

Linking Food Security with Development, Inequality and South-South Migration

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Abstract

In this paper, we draw attention to the ignored linkages between food security, inequality, and development with respect to South-South migration. Building on core arguments reflecting on these ties and empirical studies from diverse sending and receiving contexts, we outline five distinctive ways in which these multidimensional relationships and interactions operate. The first aspect assesses how inequality of opportunities and outcomes affects food security to shape migration aspirations and movements. The second aspect discusses how food insecurity in a variety of conflict and crisis circumstances acts as the main determinant and precipitant of forced migration. The third aspect addresses migrant remittances and their contribution to the food security of sending and recipient households. A fourth aspect highlights the activities of migrants in the food systems of the receiving countries. The final aspect examines the food security circumstances of various categories of migrants and connects them with migrant precarities at the transit and destination sites. In a broad sense, our analysis identifies existing research gaps on this topic and problematizes selected buoyant framings of the migration-development nexus.

Keywords

food security, inequality, development, South-South migration

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Cover Photo

NGOs distribute food in Mexico City to migrants in transit. Credit: Jair Cabrera Torres/dpa/Alamy Live News



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Introduction

In 2018, Louise Arbour, former UN Special Representative for Migration, and lead architect of the Global Compact for Migration, articulated the relationship between migration and development in highly optimistic and celebratory terms (Arbour 2018). Her comments focused on the voluntary forms of migration and their related development consequences. International migration was characterized by Arbour as an “overwhelmingly positive” process for migrants as well as their sending and receiving communities, a “potent motor for development”, and an “instrument of prosperity, not as a failure of development”. She went on to emphasize that migration and development can be mutually supportive processes, operating as a “virtuous circle” that involves beneficial activities, practices and processes which lead to equally progressive results.

This untempered enthusiasm for migrants as agents of development is indicative of the contemporary framework of “migration and development” that underscores the beneficial development-based outcomes of migration for both sending and receiving countries (Faist and Fauser 2011). The “migration and development nexus” has received much attention from international organizations and several national governments. It includes some consideration of the various forms of development as drivers of migration, the linkages between globalization and migration, and the potential for connecting these two aspects in policy design and execution. Yet, as Crawley, Garba and Nyamnjoh (2022) have recently argued, the complex set of structural inequalities that affect migration at local, national and regional scales and shape its consequences for migrants, their sending communities and others, have not received adequate critical attention. As Crawley (2018) suggests, the “developmental potential of migration is neither straightforward nor inevitable”.

Just as the relationship between inequality, migration and development remains under-addressed, the linkages between food security, migration and development have been similarly neglected (Anns 2020, Carney and Krause 2020, Crush 2012, 2013, Orjuela-Grimm et al. 2022). Crush (2012, 2013) has previously noted that the key theme of food security has been largely overlooked in the discourse of migration and development, as well as migration studies. For example, in their discussion on famine-led migration, Sadliwala and de Waal (2018) have underscored the cursory reference to food insecurity in the Global Migration Compact to draw attention to the disregarded connections between acute food crises and population mobility. These omissions are highly problematic since food is essential for survival and food security constitutes a core measure of human security and human well-being. As a starting point, Crush (2013) identifies two distinctive dimensions to the linkages between migration, development, and food security: first, the various ways in which migrants take care of their food needs, and second, the ways in which they utilize their wages in the destination country. In addition, Crush and Caesar (2017) propose a research and policy focus on two additional linkages: the relationship between remittances and the food security of

both senders and recipients, and the reasons for the variability in migrant food security in relation to South-South migration. Carney and Krause (2020) further suggest that a focus is needed on the food security of “migrants on the move”. All these aspects can be concretely connected with the configurations of inequality in the origin and destination areas and the spaces in between.

This paper provides a corrective in several ways. First, we address their relevance to the ongoing discussion on migration and development within academic and policy circles. We broaden this dialogue beyond regular population flows to and from countries in the global South to include involuntary and irregular forms of migration. Third, we treat food security and inequality as central themes to capture the multidimensional linkages between migration and development in the context of diverse forms of cross-border and international migratory flows in the global South. Drawing on a newer body of studies that focus on food security and South-South migration, we highlight the various interactions between migration, food security and inequality in the global South. We also identify areas that require greater attention through future research.

Inequality, Food Security and Migration

UNDESA (2015) outlined key dimensions of inequality: inequality of opportunity and inequality of outcomes. Inequality of opportunity occurs in terms of unequal access to services such as education, health, or employment. Inequality of outcomes occurs when individuals have uneven living standards related to disparities in wealth/incomes, health, education and nutrition or food security. Inequalities associated with migration are often intersectional and multidimensional tied to structural inequalities within and across countries in the global South and North (UNU 2020). Migration processes are a highly visible reflection of global inequalities in terms of wages, labour market conditions, opportunities available to individuals and groups, and general living standards (Crawley 2018). Migration as a process and migrants as social actors are embedded in the “elementary mechanisms” and landscapes of inequality in both origin and destination areas with opportunity and outcomes stretched over space (Safi 2020). Furthermore, migration can trigger new inequalities and intensify existing asymmetries in both the sending and receiving areas.

