THE POLITICS OF SURVIVAL

SOUTH-SOUTH MIGRATION, URBAN INFORMALITY, GOVERNANCE, AND THE FOOD SECURITY NEXUS IN NAIROBI, KENYA

by

Zack Ahmed

(Master of International Public Policy, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2021)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to the scholarship on South-South migration by integrating food security into the analysis of urban governance and migrant livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa. While migration and development have been widely examined, their connection to food systems remains underexplored, particularly in urban settings where informality, displacement, and transnational mobility converge. The research addresses this gap by investigating how Somali migrants and refugees in Nairobi's Eastleigh navigate food insecurity within overlapping systems of governance, inequality, and transnational exchange. It explores three dimensions: the structural and socio-economic determinants of migrant household food insecurity, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a governance shock disrupting informal food systems and remittance flows, and the intersectional factors such as gender, documentation, and household composition that shape differentiated experiences of adaptation and resilience.

The study employed a mixed-methods design grounded in critical realism and intersectional epistemology, combining quantitative household surveys (n=268) with qualitative life-history interviews (n=30) and key-informant consultations. Standardized food-security measures, including the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP), and Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS), were used to assess prevalence and severity, while qualitative narratives provided insight into the lived meanings of food insecurity, coping, and transnational obligation. The analysis revealed that 43 percent of Somali households were food secure, while nearly two in five experienced severe food insecurity. Income, education, gender, and employment status were the strongest predictors of household food security, and spatial disparities within Eastleigh highlighted uneven geographies of vulnerability shaped by policing, infrastructure, and tenancy.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these inequalities, with over 80 percent of households reporting income loss and two-thirds citing increased food expenses. Market closures and mobility restrictions disrupted informal trade and access to culturally appropriate food, exposing the fragility of migrant-dependent informal economies. Female-headed and undocumented households faced compounded deprivation but also demonstrated agency through community savings groups, remittance pooling, and collective coping mechanisms. The study situates these experiences within a multi-scalar theoretical framework combining Migration Systems Theory, Urban Informality, and Intersectionality, showing how structural forces, governance regimes, and social hierarchies interact to produce and reproduce food insecurity in migrant communities.

The research makes four key contributions. First, it develops an integrated conceptual model linking migration, governance, and food systems, reframing urban food insecurity as a political and relational condition rather than a technical or humanitarian problem. Second, it advances Southern urban theory by showing that informality is not a symptom of governance failure but a central mode through which legality, access, and belonging are negotiated. Third, it introduces methodological innovation through a reflexive, mixed-methods design that combines standardized indices with culturally grounded narrative analysis. Fourth, it extends policy debates by positioning food security within frameworks of rights, inclusion, and urban citizenship.

Overall, the dissertation demonstrates that migration and food security are mutually constitutive processes. Mobility both mitigates and generates vulnerability within the unequal governance landscapes of African cities. For Somali migrants in Nairobi, food security is not only about access to food but also about recognition, stability, and belonging in an urban environment that simultaneously depends on and marginalizes them. The findings underscore

the need for integrated urban and migration policies that recognize informal food systems, support women's economic participation, and strengthen transnational safety nets. By situating these insights within the broader transformations of South-South migration and African urbanization, the study contributes to rethinking food security as a question of justice, governance, and everyday survival in the Global South.

Keywords: Food security, governance, Urban informality, intersectionality, South-South migration.

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This work is as much yours as it is mine.

