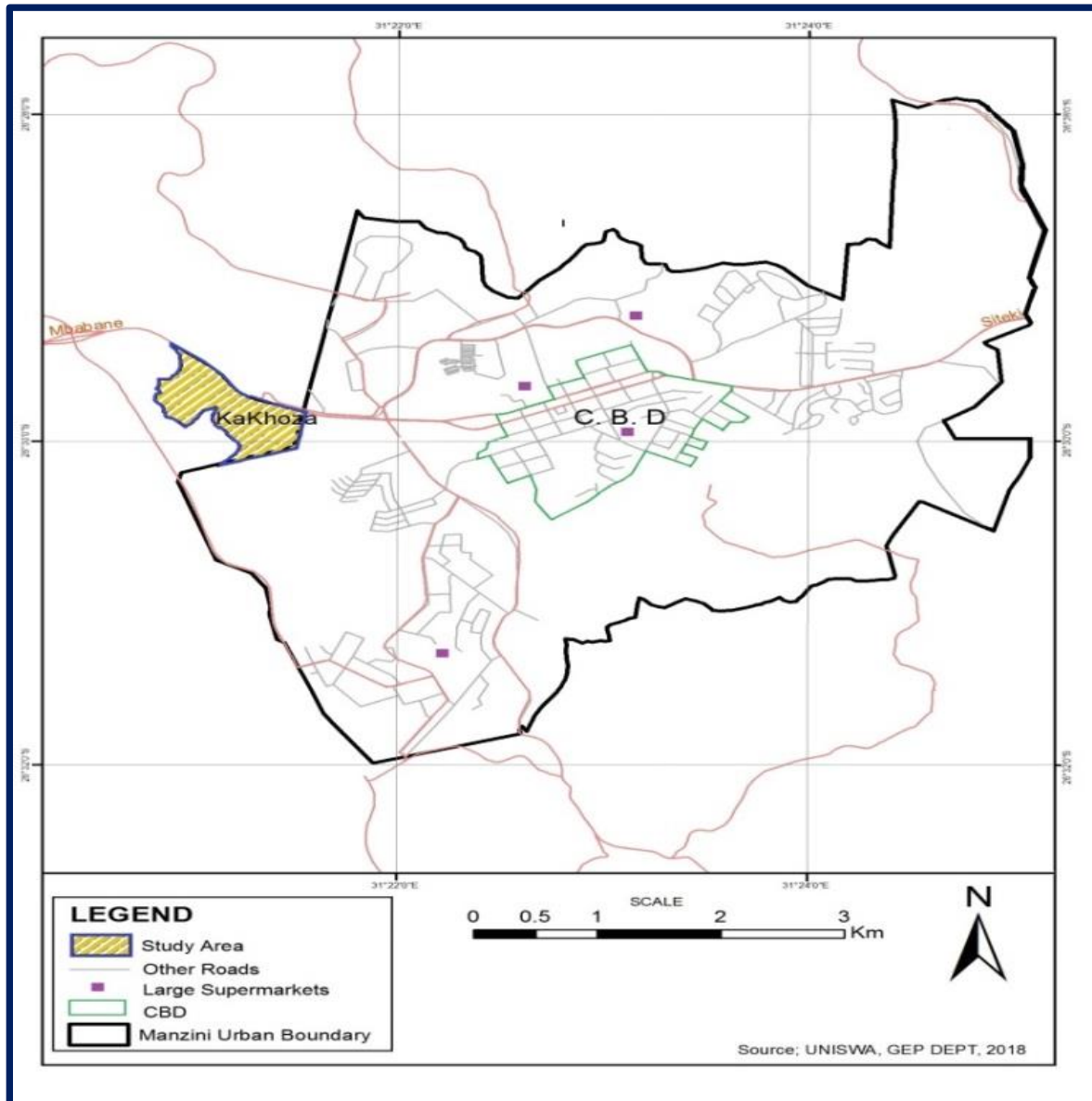
According to the Office of the Resident Coordinator of the UN Country Team in Swaziland, nearly one-third of rural population spend much of their money on food and have little capacity to cope with the combined effects of production shortfalls and increased market prices, and can quickly fall further into food insecurity. Drought, therefore, aggravates the vulnerability of the Swazi population to poverty and food insecurity given that 63 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Drought in Swaziland remains a major challenge the country has to contend with in its quest to achieve food security.

### **Research methodology**

The study was conducted in Manzini and used the informal settlement of kaKhoza (Figure 1) as a case study site in order to understand how drought restricts access to food in low income urban households in Swaziland. KaKhoza was selected on the basis of her low socio-economic status and was thought to yield good results on how the urban poor are affected by drought in terms of access to food. The study drew from both the positivistic and interpretivistic traditions and employed the mixed method approach in trying to understand the drought-food access nexus in urban Manzini. The mixed method approach was found appropriate as it allowed for the collection of data from a wide range of sources for a better understanding of how the poor urban dwellers in Manzini were affected by the 2015/16 drought condition in the country. Creswell (2014) recommends this approach for its ability to allow for in-depth understanding of any phenomenon under investigation and its ability to increase reliability of research findings.