Safi (2020) has identified three intersecting channels through which migration interacts with inequality dynamics: economic, legal and ethno-racial. As a key feature of capitalist economies, international migration nourishes stratified and segmented exploitative labour regimes in terms of types of work available, wages and other benefits. Labour migrants fall (and often fail) predominantly in poorly remunerated, less stable, and less attractive employment toward the bottom end of the labour market. Legal processes of categorization through a variety of migrant statuses (tem-

porary workers, irregular migrants, students, accompanying spouses, asylum-seekers, refugees, seasonal migrants) and border control procedures affecting modes of entry, bring differentiated rewards and benefits. As non-citizens, most migrant groups receive fewer rights and protections. As the final aspect of social stratification, other cross-cutting divisions, especially gender, nationality, ethnicity and race, exert a decisive influence over access to occupations and positions in the labour market. The ethno-racial categorization of migrants and related biases exert a strong impact on the economic, social and political rights of migrants and on uneven access to resources.

Although discussed primarily for North-South migration, the concepts of “migrant precarity” and “hyper-precarity” have been used to emphasize their “lifeworlds that are inflected with uncertainty and instability” (Lewis et al. 2015: 581). This condition of precariousness can typify the migrants’ working and living conditions, which have a strong impact on their own food insecurity, those of their households in these receiving settings, and their dependants in the sending areas. Similarly, “migrant marginality” highlights the disadvantages and vulnerabilities faced by various categories of migrants and this marginalization is seen as a predecessor to entrenched inequalities (Netshikulwe, Nyamnjoh and Garba 2022). Food insecurity is thus a stark outcome of migrant precarity (Ramachandran et al. 2022). Equally importantly, it is a crucial indicator of the existing social and economic inequalities with which individuals and groups are associated. As Klassen and Murphy (2020: 1) have noted, “access to food is an important marker of how well a society distributes its wealth, reflecting the state of political accountability, economic redistribution, and the society’s commitment to uphold the right to food”. Shaped by the four dimensions of availability, access, utilization and stability, food security occurs when individuals, households and groups have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious foods that fulfil their dietary requirements and food preferences for active and healthy lives. Food security and insecurity are inextricably intertwined with poverty and inequality. If migration is a symbol and expression of inequality within and across countries worldwide, including those in the global South, then food security is a key measure and expression of these asymmetries.

Food Security, Migration Aspirations and Actions

With its far-reaching impacts on health and well-being, food insecurity can influence migration aspirations, intentions, and behaviour. A study found that subjective well-being has a strong impact on the expressed willingness to migrate (Cai et al. 2014). The food security status of individuals, households and groups exerts considerable influence on international migration desires and decisions. This status is inextricably connected with the prevailing configurations of social, economic and political inequalities in the countries of origin. The worsening of existing circumstances

through personal and/or external shocks, such as job losses, declines in household incomes, increased household expenses, inevitably exacerbates the food insecurity conditions of individuals and families. An emerging body of works has confirmed that food insecurity tied to escalating asymmetries within and across areas is a primary driver of the aspirations, intentions and actions to migrate in various parts of the global South. A new longitudinal study with rural and urban residents in southwestern Ethiopia documented an elevated propensity for international migration among young male and female members in households that had suffered severe food insecurity or farm loss shocks (Lindstrom, Randell and Belachew 2022). At the regional scale, Sadiddin et al. (2019) show that in sub-Saharan Africa, food insecurity increases the likelihood of individual desire to migrate to another country and this aspiration increases with worsening food insecurity. Migration-related aspirations are likely high among individuals and households facing regular deficits in sufficient amounts of nutritious food.

As the result of existing or intensifying localized inequities in the sending areas, food insecurity can also operate as a “push factor” of voluntary migration in most areas of the global South. Carney (2015) draws attention to the “unending hunger” caused by the deepened structural inequalities in Mexico and international migration has become a common coping strategy to address these increased precarities in certain areas. Exogenous factors and other significant developments that deepen existing disparities between individuals, households and groups have cascading detrimental effects on food insecurity and often lead to increased migratory flows to other countries. In the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, a combination of situational factors including income inequality, poverty, social insecurity and violence, in addition to the dire impacts of climate-related events, have produced profoundly adverse effects on food security and in turn generated “knock-on effects” upon migration (IOM and WFP 2022: 9, IOM et al. 2015).