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my work and that it is a true copy of the thesis, including any required and final revisions as accepted by the supervisory committee. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I understand that this thesis may be made electronically available to the public

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (Project)
HDDS	Household Dietary Diversity Score
HFIAP	Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence
HFIAS	Household Food Insecurity Access Scale
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RRPS	Rapid Response Phone Surveys
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSM	South-South Migration
UFS	Urban Food Security
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

Urbanization is transforming social and economic life across the Global South. In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the urban population has grown more than fivefold since 1980, rising from roughly 80 million to over 440 million people, with the share of urban residents increasing from 23 to more than 42 percent (OECD et al., 2017; Sakketa, 2023). This expansion has taken place without a corresponding growth in municipal capacity. Local governments and public service systems built for smaller populations now manage employment, housing, and infrastructure for rapidly expanding and increasingly diverse urban communities. The result is not a shift from "informality" to formal urban order but their coexistence, where tolerance, selective enforcement, and gradual upgrading sit alongside exclusion and periodic clearance (Potts, 2012; Reardon et al., 2015). These patterns are reinforced by demographic and environmental pressures. SSA is projected to become the world's most populous region by 2050, and climate variability already undermines rural livelihoods that supply the region's cities (UNFCCC, 2020; United Nations, 2022). Urban growth is therefore not only spatial but also a social response to intertwined pressures of employment, environment, and governance.

Food systems make these pressures visible. As demand outpaces local food production, most urban households now rely on purchased food; in many African cities, more than 80 percent of residents depend on markets for daily consumption (Frayne, Crush & McLachlan, 2014; McCordic & Frayne, 2017). Supermarkets and wholesale depots coexist with dense networks of street vendors, market stalls, small eateries, and neighbourhood kiosks (Reardon & Timmer, 2012; Battersby & Watson, 2019). For low-income residents, these informal outlets are central to survival because they sell in small quantities, offer credit, and are easily accessible (Wagner, 2024). Yet their contribution is undermined by spatial and legal insecurity. Vendors and home-

based food businesses face evictions, enforcement drives, and periodic “modernization” or public-health campaigns that interrupt supply and limit access for the poorest consumers (Kyed, 2019; Adama, 2020; Kamete & Lindell, 2010). These tensions expose a paradox seen across African cities: informal food economies sustain urban life but remain peripheral to formal food-security policy and planning (Crush, 2013; Resnick, 2017).

Migration lies at the centre of this urban food economy. African cities are destinations for internal migrants and nodes in South-South mobility networks that connect markets, labour, and capital (Bakewell & Jónsson, 2011; Crush & Caesar, 2017). Migrants supply labour, entrepreneurship, and transnational linkages that tie city markets to regional and global circuits of trade and finance. Nearly half of all international migrants now live in the Global South, including more than 50 million migrant workers moving within Southern regions (UNDESA, 2020; ILO, 2018). Recent scholarship stresses that these flows represent distinct migration systems with their own logics, governance challenges, and development linkages rather than a residual form of South-North migration (Chikanda et al, 2025). Cities such as Nairobi, and neighbourhoods like Eastleigh, have thus become key nodes in regional networks of migration, trade, and remittance exchange (Carrier, 2017; Carrier and Scharrer, 2019).

Remittances link cities and rural areas, financing consumption, small enterprises, and informal markets (Ratha & Shaw, 2007; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Yet reliance on informal work and unregulated trading spaces exposes migrants to price volatility, policing, and exclusion from formal welfare systems, all of which deepen urban food insecurity (Resnick, 2017; Crush & Tawodzera, 2017). These realities challenge the optimistic idea of migration as a “triple win” or “virtuous circle” of development (Clemens et al., 2014; Crush, 2013). Evidence from South-South contexts shows that the developmental benefits of migration are uneven when food

access depends on precarious markets and exclusionary governance (Dhakal, 2025; Tawodzera, and Crush, 2025; Thomas-hope, 2025).

Nairobi captures these dynamics. Eastleigh's transformation from a colonial-era residential suburb into a transnational commercial hub reflects the convergence of regional migration, informal enterprise, and remittance capital (Carrier & Lochery, 2013; Carrier, 2017). Somali-led markets connect local consumers with suppliers across Kenya, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East, showing how daily trade reshapes urban food systems without major formal investment or aid. Yet this success coexists with restriction. Economic participation unfolds under refugee policies that limit mobility, periodic securitization of Somali communities, and uneven access to credit and infrastructure (Agwanda, 2022; Bhagat, 2020). Migrants who sustain the neighbourhood's food economy do so under legal uncertainty and discretionary enforcement.