Data was collected from the informal settlements of kaKhoza using a three step procedure involving a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, key informants interviews and focus group discussions. A questionnaire was administered to 145 (out of 454) heads of households selected using systematic sampling technique. Purposive sampling was employed to select 30 and 8 respondents for the in-depth and key informant interviews, respectively. The researcher also engaged the observation method approach to capture additional information about effects of

drought as observed in the study site. The researcher adhered to all legal and ethical procedures during the data collection and research writing processes. As such, participation in the research was strictly voluntary without any form of coercion, whatsoever.



**Figure 1:** Location of surveyed area (kaKhoza) in Manzini.

**Findings and discussions**

The study found that drought negatively influences poor urban households’ access to food in Manzini. The effects of drought on access to food were found to be directly linked to the sources of food utilized by the poor urbanites in the study area. It is through interrogating the relationships between drought and the urban food sources, therefore, that helped to understand and unpack the effects and challenges paused by drought on access to food in the urban context. The different

ways by which drought restricted access to food in kaKhoza in Manzini is best captured in the following extracts from in-depth interviews with kaKhoza residents and retail owners in the study area.

*...Drought has ravaged our fields... some of us here just sleep with nothing to eat. ...we now survive by buying from 'nabomashonisa' (SiSwati word used to refer to informal markets) only to eat for that day to keep the soul and body together. This year is just worse. I tell you, some people here might not see 2017 if the situation continues like this. I can show you households here who have gone for a week now without a decent meal (KaKhoza Resident).*

*Food prices have gone up faster than we expected. You know, we also buy food to sell to our customers after a markup and we could not believe when we got the delivery note...the increase in food prices this year is really abnormal and we could not buy all the food we wanted from the suppliers because of the prices ... (Retail owner – Spar).*

*Food has never been so expensive before, the increase in prices this year is abnormal. This is because of this drought ...if you can recall, the same happened in the 2011/12 drought when food prices rose badly...eight hundred Emalangeni has been enough to buy food for my family, but now it is no longer enough. Now I spend one thousand three hundred on food alone. All I can buy now is maize meal, rice, potatoes, fish, and maybe meat...vegetables, no... For the first time cabbage costs 20SZL... I never thought vegetables prices can be so high (KaKhoza Resident).*

*Drought has affected us badly. Now we can't get most of the food we sell in Swaziland but have to buy it from South Africa. Even in South Africa, this year the food prices are high... For example, a 25kg packet of potatoes has increased from SZL 45:00 to SZL 80:00 (wholesale price). From this price, you still have to make a markup, and the consumer price will go up to SZL 100:00 per packet. ... Customers now buy basic food stuffs...like potatoes. Fruits and vegetables stay for a very long time, wither and eventually rot because it is not bought...As you can see, very few people now sell fast perishing food stuffs like tomatoes, spinach, lettuce . We have resorted to selling crop like potatoes and bean (Street Vendor in Manzini Market at Khoza Resident).*

The above extracts perfectly portray the major concern of most respondents in the study area with regards to drought and food access. The high food prices which were magnified by the 2015/16 drought was a major issue of concern among respondents and one that played a major role in compromising their access to food in urban Manzini. Prices of most food commodities increased steeply and became unaffordable to most poor households as noted by most residents. For instance, the price of a cabbage increased from SZL 7.50 to SZL 20.00 and potatoes prices increased from SZL 45.00 to SZL 80.00 per 25kg making such food items (and other food commodities such as maize meal) unaffordable and inaccessible to the majority of poor households in Manzini. This upward trend in food prices most noticeable during the 2015/16 drought period forced poor urban households to resort to low-cost street food and re-packaged food from informal markets (Plate 1). Food from informal market was 'cheap' and affordable to most poor households since a 300g (0.3kg) packet of maize meal was selling at SZL 6.00. However, the unit cost for this food is high

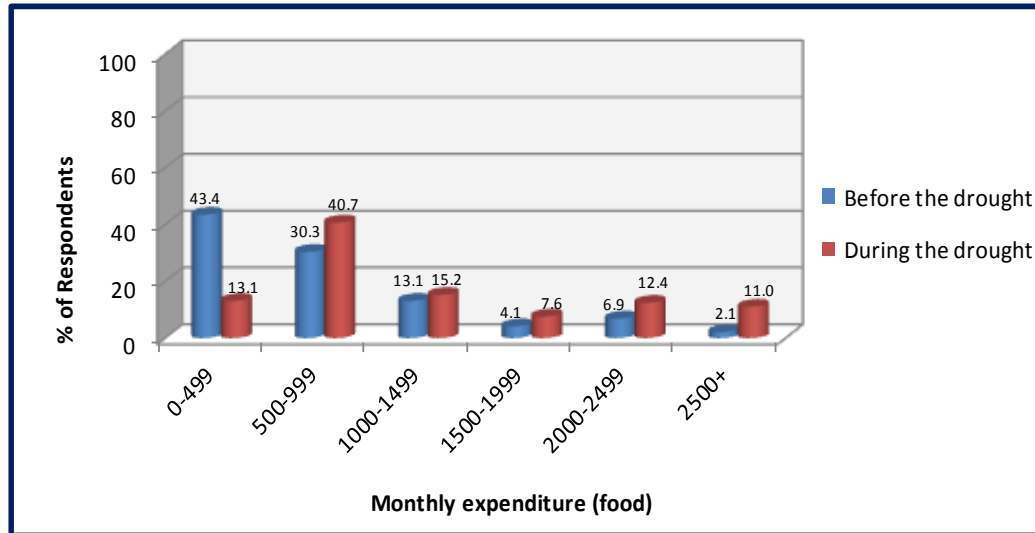
compared to supermarkets. For instance, 1 kg packet of maize meal in supermarkets during the drought period cost SZL13.36 while the re-packaged 300g 'cheap' food which sold for SZL6.00 each, translates to SZL 19.98 per 1kg in the informal markets leaving a price difference of SZL6.62. It means when one buys 1kg of maize meal from the informal sector it will be SZL 6.62 more than it is in supermarkets.