Migration is a common livelihood strategy and coping mechanism used by marginal households to diversify risks when faced with economic shocks due to existing socioeconomic asymmetries and related food insecurity (Smith and Floro 2019). Migration has been viewed as a route to escape poverty, inequality and food insecurity for such households. Poverty and food insecurity have been identified as key inter-linked determinants of internal migration in the global South (Choithani 2017). However, their relationship with international migration is not uncomplicated due to the higher barriers and risks associated with such movements. The poorest segment of population facing severe food insecurity may not be able to migrate despite such aspirations because of weaker access to the formal channels of migration. When they do move, it may be across shorter distances sometimes using risky informal channels. The nuances of this relationship and the role of food security in these dynamics has been less understood, and the absence of in-depth research hampers complete understanding of these linkages.

Driven by intensifying household precarities and food insecurities, the short-term and long-term migration of males from farming communities can exacerbate gender-based inequality in sending areas. A study of Nepali migration to India showed that improved food security occurred at the expense of intensified gender and other inequalities experienced by migrants and their sending households (Kim et al. 2019). While male migrants laboured under risky and tough working conditions in India, Nepali women left behind had to assume entire responsibility for farming on top of housework and childcare. These extra duties increased their work burden and negatively affected their well-being.

Crises, Food Insecurity and Survival Migration

The diverse interactions between inequality and food security are important, yet less recognized and less understood drivers of various forms of migration. These linkages have been acknowledged very recently especially with respect to the involuntary forms of migration and expounded in some detail. Although conflict has been accepted as one of the main drivers of enforced “survival migration” (Betts 2013),

recognition of the nexus between conflict, food insecurity and survival migration is more recent. During conflict and crisis circumstances, the drivers of both food insecurity and forced migration are overlapping to a very great extent. The *Global Report on Food Crises 2021* identifies conflict and the widespread insecurities these crises produce as key determinants of acute food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition (GRFC 2021). A recent World Food Program (WFP 2017a) study found that food insecurity is an important contributory factor in the occurrence and severity of armed conflict and generalized situations of violence which result in large-scale cross-border migrations in the global South. Conflict, forced migration and food insecurity can often feed into and intensify each other (FAO and IFPRI 2017). Since the largest segment of conflict-affected displaced persons are present in the global South, it can be argued that these negative interactions have an acute impact on the major patterns of South-South migration. According to the *Global Report on Food Crises 2017*, over 15.3 million persons were displaced within and outside their countries by six of the world’s worst conflict-related food crises in the global South by 2016: Syria, Yemen, Iraq, South Sudan, Northeast Nigeria and Somalia (GRFC 2017). Using latest data, Table 1 provides latest estimates of conflict-related forced displacement from these countries to the major refugee-hosting countries in the global South.

Table 1: Major Crisis-Related Displacement in the Global South, 2021

Country of origin	Total estimates	Major global South receiving countries
Syria	Refugees: 6,824,062 Asylum-seekers: 131,923 IDPs: 6,865,308	Lebanon: 831,053 Jordan: 675,433 Iraq: 262,756 Egypt: 143,803
Yemen	Refugees: 40,900 Asylum-seekers: 36,775 IDPs: 4,288,739	Jordan: 12,777 Somalia: 8,341 Malaysia: 3,721 Ethiopia: 2,490
Iraq	Refugees: 345,305 Asylum-seekers: 240,468 IDPs: 1,177,234	Jordan: 66,363 Syria: 19,800 Lebanon: 8,983 Egypt: 6,807
South Sudan	Refugees: 2,362,769 Asylum-seekers: 5,037 IDPs: 2,017,236	Uganda: 958,968 Sudan: 803,634 Ethiopia: 386,929 Kenya: 135,351 DRC: 57,072 Egypt: 20,713
Northeast Nigeria	Refugees: 383,660 Asylum-seekers: 83,105 IDPs: 3,084,916	Niger: 187,065 Cameroon: 120,959
Somalia	Refugees: 776,678 Asylum-seekers: 59,605 IDPs: 2,967,500	Kenya: 288,655 Ethiopia: 223,062 Yemen: 75,405 Uganda: 53,992 South Africa: 27,080

Source: Compiled from UNHCR (2023)

Conflict and crisis circumstances invariably generate acute food insecurity and act as a main determinant of large-scale displacement. Vulnerable households lose access to a wide range of resources necessary for survival, and migration becomes a necessity to escape conflict or extreme poverty and livelihoods' deterioration (FAO 2016). Violent conflicts severely disrupt and damage regular social and economic processes tied to food systems, such as crop production, operation of markets, trade and circulation of commodities, including food. Rampant food insecurity is therefore a common occurrence at locations facing protracted crisis circumstances. For example, Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon indicated that their country's conflict destroyed many livelihoods and access to food markets, negative conditions which produced harsh impacts on the food security of most residents (WFPb 2017). Individuals who were food secure before the conflict were also hit hard and forced to flee the country. Economic hardships and severe forms of food insecurity were major contributory factors for the exodus, although the act of migration only worsened refugees' food insecurity.