These conditions are shaped by Kenya's encampment-based refugee regime, discretionary enforcement of migrant mobility restrictions, and episodic securitization of Somali neighbourhoods, which together render informal livelihoods both necessary and precarious (Agwanda, 2022; Campbell, 2006; Varming, 2020). Police raids, licensing drives, and security operations in Eastleigh therefore function as routine instruments of urban governance rather than exceptional interventions, producing chronic livelihood insecurity for migrant traders and food vendors (Bhagat, 2020).

Taken together, these realities mirror global debates about aligning migration governance with inclusive food systems, from the Global Compact on Migration to the New Urban Agenda and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (Crush, 2019; Battersby & Watson, 2019; Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, 2019). Against this backdrop, this dissertation asks how South-South migration

both sustains and is constrained by the informal urban food systems through which migrant households seek to secure their livelihoods.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Migration and displacement research remains shaped by a long-standing camp orientation (Sanyal, 2016). For decades, policy frameworks and academic studies have focused on formal refugee settlements as the primary spaces of governance, service delivery, and data collection (Stevenson and Sutton, 2011; Weima and Hyndman, 2019). This emphasis has left urban displacement comparatively neglected, even though most refugees now live in cities where they work, trade, and organize their own support systems (Huq & Miraftab, 2020; te Lintelo and Soye, 2018; Verghis & Balasundram, 2019). The gap between policy and reality is stark. While humanitarian programming still revolves around camp-based management, self-settled urban refugees sustain livelihoods in complex and often unregulated urban economies. Existing research has largely addressed urban refugees through the lens of housing, healthcare, or protection (Campbell, 2006; Omata, 2021; Earle, 2024). Much less attention has been paid to the everyday economic systems of markets, credit, and remittances, through which displaced people secure food under conditions of legal uncertainty and uneven regulation.

Migration scholarship itself has also been marked by a Northern bias. As Chikanda et al (2025, pp. 3-4) observe, “South-South migration challenges scholarly Eurocentrism by demonstrating the key role played by migration and its important consequences for countries of origin, destination, and transit in the South.” Understanding migration and food insecurity in African cities therefore requires frameworks grounded in Southern realities, ones that recognize how migrants actively shape the urban food systems on which they also depend.

The COVID-19 pandemic made this gap more visible. As Crush and Ahmed (2024, p. 6) note, "migrants and refugees were affected disproportionately by pandemic precarity, as they were more likely to be in unstable employment, to live in overcrowded conditions, and to be excluded from government relief measures." Rajan (2025, p. 6) similarly describes the pandemic as "an epochal moment that altered the global socio-political landscape to an irrevocable extent," transforming mobility patterns and exposing deep weaknesses in urban governance. These realities highlight how research and policy have struggled to capture the layered vulnerabilities of displaced populations, especially within informal food systems that serve as their main safety nets.

Much of the field remains oriented toward rural production and national food supply, often applying rural indicators to urban settings (FAO, 2006; Sibhatu et al., 2015; Crush, 2013). Yet, urban food security research has its own blind spots. In African cities, most households rely on markets rather than farms for their food, making employment, income, and price regulation central to nutrition and access (Frayne, Crush & McLachlan, 2014; McCordic & Frayne, 2017). Studies have mapped supermarket expansion and informal retail (Reardon & Timmer, 2012; Battersby & Watson, 2019), but few examine how migrants' legal status, mobility, or social networks affect their ability to obtain affordable, culturally appropriate food. The result is an incomplete understanding of food security as a lived urban experience shaped as much by governance and inequality as by market dynamics.