Even much disturbing was that even though the price of maize and maize meals in the country's supermarkets and shops had gone down as the situation got back to normal, the price in the informal markets stayed the same and the residents still purchase the 300g at SZL6.00. From these findings, it is clear that buying food from the informal market can sometimes be very costly and hence rip the resources of the poor and expose them to more food insecurity. The high unit cost in the informal markets, therefore, resulted to high monthly food expenditure (Figure 1) which further compromise poor households' access to food in future.



**Plate 1:** Vendor selling re-packaged food in kaKhoza

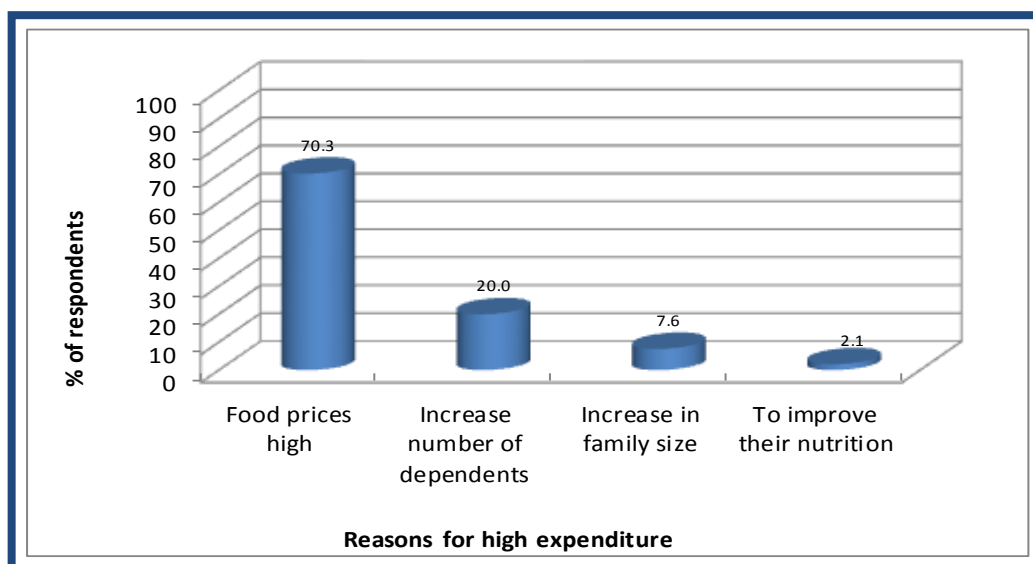




**Figure 1:** Expenditure on food – before and after the drought

As a result of the 2015/16, changes in expenditure for food demonstrated an increase in response to the drought-induced food price hike. For instance, households who spend above SZL 2500 on food increased from 2.1% before the drought to 11% during the drought period (Figure 1). While a good majority of households (43.4%) were able to purchase their groceries just by less than SZL 500 (SZL 0-499) before the drought, most of these households could no longer do so during the drought period but only 13.1% were still able to spend less than SZL 500 on food.