In conflict situations, many individuals can experience what Carney (2019) has described as "food-specific violence". Access to food and its availability can be weaponized and used to control certain groups greatly deepening the power asymmetries between individuals and communities. The destruction of food sources and rural infrastructure on top of large-scale population movements and other occurrences such as natural disasters can forge pervasive long-term food security hardships (Martin-Shields and Stojetz 2018, Teodosijević 2003). Widespread inequality can persist in the crisis-affected settings for five years or so even after violent conflicts come to an end (Bircan, Brück and Vothknecht 2010). Koren and Bagozzi (2016) evaluate the role of food security in conflict dynamics and conflict risks to claim that food insecurity grievances especially in areas with weaker food availability or supplies can spiral into violent social and political struggles. Access to food resources and food availability can influence conflict dynamics and these conflicts may increase in future due to climate-induced changes as individuals and groups clash over a declining pool of food resources. For example, armed conflict in Colombia involving multiple actors (guerillas, paramilitary groups, drug traffickers and criminal gangs) for strategic control over rural territories produced severe food insecurity through decreases in food production and abandonment of crops and land by local population (Segovia 2017). Displaced persons consisted largely of rural people living in poverty and vulnerable groups such as indigenous populations and persons of African descent.

Food-based crises are a ubiquitous feature of prolonged economic crisis situations due to rampant food insecurity forged through food scarcity and exorbitant food prices. Venezuela and Zimbabwe are representative examples of countries located in various regions of the global South that have recently undergone such negative changes. Both countries have witnessed large-scale outmigration in recent years related to these circumstances. The latest estimates suggest that the crisis in Venezuela has led to the displace-

ment of around 5.57 million persons, mainly to other countries in the region: Colombia (1,872,472), Peru (1,327,362), Chile (505,007), Brazil (310,661), Argentina (170,517) and Panama (130,514) (UNHCR 2023). Financial collapse and recurring periods of hyperinflation have contributed to sharp economic contractions, very high levels of unemployment accompanied by widespread deterioration in food access due to massive increases in the prices of all foods, even staple goods. A severe deterioration of the living standards for many residents, including high food prices and unchecked food scarcities, has been primary drivers of flows to other countries (Crush and Tevera 2010, Doocy et al. 2019). Although most were food insecure in a recent study conducted in Cape Town and Johannesburg, Zimbabwean migrants believed that their conditions in South Africa had improved compared to those they had experienced in their sending country (Crush and Tawodzera 2016). Their generalized circumstances in South Africa were also perceived as superior to those of their relatives back in Zimbabwe. A new study of Venezuelan migrants in Bogota, Colombia revealed that the massive shortages of basic food commodities related to the country's economic crisis were the final precipitants of outmigration for at least some migrants (Pico, Matamoros, and Bernal 2021). As one participant explained: "The main reason I left Venezuela was that I couldn't get groceries like milk to feed my granddaughter, and when that happened, I couldn't stand it anymore" (p. 6). However, survival migration does not automatically mean the restoration of food security. As one Zimbabwean migrant in South Africa noted: "The people in Zimbabwe will be expecting us to feed them and not vice-versa. But we are struggling here" (Crush and Tawodzera 2016). Persistent difficulties in securing regular income along with the urgent and unrelenting need to support relatives in Zimbabwe contributed to high levels of food insecurity and poor dietary diversity among Zimbabwean migrants in South African cities (Crush and Tawodzera 2017).

Global economic crises and recessionary periods exacerbate socioeconomic hierarchies and produce food security shocks, especially for marginal households with poor financial resources. These dire circumstances are compounded by concomitant negative changes to the labour markets, and certain cohorts especially low-wage, less skilled workers are much more likely to face retrenchments. During the global food crisis of 2008, soaring food prices, especially cereals, reduced the import capacity of many lower income food deficit countries (Mittal 2009). The food security of marginal households with very limited incomes was severely affected, forcing them to spend a larger share of their incomes to meet their basic needs, including food. Carril-Caccia, Paniagua and Suarez-Varela (2022) estimate that severe food crises affect the directionality of migration, which is increasingly headed to other countries in the global South. Such crises also inevitably result in the worsening of the socioeconomic circumstances of migrants and refugees in the receiving countries. Nawrotzki et al. (2014) evaluated the long-term impact of the 2008 global food crisis in northeastern South Africa and found significant differences in the food insecurity experiences of various vulnerable social groups, including migrants and refugees.

Former Mozambican refugees experienced the worst outcomes through an absolute decline in livelihood and food security between 2004 and 2010. Despite higher levels of food security to begin with (perhaps due to higher levels of employment), migrant households had fallen behind non-migrant households by 2010.