Another gap concerns the treatment of heterogeneity and shocks. Policy and research frameworks often treat categories such as "refugees," "women," or "the urban poor" as homogeneous, obscuring the internal differences that shape vulnerability and adaptation. Intersectional factors such gender, legal documentation, household structure, class, and

transnational obligation combine to produce highly uneven food-security outcomes (Crenshaw, 1991; Bauer et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic made these disparities more visible. Lockdowns, price inflation, and disruptions to remittance flows deepened food insecurity among self-settled refugees, yet most analyses failed to disaggregate these experiences (Pape et al., 2020; Pinchoff et al., 2021; Kunyanga et al., 2023; Rajan, 2023). As a result, we know little about how mobility, informality, and cross-border finance intersect to shape household resilience during crises. This dissertation addresses these gaps by examining the everyday food economies of Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh, situating their experiences within the broader systems of migration, governance, and inequality that structure urban life in the Global South.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

To address the gaps identified above, this dissertation pursues three interrelated objectives that together explore how South-South migration intersects with urban food security in Nairobi. Each objective is linked to a specific manuscript and set of research questions, reflecting the dissertation's mixed-methods and multi-scalar design. Collectively, they move from identifying baseline conditions to assessing crisis impacts and, finally, to understanding differentiated experiences of resilience and vulnerability within the migrant community.

Objective 1: Baseline Assessment

The first objective is to establish a quantitative foundation by measuring the levels, spatial patterns, and socio-economic determinants of food security among Somali refugee and migrant households in Nairobi, and to examine how structural factors such as income, employment, and remittance flows shape urban food access and utilization.

Research Questions

1. What are the levels and determinants of food security and insecurity among Somali refugees in Eastleigh?
2. How do experiences of food security vary within this population, and why?
3. Does food security improve with increased time since migration to Nairobi?

Objective 2: Crisis Impacts

The second objective is to investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted informal food systems and transnational remittance networks, deepening vulnerability within the Somali community, and to explore how pandemic restrictions intersected with pre-existing conditions of informality, legal precarity, and limited mobility.

Research Questions

1. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the food security and livelihood strategies of Somali refugees in Eastleigh?
2. In what ways did the pandemic disrupt informal food networks and remittance flows, and with what consequences for household food security?
3. How did intersectional factors such as gender, migration status, and socio-economic class exacerbate food insecurity during the pandemic?

Objective 3: Intersectional Analysis

The third objective is to apply an intersectional framework to uncover how overlapping identities, social positions, and governance conditions generate divergent food-security outcomes, and to move beyond general categories such as “refugees” or “the urban poor” to

identify how gender, documentation status, and transnational obligations shape both vulnerability and adaptation.

Research Questions

1. How do overlapping social positions such as gender, legal status, and household composition shape Somali refugees' food-procurement strategies and vulnerabilities?
2. Which structural or external factors, such as governance gaps, informality, or global shocks, magnify or mitigate these vulnerabilities?
3. What policy or programmatic interventions emerge from an intersectional analysis of South-South migrant food security in Nairobi?

Together, these objectives create an integrated analytical framework linking structural determinants, crisis-era disruptions, and intersectional differentiation. They deepen understanding of how Somali migrants navigate Nairobi's urban food systems under overlapping pressures of informality, legal uncertainty, and transnational dependence, while also identifying pathways for more inclusive governance and policy response.

1.4 Research Context: Nairobi and Eastleigh

Nairobi captures the contradictions of contemporary African urbanization. The city's population has expanded more than fourfold since 1980, driven by both internal migration and cross-border movement from the Horn of Africa (OECD et al., 2017; Sakketa, 2023). As Kenya's political and economic capital, Nairobi attracts migrants seeking work, education, and security, yet it also embodies the tensions of rapid urban growth: high unemployment, spatial inequality, and deep dependence on informal economies (Macharia, 2007; Nakamura and Avner, 2018; Zulu et al, 2006) For most residents, food security depends not on agricultural production but on daily income and access to markets. Households purchase rather than