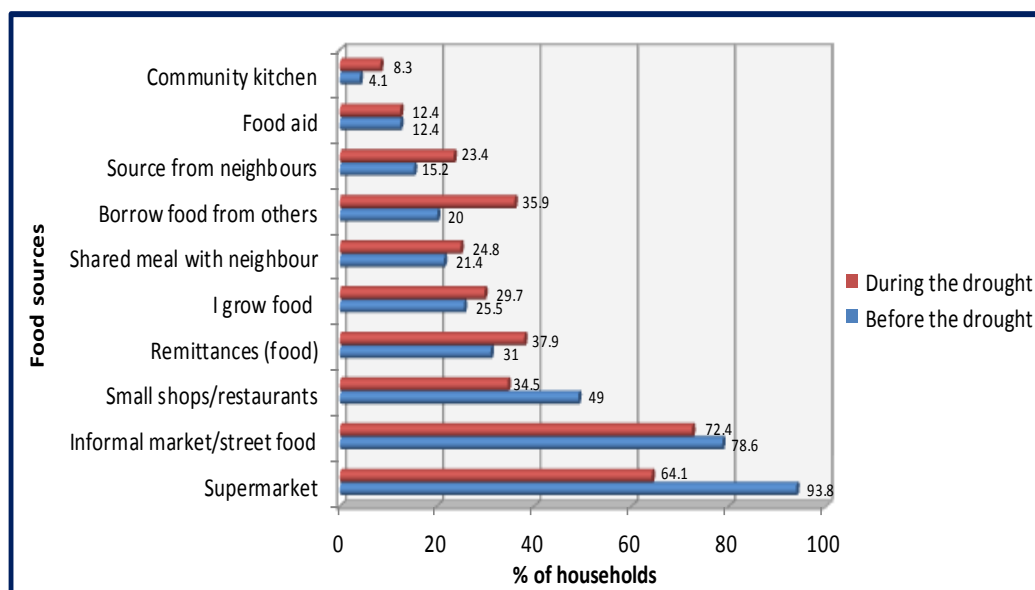
When respondents were asked to indicate the reasons for the increase in expenditure for food, majority (70.3%) cited increase in food prices with a few who indicated other reasons which include increase in number of dependents (20%), increase in family size (7.6%) with others who said they spend more money on food to improve their nutrition (2.1%) (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Reasons for high expenditure on food

The increase in food prices, therefore, had a remarkable effect on access to food for most low income households in Manzini. Firstly, it eroded the scanty and hard-earned income of poor households who were forced to buy expensive food in supermarkets. Their attempts to flee the costly supermarkets food landed them into the ‘jaws’ of the informal sector where they were forced to buy low-cost food which has a higher unit cost. The unit cost for food in the informal sector tends to be higher than that of supermarkets, and this is correctly so even in Manzini, as captured in Tevera and Simelane’s (2014) study where they found that food in informal markets in Manzini can sometimes be two times more expensive than in supermarkets. Regardless of this high unit cost in informal food, the informal sector continues to be popular among the poor in the Global South, more particularly in time of food crisis and high food prices. This observation finds support from Tawodzera et al.'s (2012) study which also found that the 2008 economic meltdown in Zimbabwe (where food was scarce and expensive) forced almost every low income household (98%) in urban Harare to resort to the informal sector for ‘cheap’ food.

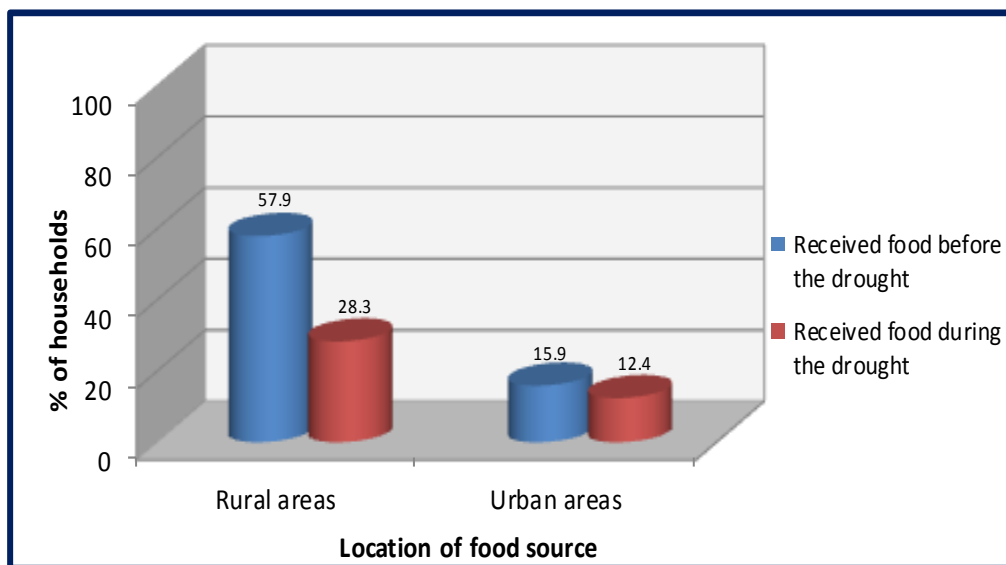
The drought-food price cocktail is not only reflected on shifting interest from formal sources (supermarkets) to informal food outlets (informal markets/street food) in Manzini as captured in Figure 3, but has also resulted in overreliance on social networks for food and on other ad hoc food sources such as remittances, community kitchen, borrowing of food and relying on neighbours for food (Figure 3). The increase in the people who rely on these food sources, as Frayne et al., (2010) is consistent with the behavior of people with limited food income and hence reflects the challenge that drought and food price have exerted on the already disadvantaged poor households in Manzini.