The various reasons for these disparities in food security during and after economic crises and their relationship with the specific barriers and challenges that various migrant cohorts face in the receiving countries deserve additional attention. Moreover, the specific moments and conditions of such crises, their interactions with intensity of food insecurity, and ways in which these aspects function as triggers of out-migration need to be analyzed further. The dynamic interactions between crises, increased food insecurity, escalating inequalities, cross-border mobility, and immobility also need to be carefully unpacked. A direct causal relationship cannot be assumed in all instances. As Table 1 shows, while conflict-related crises have generated massive displacement to numerous countries in the global South, there is a large cohort of IDPs in these countries. Yemen's conflict has predominantly resulted in mass and recurring cycles of internal rather than cross-border displacement, even after devastating levels of hunger and severe malnutrition across the country (OCHA 2023, IAHE 2022). Using a large-scale dataset from the 2014 and 2015 waves of the Gallup Poll Survey, Smith and Floro (2020) examined the linkages between food insecurity, gender, and migration in low- and middle-income countries. Their findings showed that while food insecurity is a major determinant of migration-related behavior in terms of aspiration and preparation, migration intentions increase monotonically, and migration preparations decrease with the severity of food insecurity. Women are less likely than men to have migration intentions and preparations. Gender-based inequalities within and outside households exert a negative impact on these processes.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief the robust connections between food security, inequality, and development, with short-term and long-term implications for migratory dynamics, migrants in destination settings and their sending communities. Far from being just a health-based crisis, it has triggered unprecedented multi-dimensional crises of inequality, including gender-based inequities, intensified extreme poverty, and heightened food insecurity (Sidik 2022). In 2020, many vulnerable households experienced harsh shocks to their livelihoods, household incomes, and food security, and recovery has not yet occurred (Crush and Si 2020). New studies have confirmed that Covid-19 has exacerbated pre-existing imbalances in the labour market and unravelled recent efforts to lower economic disparities on a global scale (Nayaran et al. 2022). Global travel bans, lockdowns, and other public health measures to limit contagion have produced disproportionate negative effects on migrants' socioeconomic and health wellbeing. Income losses, weaker access to pandemic relief measures, greater exposure to the virus due to their work and living conditions, increased remittance responsibilities, and increased anti-migrant tendencies have all exerted new pressures on migrants, leading to a significant deterioration

of their food security (Crush, Thomaz, and Ramachandran 2021, FAO 2020, IOM and WFP 2020).

Rising inflation and increasing food prices have coalesced with the latest developments, such as the Ukraine conflict, to magnify the widespread shocks and stressors of Covid-19 and forge a "global food crisis" and intensified acute food insecurity in the "hunger hotspots" (WFP 2023, WFP and FAO 2022). The latest *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022* reports a sharp spike in moderate and severe food insecurity in 2020, followed by significant surges in severe food insecurity a year later (FAO et al. 2022). Although its full effects are still unfolding, some new studies have suggested that increases in migration will constitute one of the long-term effects of the pandemic and related structural changes (Smith and Wesselbaum 2020). Longitudinal surveys conducted with a sample of Guatemalan farmers between 2019 and 2021 recorded a three-fold increase in emigration intentions by 2021 which were absent before the onset of Covid-19 (Ceballos, Hernandez, and Paz 2021 2022). Although improvements in incomes, food security, and dietary diversity were recorded in 2021 compared to the previous year, more than half of the respondent households were borrowing to cope and had not yet fully recovered from the pandemic-related shocks.

Remittances and Food Security

The role of migrant remittances in addressing inequalities-related deficits in sending areas has received much attention. The impact of remitting on food security for both recipients and senders has also been investigated. Migrant remittances have become an important part of the resources of at least some left-behind households, with significant implications for recipients' expenditure and consumption patterns. Studies focusing on diverse migrant-sending areas have shown that households receiving international remittances are more likely to be food secure than those who do not (Regmi and Paudel 2017). A new work argues that the intensity of impacts on the food security of recipient households is tied to national income classification in sub-Saharan Africa (Sulemana, Anarfo, and Doabil 2022). Lower-income countries with larger cohorts experiencing poverty and poor standards of living experienced the strongest positive effects on their food security. Other works have shown that remittances expand household food expenditures in sub-Saharan Africa and improve the long-term food security of recipients (Ajefu and Ogebe 2020).

Another study of 51 developing countries found that the level of food supply tends to be higher in countries with high remittance flows (Subramaniam, Masron, and Azman 2022). Analyzing a World Bank living standards dataset for Nigeria, Obi, Bartolini and D'Haese (2020) conclude that remittances are a "veritable instrument" to meet short- and long-term food security of households during food crises. These effects were pronounced for women-headed households that are at increased risk of food insecurity. Ebadi's

(2019) assessment found significant correlations between remittance receipts and food security across all regions of the global South. Households who did not receive remittances were much more likely to be severely food insecure in sub-Saharan Africa, along with Southeast, South, and East Asia. In some countries, such as Liberia, Yemen, Haiti and Nepal, non-receipt of remittances was significantly tied to moderate and severe food insecurity. However, the poorest households that made up the lowest 20% income quantiles were less likely to receive remittances.