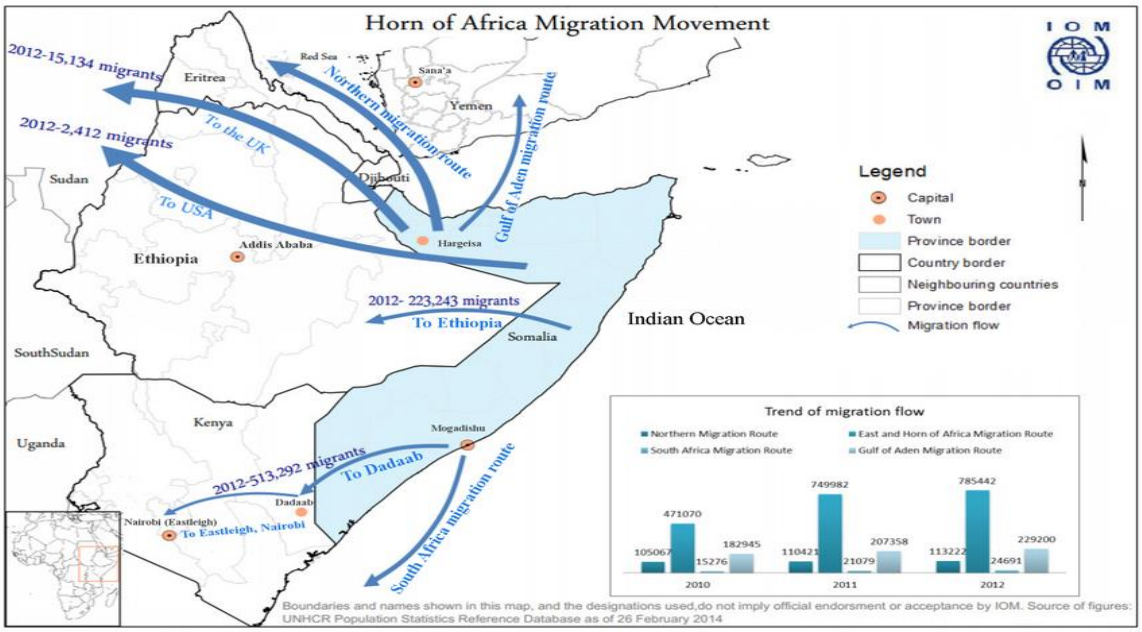
produce food, relying on networks of small traders, vendors, and transporters who operate outside formal regulation (Frayne et al., 2014; Battersby & Watson, 2019). These informal systems keep the city supplied but remain fragile, vulnerable to policing, inflation, and infrastructure breakdown.

The city's fragility mirrors wider regional pressures across SSA, where the combined effects of conflict, inequality, and climate variability have eroded rural livelihoods and intensified migration toward urban centres (UNICEF, 2021; UNFCCC, 2020). Consecutive droughts between 2020 and 2022 left more than 36 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya facing acute food insecurity, demonstrating how environmental stress and economic crisis feed directly into regional mobility (CARE, 2022;1, 2020).

Somali migration to Kenya reflects a much longer regional history. Colonial boundary-making divided Somali populations among Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Djibouti, creating cross-border ties that have endured for over a century (Chau, 2010). The collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991, combined with recurring droughts and insecurity, intensified this mobility (Kumssa and Jones, 2014). Hundreds of thousands sought refuge in Kenya (Figure 1) due to its proximity, many entering through the northeastern frontier. While most were initially confined to camps such as Dadaab and Kakuma (Horst, 2007), an increasing number moved to cities like Nairobi to pursue livelihoods and autonomy unavailable in encampment settings (Omata, 2021; Earle, 2024). Migration within the South now accounts for nearly half of all international mobility, with more than 50 million migrant workers circulating within Southern regions (ILO, 2018; UNDESA, 2020). This broader South-South trend situates Somali migration within a continental system of adaptation and survival. It reflects what Crush et al (2025) describe as "the new geography of South-South migration," where regional hubs such

as Nairobi function as both destination and transit points in emerging migration systems shaped by trade, conflict, and climate stress.