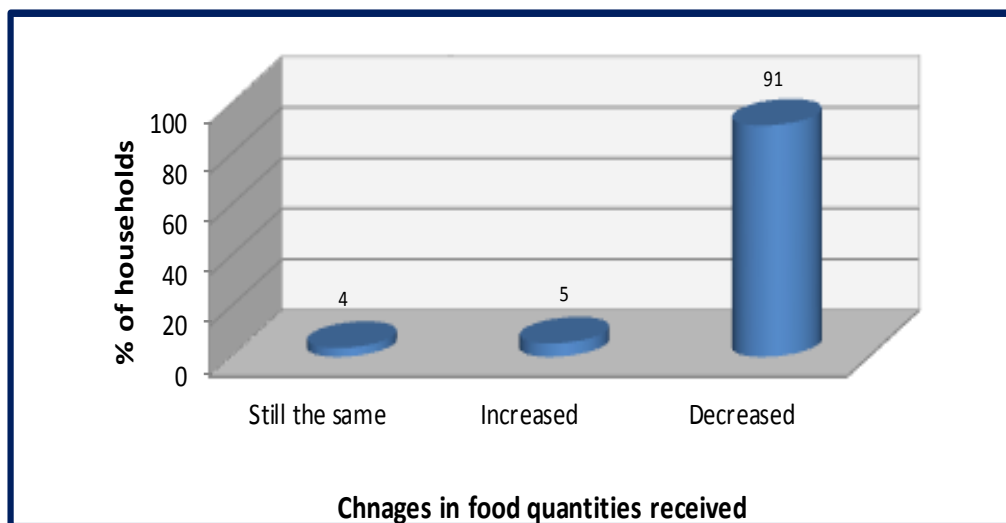
**Figure 3:** Sources of food before and after the drought

What was even more disturbing to discover was that even though remittances seem to be an important source of food for poor urban households, the drought-induced decline in rural food production disturbed the flows of food remittances between rural and urban households negatively

affecting those urban households who rely on rural food transfers. Due to crop failure and poor yields in the 2015/16 farming season, fewer households (28.3%) compared to before the drought (57.9%) were now able to get food from rural relatives to use in cities (Figure 4). Even the few households who managed to secure some food from their rural relatives to eat in the city, majority of them (91%) complained of receiving smaller quantities than what they used to get before the drought (Figure 5).



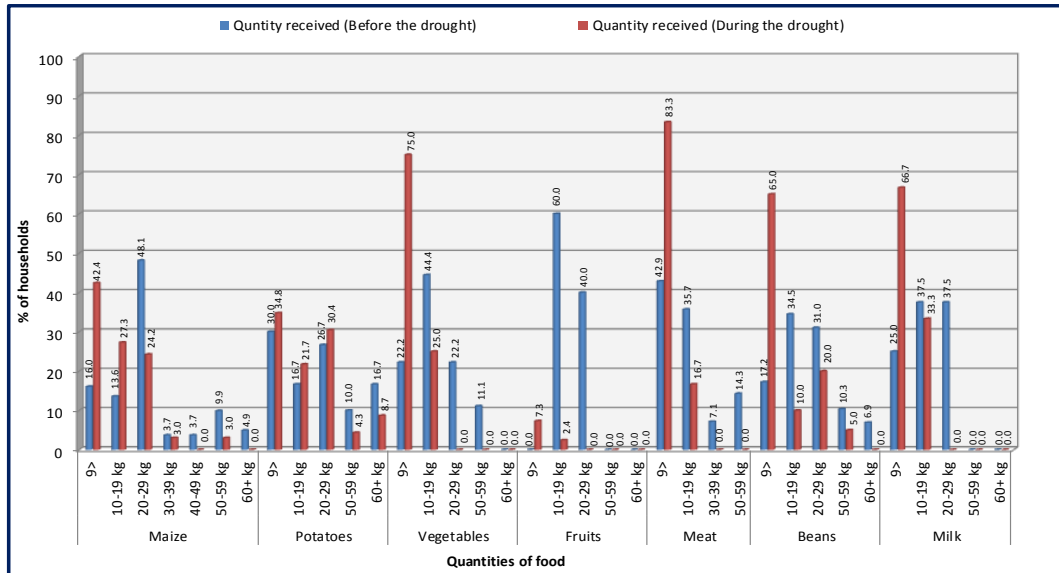
**Figure 4:** Households receiving rural food before & during the 2015/16 drought