Although attention has centered largely on monetary transfers using formal and informal channels, food transfers are an important part of the remitting landscape in parts of the global South. Several recent works have shown that informal food remitting is an important, albeit unrecognized dimension of remittances in Southern Africa with consequences for the welfare and food security of both sending and receiving households (Crush and Caesar 2016 2017). One-third of the migrant-sending households had received food remittances in a survey of five countries (Peberdy et al. 2016). Transnational food transfers enhance food supply among migrant-sending households (Frayne and Crush 2017, Tawodzera and Crush 2016). While remittances may not always greatly enhance dietary diversity, they ease the harsh effects of existing socioeconomic inequalities through higher food security equilibrium. Remittances therefore provide mitigating effects on the prevailing hardships of sending communities associated with entrenched inequalities. These positive consequences are, however, available only to migrant-sending households, and even such households may not receive remittances on a regular basis.

Remittance receipts operate as informal support mechanisms in the context of weak or absent social welfare systems and improve the general well-being of recipient households. Through their remittance practices, migrants are members of translocal and transnational households stretched across different geographical places. While remittances bring various benefits to recipients, the pressure to constantly remit, or the remittance burden can worsen migrant vulnerabilities in destination areas (Ramachandran and Crush 2021). For example, persistent difficulties in securing regular incomes in addition to the urgent and unrelenting need to support relatives contributed to high levels of food insecurity and poor dietary diversity among Zimbabwean migrants in South African cities (Crush and Tawodzera 2017). As one respondent noted: "Life is really difficult. The food is never enough, and I have gone hungry many times...Yes, things were really terrible in Zimbabwe and that made us come here, but to be honest, I am still struggling. I have to survive on charity and begging" (Crush and Tawodzera 2016: 18). Due to this responsibility to remit, migrants remain tied to the mechanisms of inequality in both their sending and receiving areas (Ramachandran et al. 2022).

Migrants, Food Systems and Foodscapes

Migrants are important constituents of local and national food systems in the sending and receiving areas and contribute to the food security of their own and other households in various ways. In a previous section, we briefly discussed that the transformation of food production systems and related vulnerabilities, especially food insecurity, is a distinctive driver of cross-border migration in some areas. Cross-border migration has played an additional role in supporting local food production systems in migrant-sending areas. A study of subsistence migration from Nicaragua to other Central American countries, especially El Salvador, shows that it has sustained small-scale agricultural systems and food production in the sending areas (Carte, Radel, and Schmook 2019). Rather than forging remittance landscapes, it has enabled some household members left behind to maintain small-scale agricultural practices by producing and remaining on the land in a difficult social, political, and economic environment. Here, migration has stemmed deagrarianization or the decline of the farming sector by mitigating the harsh outcomes of rural poverty for farming households. In a similar pattern, labour migration has not automatically led to a complete or absolute exit from agricultural production for sending communities in Southeast Asia (Kelley et al. 2020). As part of multi-local, diversified, and hybrid livelihood strategies, labour migration has transformed agrarian livelihoods, yet helped to maintain smallholder subsistence farming. Female migration for overseas contract work has forged the transition from subsistence to commercial farming by their male relatives in the Philippines (McKay 2013). These less clearcut linkages between structural factors, agrarian change, migrant agency, and migrant livelihoods and their various repercussions for food security need further evaluation.

Beyond that, migrants are key actors in local and national food systems related to food production, distribution, and retailing in several destination areas. Less work is currently available on this topic, especially in relation to South-South migration. Chikanda, Crush and Tawodzera (2020) have argued that very little material is available on the food security and distribution of migrants in the urban areas of the global South (see also Crush 2016). Migrant workers are active participants in the local and national food production systems of destination countries and contribute to the food security of local populations. The labour-intensive, low-skilled, and often poorly remunerated agricultural sector, including fisheries, livestock, forestry, and other agriculture-related activities, is the largest employer of migrant workers in numerous African countries. In Algeria, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Liberia, Namibia, Niger and Nigeria, the agricultural sector absorbs 28% of all employed migrant workers (African Union 2017). In South Africa, there is a long history of formal and informal recruitment of farm workers from neighbouring Lesotho,

Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Bolt 2015, Kudejira 2021). Documented and undocumented migrants from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar constitute an increasing number of workers in Thailand's commercial agriculture (ILO 2021, Mekong Migration Network 2020).

Existing research has highlighted the various inequities that migrant farm labour encounter while participating in these productive activities through unfair and unsafe working conditions. The intersecting impacts of migrant status with gender, ethnicity, and national origin have been further assessed. Nicaraguan farmworkers face long working hours, physical demanding manual labour and repeated exposure to pesticides in Costa Rica and are often denied their legitimate rights (Poirier et al. 2022). Documented migrants are eligible for formal employment, healthcare and pensions as part of the country's well-developed and expansive social protection system, although access to these benefits is restricted in practice. A new ILO (2021) study exposed the discriminatory treatment of migrant agricultural labour by gender and nationality in Thailand, with women migrants and migrants from Myanmar receiving much lower wages and temporary contracts. However, less research is available linking these various precarities with the food security of migrant households and the ways in which it defines their relationships with their sending areas. In a rare study, Kudejira (2021) analyzed the food-focused activities of Zimbabwean farm workers in South Africa. Operating through migrant social networks, communal food sharing practices helped mitigate to some extent the arduous circumstances of their existence in South Africa, especially food insecurity.