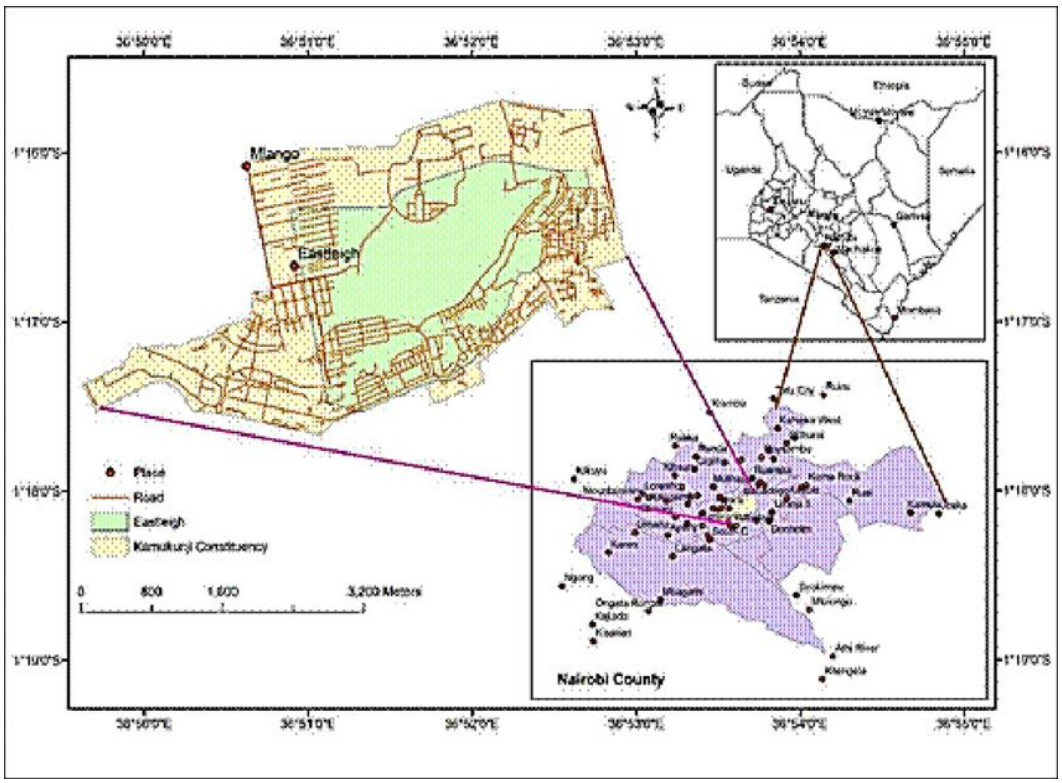
Figure 1: Map of Horn of Africa region showing key locations and migration patterns for Somali refugees



Source:https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Horn-of-Africa-region-showing-key-locations-and-also-migration-patterns-for-Somali_fig1_272842525.

Eastleigh (Figure 2), located northeast of Nairobi's central business district, exemplifies this complexity. Once a planned residential suburb, Eastleigh has since the 1990s evolved into a dense commercial hub often referred to as "Little Mogadishu" (Carrier, 2017). Its transformation reflects the convergence of regional migration, transnational trade, and remittance finance (Carrier & Lochery, 2013; Lindley, 2010). Somali traders import consumer goods and foodstuffs from Dubai, Guangzhou, and Mogadishu, while small-scale vendors cater to both Somali and Kenyan consumers. Hawala money-transfer systems link the neighbourhood to diasporas in the Gulf, Europe, and North America, circulating capital that sustains enterprise and household consumption. These financial and commodity flows make Eastleigh one of Nairobi's most dynamic informal economies, where global and local interactions shape daily trade, trust, and survival.

Figure 2. Eastleigh Map , Nairobi, Kenya.



Source: Otieno et al (2025).