**Figure 5:** Changes in quantities of food received from rural areas

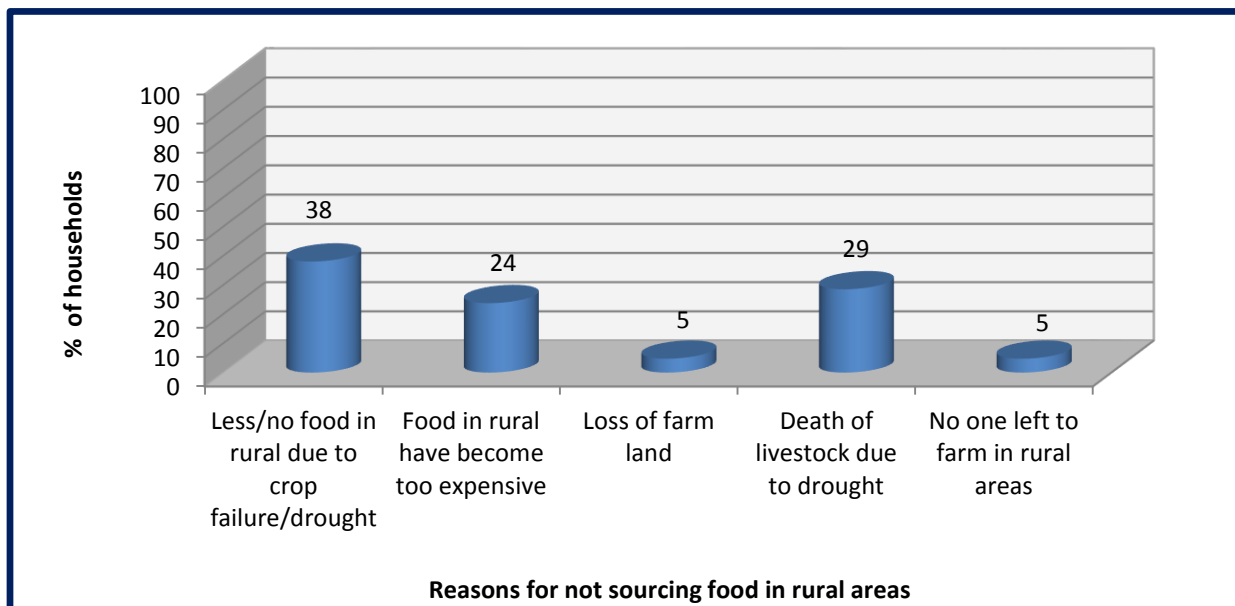
During the drought period, more households (42.4%) were receiving smaller quantities of maize (>9kg) compared to the fewer 16 percent who received the same quantity of maize before the 2015/16 drought. No household was found to receive more than 60kg of maize from rural areas during the drought period. The same pattern was observed on other food item such as vegetables,

meat and milk where a significant decline in quantity received was also noticeable. For instance, no household received above 50kg of vegetables, meat and milk during the drought period (Figure 6). Instead, it was common for most households to receive at most 9kg of these food items, with the exception of potatoes and beans, which are drought resistant crops and were in abundant supply even during the drought period and hence more accessible.



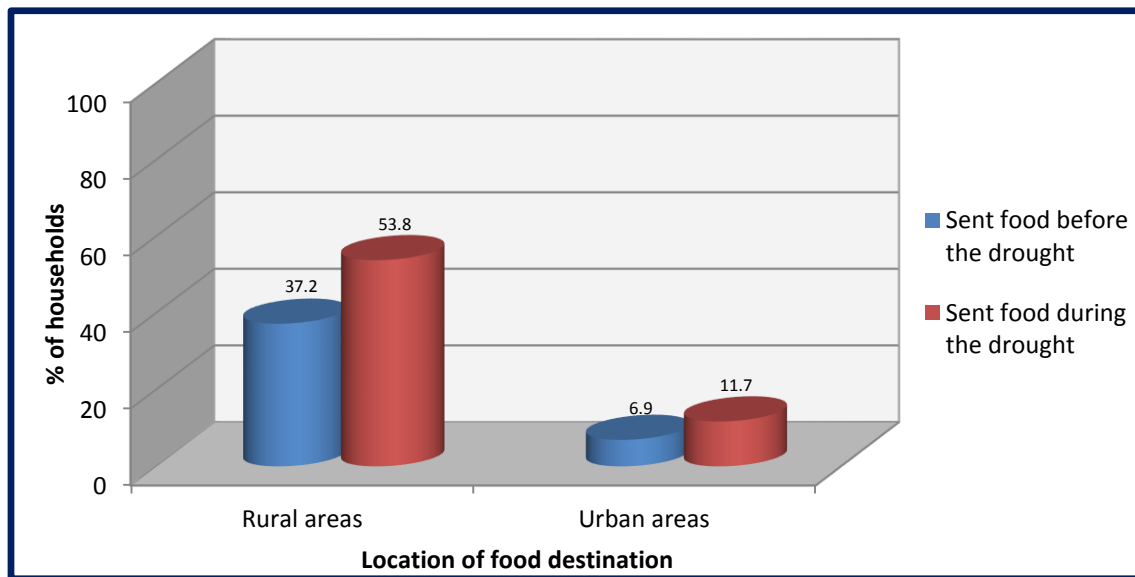
**Figure 6:** Quantities of food received from rural areas before & during 2015/26 drought

When respondents were asked the reasons why they get less food from rural areas now compared to the past, they cited drought as a major cause (38%), or at least drought related challenges such as increase in food prices (24%) and death of livestock (29%) which also attributed to drought (Figure 7).



**Figure 7:** Reasons for less utilization of rural areas as food source

Regardless of the struggle to access adequate food due to drought for those households who rely on rural relatives for food, these household had to send some food to their rural relatives. While this is a common practice in Swaziland for urban households to sometimes send food remittances to their rural relatives, the 2015/16 drought significantly increased the number of households who had to send food to their rural relatives as a result of poor harvest and crop failure in rural Swaziland. The number of households who had to send food to their rural relatives, for instance, increased from 37.2 percent to 53.8 percent (Figure 7).