Migrants and refugees are less recognized elements of local foodscapes in urban areas of destination country settings. Foodscapes refer to the local food environment including the spatial distribution of food outlets such as formal and informal retail food shops, markets, restaurants, and food availability shaped by socioeconomic relationships and structural inequalities (Vontrhon, Perrin and Soulard 2020). These foodscapes are composite arrangements of formal and informal sector activities in most areas of the global South, and migrants actively participate in these activities. Migrants feed cities working as street vendors and small- and medium-scale traders engaged in food retail operations. A Hungry Cities Partnership (HCP) survey of informal food vendors in Cape Town city in South Africa found that more than half had migrated from multiple countries within and outside of Southern Africa and some were refugees and asylum-seekers (Tawodzera and Crush 2017). In Malaysia, hierarchies of migrant workers have emerged in the food service sector, with Rohingya refugees active yet invisible in *pasars* (wholesale fresh markets) and other groups placed in *mamak* stalls (restaurants and outdoor food stalls) (Muniandy 2020).

In South Africa, migrant vendors and traders make a wide range of reasonably priced uncooked and cooked food products, including fruits and vegetables, available in urban areas, especially in less-served neighbourhoods (Crush

2016, Haysom, Crush and Caesar 2017, Skinner and Haysom 2017). Migrant-operated *spazas* or informal grocery stores adopt flexible and accommodating practices such as low mark-up, credit purchases for regular customers, selling food in very small quantities (such as a single slice of bread or one egg), among others, to support the food security of the poorest residents, both in terms of food quantity and food diversity. With their activities in the informal food sector, migrant traders also offer a variety of foods in the poorer, less desirable neighbourhoods that are generally not well served by formal grocery stores and supermarkets. In this respect, migrant economic activities have limited the negative effects of "food deserts". The term "food deserts" has been used to characterize poor quality residential settings where food availability and access to nutritious foods may be unequal to other neighbourhoods.

Despite that, migrant food vendors and workers can operate in an extremely hostile environment, face rampant xenophobia, with repeated attempts by authorities and citizens to curtail their economic activities. Malaysia's Penang province banned migrants from working as cooks at street food stalls, using the claim of preserving the authenticity of the food (Khoo 2017). The popular street food sold in this area is intertwined with its rich migration history. Frontline migrant workers from Bangladesh, Burma, and Thailand in this country's food service industry have been visible targets of racial prejudices and xenophobic tendencies (Muniandy 2020). They also constitute easily exploitable surplus labour. In South Africa, migrant street food vendors and *spaza* operators have faced recurring bouts of xenophobic violence, including physical attacks, looting of their stock, and arson (Crush and Ramachandran 2015, Tawodzera and Crush 2023).

Although less analyzed outside the broad African region, migrants are involved in the informal bidirectional movement of food commodities across urban and rural locations in various destination and sending countries. Conducted largely through female traders, the informal cross-border trade of food products using short-term mobilities plays a decisive role in poverty alleviation and food security in Southern Africa (Peberdy et al. 2016). Studies on informal cross-border trade along the South Africa-Zimbabwe migration corridor confirm their multiple positive consequences for food security in crisis-ridden Zimbabwe (Chikanda and Tawodzera 2017, Kachere 2011). These mobilities offered livelihood sources, supplemented migrant incomes, and provided food to other households. Women traders were especially involved in the trade of agricultural products during periods of massive food shortages in Zimbabwe and made food available at affordable prices to many impoverished and crisis-hit households. The use of certain practices such as bartering made food accessible to the poorest segments. This type of importation of food products through less formal channels softened to some extent the devastating results of the country's crisis-related food shortages.

Migrants, Inequality and Food Insecurity in Receiving Areas

The social and economic inequalities between migrants and host populations in the migrant-receiving countries are another important component of the linkages between inequality, migration, and development (Gisselquist 2021). Here, two important questions emerge with respect to food security. First, how do these inequalities affect the food security of various migrant groups and second, what are the differences in the food security and food insecurity experiences of migrants and non-migrant groups? Some studies have suggested that migrant food security is adequate when assessed against citizens. Analyzing Gallup World Poll data from 2014 to 2019, Dou et al. (2022) estimated that the prevalence of food insecurity among migrants was lower than that for non-immigrants globally, due to their higher employment levels. However, migrants reported higher levels of moderate and severe food insecurity and poorer mental well-being in the Asia-Pacific region. More detailed research at the regional, national, and subnational scales and its connections with migrant status will offer more nuanced understandings of these comparative appraisals for South-South migration.