Despite its vibrancy, Eastleigh's economy operates under chronic precarity. Most enterprises lack formal registration or access to bank credit, relying instead on community regulation and rotating savings groups such as ayuuto (Carrier, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2015). Periodic police raids, licensing campaigns, and arbitrary enforcement can wipe out livelihoods overnight (Varming, 2020; Bhagat, 2020). Poor infrastructure, unreliable electricity, inadequate sanitation, and congested transport routes raise the cost of storing and distributing food (Asoka et al., 2013; Obolensky et al., 2019). Refugee policy compounds these pressures. Kenya's approach has oscillated between cautious integration and encampment, punctuated by periods of securitization that frame Somali identity through a lens of suspicion and national security (Agwanda, 2022; Otieno et al., 2022). In this environment, traders and consumers depend

heavily on informal institutions such as clan elders, mosque committees, and business associations for dispute resolution, resource sharing, and protection.

Gender and household structure are integral to Eastleigh's economy. Somali women are visible entrepreneurs (Ritchie, 2019), dominate small-scale food vending, catering, and domestic trade, balancing income generation with childcare and community responsibilities. Consequently, they have been described as the "backbone of Somali [Eastleigh] society" (Jacobsen, 2011, p.37). Men tend to control larger wholesale and cross-border operations, drawing on clan networks and diaspora capital. These gendered divisions shape both opportunity and vulnerability. Female-headed or undocumented households often rely on flexible social credit, while male traders face expectations to remit earnings abroad (Pinchoff et al., 2021). Across these livelihoods, food security depends on a fragile balance of cash flow, remittances, and informal credit, which can easily be disrupted by inflation, policing, or global crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed these vulnerabilities in sharp relief. As Crush and Ahmed (2024, p. 7) observe, "informal markets, essential for both livelihood and food access, were severely affected by lockdowns and health regulations, leading to a cascade of negative outcomes for both traders and consumers." In Eastleigh, market closures and mobility restrictions disrupted food supply chains and cut earnings, while travel bans and reduced remittances strained the transnational financial ties on which many households depend. Rajan (2025) similarly describes the pandemic as a global inflection point that "redefined both the governance of cities and the conditions of human mobility," a dynamic that was clearly evident in Nairobi.

For this dissertation, Eastleigh serves as more than a field site. It provides an empirical lens through which to examine the relationship between South-South migration and urban food systems. The neighbourhood demonstrates how migrants construct livelihoods and sustain food access in the absence of formal protection, how transnational remittances underpin local markets, and how governance through informality simultaneously enables and constrains these processes. These dynamics connect to broader policy debates linking migration and food-system governance, including the Global Compact for Migration, the New Urban Agenda, and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, which emphasize inclusive and climate-resilient urban food systems (Crush, 2019; Battersby & Watson, 2019; Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, 2019). Studying Somali migrants in Eastleigh therefore provides a grounded understanding of migration as a regional system, food insecurity as an urban governance issue, and resilience as a socially differentiated practice.

Eastleigh thus stands as both a neighbourhood and a microcosm of the Global South's urban future, a space where mobility, exclusion, and adaptation converge. It is within this context that the dissertation investigates how Somali migrants navigate Nairobi's informal food economy amid overlapping pressures of legal uncertainty, transnational dependence, and limited institutional support.

1.5 Literature Review

The literature on migration and food security in the Global South is extensive but fragmented, shaped by disciplinary divides and spatial biases. Scholars have examined migration as a livelihood strategy and food insecurity as a development challenge, yet the two fields have rarely intersected in a sustained or systematic way. This section synthesizes the main contributions across these bodies of work to situate the dissertation within ongoing debates. It also highlights how the focus on Somali migrants in Nairobi contributes new insights to

discussions on migration, urban food systems, and governance. Rather than providing an exhaustive review, it identifies key conceptual linkages and the empirical gaps this study aims to address.