**Figure 7:** Households sending food to rural & urban relatives before and during 2015/16 drought

This had a negative effect on the economy of the sending households, particularly given the high food prices at the time. The same households who were also grappling with food shortages and food prices in their own households were now forced to send food to rural areas which compromised their own access to food. Although some of the urban households who relied on rural food transfers had practically nothing to eat the stress of seeing their relatives sleeping on empty stomachs was unbearable and they had to scavenge for food to send to rural areas. Such stress and concern is well captured in the following extract:

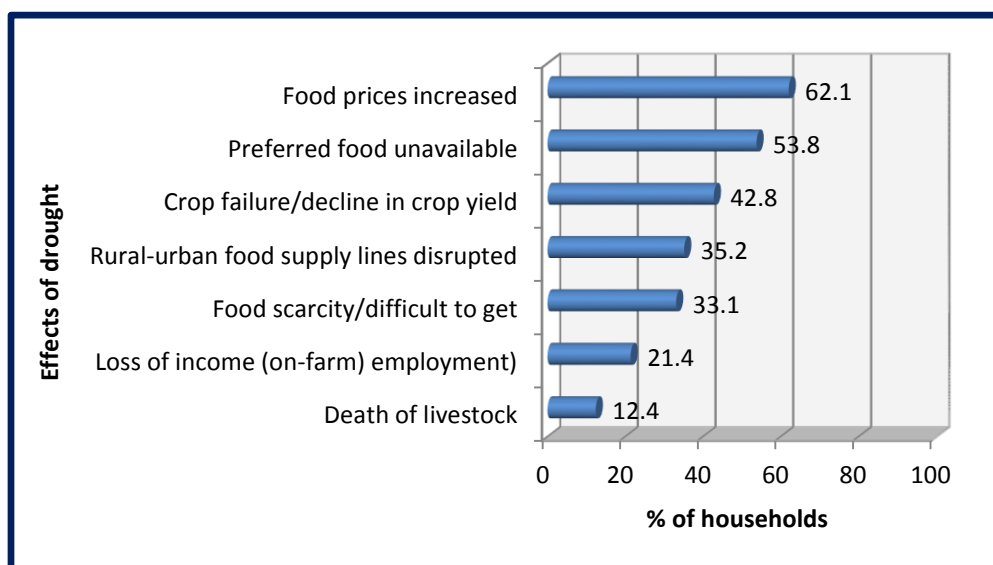
*Mnaketfu,<sup>1</sup> don't even ask. We are dead from this drought...I never had a problem with food, especially with maize meal because every month I knew I would go home and come with a 25 litre of maize meal for my family and sometimes bring some for my friends, especially in 2014 because we got a lot of maize at home. Last month (referring to March) I went home hoping to get something but only to come back with a bucket of stress from what I found at home...I came back empty handed. There is practically nothing left even for them to eat. It stresses me that I don't have food and don't know where to get it, but even more stressful is to learn that my parents sometimes go to bed without eating*

<sup>1</sup> This is a Siswati word translated to mean 'brother' and normally used by close relatives and by others to show respect towards the person addressed.

*anything. I wake up every day to look for piece jobs just to buy them a 10kg of maize meal. Otherwise, I might die of stress, you know, just because you live in town, people don't understand when you tell them you have no money. I can't even sleep. The situation is too bad mnaketfu...we are really affected by this drought and the situation is not getting better but much worse... (Khoza Resident).*

This case study does not only capture the challenges brought by the 2015/16 drought to the poor households of Manzini with regards to access to food, but also reveals the emotional turmoil these poor households had to go through as a result of their starving rural relatives. Even if the poor urban households can resort to certain survival strategies in the urban setting which might put food on their table, such as sharing of meals with neighbours, borrowing food and relying on community kitchen for the next meal, the pressure they had from their starving relatives in rural areas could force them to resort to informal credit just to purchase some food for their parents in rural areas. This could expose them even more to food insecurity due to debts and restrict their access to food even in future due to the accumulated debts.

The 2015/16 drought indeed had a negative role to play on the food security situation of almost all the selected households in Manzini as most of the poor households could identify how drought had limited their access to food in the urban context. Responding to a question which required them to state specifically how their access to food had been compromised by drought, majority of respondents (62.1%) cited food price increase. More than 50 percent (53.8%) of the selected households noted that due to the 2015/16 drought, they did not have access to the type of food they preferred while a reasonable majority (42.8%) complained of crop failure, among other major obstacles (Figure 8).