Although not all migrants experience food insecurity at their transit and destination areas, it is a key aspect of migrant marginality and precarity related to South-South migration. Many categories of vulnerable migrants face a common set of challenges that produce substantial inequalities in opportunity and outcomes: decent work deficits, erratic work opportunities, inadequate incomes, poor living and housing conditions, weak social protection, xenophobia, and discriminatory treatment, among others. The multiple layering of inequalities that migrants are simultaneously exposed to at receiving country settings can rapidly forge pathways to their extreme or hyper-precarity with cascading effects on their food insecurity (Duerto 2021, Gama et al. 2020). We provide examples from diverse countries and regions next.

Food insecurity was a “consistent condition” for Afghan refugee families in Pakistan, despite holding government issued identity-cards (Khakpour et al. 2019). Regular harassment by police, such as having to offer bribes, difficulties in the annual renewal of these cards and lower wages offered by employers, contributed to their precarious status, with negative outcomes for their food security status. The entire families of Colombian refugees in Ecuador faced severe food insecurity and malnutrition that led to poorer health status, weaker school performance, and lower self-esteem for their children (Shedlin et al. 2016). Similar findings have been documented for Iraqi refugees in Lebanon (Ghattas et al. 2014) and other refugee hosting areas (Maharaj et al. 2017, Muhyie 2020, Nisbet et al. 2022, Sayhoun et al. 2020). Food insecurity and stress were greatly exacerbated during periods of intensified immigration policing for young irregular Haitian male migrants in the Dominican Republic (Carney and Krause 2020). Forced to skip work, two-third of respondents had to consume the same, less nutritious food every day. High levels of food insecurity among recent employed and unemployed Venezuelan migrants and asylum-seekers

in Trinidad and Tobago (Saint Ville et al. 2022). Irregular migrants transiting through Mexico encountered inadequate quantity and quality of food consumption and were forced to rely on migrant shelters to meet their food needs. (Deschak et al. 2022). They had to resort to begging or offer their services in exchange for food, which was sometimes met with aggressive xenophobic reactions. Poverty, racialized violence and stigma, and food insecurity often operates as a vicious cycle in the lives of migrants with precarious migration status (Carney and Krause 2020).

Gendered biases and gender-based inequities intersect with other forms of discrimination to produce unique hardships for female migrants and differential experiences by migrant gender identities. In a study in Durban city, South Africa, most female asylum-seekers and refugees were forced to skip meals for the entire day and women often ate less than their other family members (Napier, Oldewage-Theron, and Makhaya 2018). During the COVID-19 pandemic, women Venezuelan migrants in Ecuadorian cities had to reduce their food consumption to meet the food needs of their children and grandchildren (Milan and Martens 2023). Although placed in households with abundant food, Indonesian women domestic workers in Singapore often went hungry, were given smaller portions of food, less desirable categories of food, and served spoiled food or leftovers from their employers’ plates (Mohamed 2014, 2017). Food was used as a deliberate tactic to reinforce the unequal position of these workers and their weak rights. Extended exposure to Zimbabwe’s long-term crisis and its deterioration just before and during the pandemic made women-led households in South Africa especially vulnerable to related shocks (Ramachandran et al. 2022). Despite being employed after facing rampant job losses in 2020, only 5% of such households were food secure in 2021. Unaccompanied migrant youth with irregular incomes and limited cooking facilities were more likely to face food security in terms of availability and diversity (Hayden 2022). More work is needed on such less represented cohorts, such as unaccompanied minors, accompanied child migrants, youth migrants, elderly migrants, LGBTQ+ migrants, and women-headed migrant households.

Conclusion

Our paper responds to recent calls for greater attention to both inequality and food security in the policy-oriented dialogue on the “migration-development nexus”. As stark outcomes of existing socioeconomic asymmetries within and across countries and regions, food insecurity has long been accepted as a core challenge of equitable and sustainable development. In this work, we have positioned food security and inequality as core, interconnected elements to map the migration-development relationship in expansive and nuanced ways for South-South migratory flows and mobilities. Drawing on recent research focusing on numerous sending and receiving areas in different regions of the global South, we have identified five distinctive dimensions to the dynamic linkages between food security, inequality, migration

and development in the global South. First, we show how food security and inequality interact to influence migration desires and actions. Second, by providing a discussion of various forms of crisis scenarios and conflict dynamics, we analyze how and under what circumstances food insecurity becomes the main driver and final trigger of forced displacement and voluntary migrations. Third, we assess the role of food and cash remittances in addressing the food insecurity of sending households. We underscore its competing effects on inequalities-based deficits in sending areas and migrant precarity in receiving areas. Fourth, we discuss the role of migration and migrants in the food systems and foodscapes of sending and receiving areas. We show that migrants make positive contributions to food security and support local food systems at both sets of locations, despite labouring under difficult, unequal, and hostile conditions. Fifth, we connect migrant precariousities with the food security status of various categories of migrants in transit and destination areas. We further identify gaps in existing literature that require attention. By mapping the compound competing and contradictory ways in which these linkages act upon South-South migration, we attempt to temper the celebratory narrative of the migration-development nexus.

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