**Figure 8:** Effects of drought food on households

What was interesting also to discover was the extent to which this food price-drought cocktail has extended its influence beyond the buyer-seller boundary to those who help to transport the purchased goods to the bus terminal. Those who help transport goods for customers from the market to the bus rank (Plate 2) voiced their concern about how they have also been affected by the recent drop in customers who purchase food items from Manzini market. This decline, as already alluded to, is attributed to the increase in food prices which was triggered by drought, among other things. In an interview, the respondent pointed out that the sudden decline in the number of people who buy food from Manzini market has pushed them out of business since they have little or nothing to transport since people come in the market and go back empty handed. According to the respondent, this has clipped them financially and increased their exposure to hunger since they have no money to buy food. This has also exposed them to other risks as they are sometimes forced to walk long distances to and from 'work'. It also transpired in an interview with the people who transport good for Manzini market customers that the markets are used as alternative food sources to escape from the high food prices in the supermarkets. This is what one respondent said:

*We survive by transporting goods for people to the bus terminus. The drought has really affected us too. A week is about to elapse now, I have not got any customer. People come and go back empty handed, complaining that the food has become too expensive also in the market just like in the supermarkets they are running away from. Normally, I get customers daily and usually cash at least SZL 100 and able to buy food for my family. As I speak, there is nothing to eat at home...completely nothing. This year, oh... it's really bad. Very few people buy now in this market; it's now a struggle even to get money for transport. You stay here (Manzini Market) the whole day only to find that you have only managed to get SZL 20, you can't even buy the smallest pack of rice. Even transport, you can only pay for a single trip and the following day, you have to walk to 'work'. Sometimes I borrow money for transport hoping to get back home with something only to find that there is nothing again and have to walk back home...of course empty handed – no food. People who buy now are those with cars, and we don't get much help from those (**Street Vendor and kaKhoza resident transporting food in Manzini**).*



**Plate 2:** Purchased food transported from Manzini Market to Manzini bus terminus

### Conclusion

Drought in Swaziland has been widely accepted as a major hydrological disaster that has compromised access to food for majority of the Swazi population and has pushed thousands of Swazis over the cliff of hunger. Among the major pathways through which people's access to food had been compromised by drought, particularly the 2015/16 drought, is though inducing food prices increase, reducing rural-urban food transfers (both the frequency of transfers and quantity of transferred food), inducing reversal food flows (from urban to rural) and by contributing to food scarcity making certain food items unavailable.

Drought restricts access to food in the urban environment, and more so in kaKhoza in Manzini. It contributes to the reduction in crop yield and increase in food prices, among other things. The effects of drought on access to food in Swaziland and in kaKhoza in particular is best captured by considering its influence on the food sources utilized by the poor urban households in kaKhoza which include: informal markets, supermarkets, remittances (food), borrowing of food from others, growing own food, food transfers, and relying from neighbours for the next meal. Contrary to the findings of the AFSUN survey where supermarkets were found to be dominant food sources in most cities of the south, the informal sector was found to be a leading food source in kaKhoza, owing to the drought induced food price hike experienced in the country which restricted most poor households from patronizing supermarkets (given their bad economic conditions) in favour of the 'cheaper' or low-cost street food offered by the informal sector. Buying re-packaged food from the informal sector, although it looked cheap, was actually costly compared to buying food in bulk from the supermarket, however, the re-packed food suited the financial situation of most residents in kaKhoza.



It has also been discovered that drought had a profound influence on food transfers (mainly rural-urban transfers) and had been instrumental in the decline in the number of households sourcing food from rural areas. The contribution of drought to the decline in the quantity of food sourced from the rural areas has limited access to food for some urban households who relied mainly on these rural supplies for food. The same is true with those households who grow their own food, where fewer than normal were found to have eaten food from their fields a week prior to the survey indicating a steep decline in the utilization of this food source. In addition, more households (compared to the past before the drought) were found to send food to their rural relatives, following the widespread drought induced crop failure experienced by most rural households in Swaziland. This compulsory reciprocal food sharing strategy, which drought has induced for some households and magnified for others, erodes the already empty food reserves of most poor urban households in kaKhoza and is most likely to compromise their food security situation, particularly given the steep increase in food prices since most of these food parcels had to be purchased.

The drought-food price cocktail have also threatened businesses and job security of people at Manzini. The steep increase in food prices as a result of food scarcity (due to shortfall in food production) led to some informal business people falling out of business, particularly in Manzini market. This did not only affect the market owners but also the people who survive by transporting the purchased food to the bus terminus. While the market owners were complaining of fewer customers and shorter shelf life of their perishable food items, those who transport goods for those who buy were complaining about fewer customers. The impact of drought and food price hike was also felt by retail owners who had to scavenge around for certain types of food, mainly vegetables as most farmers could not harvest anything leading to some food items either missing in the shelves or too expensive to afford for the poor households.

Drought has, therefore, affected the food security of most poor urban households in Manzini by making certain food unavailable; compromising their access to adequate food and by affecting their dietary intake by making certain preferred food unavailable. The effects of drought on food are not only felt in rural areas where food production takes place, but they also filter into the urban environment since cities also rely on rural areas for food. As such, when food produced from rural areas is compromised by extreme weather events like drought, as Burton (2013) have rightly observed, access to food in urban areas will be compromised, particularly for the urban poor who usually lack adaptive capacity.

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