1.5.1 The Migration-Food Security Nexus

The relationship between migration and food security has been examined from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Early research in development economics and agrarian change often framed migration as both a response to and a determinant of food insecurity. Within this perspective, food scarcity was viewed as a central "push" factor prompting mobility, while migration itself functioned as a strategy for diversifying income and stabilizing consumption in the face of environmental or economic stress (de Haas, 2010; Tacoli, 2009; Awumbila et al., 2017). Yet these adaptive interpretations also have limits. Other scholars emphasize that migration can deepen household vulnerability when remittance flows are irregular, transaction costs are high, or the financial burden of migration leads to indebtedness (Zezza et al., 2011; Sadiddin et al., 2019).

Recent studies have reframed food insecurity as more than a contextual factor, recognizing it as a significant driver of migration itself. Rather than a linear relationship, the two processes reinforce each other through feedback between risk, deprivation, and mobility. Households often migrate to mitigate livelihood insecurity and to stabilize consumption in contexts of chronic or seasonal scarcity (Smith & Floro, 2020; Crush, 2013; Sadiddin et al., 2019; Smith & Wesselbaum, 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that intentions to migrate increase as food insecurity intensifies, highlighting how movement can serve both as a coping mechanism and as an indicator of structural fragility within food systems (Sadiddin et al., 2019).

Another strand of scholarship examines how migration reshapes food systems in both origin and destination contexts (Chotani, 2015;2017; Craven and Gartaula, 2015). Migration affects each of the four classical dimensions of food security (Choitani, 2023), that is, availability, access, utilization, and stability (FAO, 2006). In sending regions, remittances can enhance access to food and improve dietary diversity by increasing purchasing power (Ratha & Shaw, 2007; Crush & Caesar, 2017; Moniruzzaman & Walton-Roberts, 2022). In destination areas, migrants contribute to new markets and food networks, introduce different consumption practices, and sustain informal economies that provide affordable food for low-income populations (Crush & Ramachandran, 2023; 2024). However, where infrastructure and regulation fail to keep pace with population growth, these processes can also reproduce inequality and disrupt local supply chains.

At the same time, critical scholarship questions whether the celebrated "triple win" or "virtuous circle" of migration extends to food security outcomes. While migration can diversify livelihoods and expand income opportunities, it does not automatically improve nutrition or food access (Crush & Caesar, 2017; Choitani, 2017; Chikanda et al., 2018; FAO, 2018). Comparative analyses demonstrate that food security outcomes are shaped less by migration per se than by the broader political economy of mobility, including the conditions of employment, legal recognition, external shock such as the pandemic crisis, and access to markets and infrastructure (Crush, 2019 2012; Frayne, 2010; Tawodzera and Crush, 2025). As recent research underscores, the potential developmental benefits of migration remain uneven when food access is mediated through informal labour, precarious income, and exclusionary governance (Crush & Chikanda, 2019; Riley & Dodson, 2020).

Despite conceptual advances, empirical research continues to focus largely on rural-urban linkages, especially the relationship between remittances, agriculture, and household nutrition in sending areas (Carling, 2014; Carling et al, 2012 Sibhatu et al., 2015; Tacoli et al, 2025). Urban destinations, where most migrants are food consumers rather than producers, have received comparatively little attention. In cities, food security is tied not to agricultural output but to employment, income stability, and market regulation (Frayne, Crush & McLachlan, 2014; McCordic & Frayne, 2017; Battersby & Watson, 2019). Existing studies highlight the vulnerability of urban low-income groups to price fluctuations but rarely account for how migration status, documentation, or social networks shape food access. By centreing on Somali migrants in Nairobi, this dissertation extends these debates into the urban sphere, framing food insecurity as an outcome of governance arrangements and socio-economic inequalities within a system of South-South mobility.

Finally, emerging work on transnational and South-South migration adds further complexity to this nexus. Remittances can buffer households against shocks yet also reinforce dependence on unstable global labour markets (Carney & Krause, 2020; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Studies in different regional contexts show that remittances sustain household consumption and social ties but can simultaneously strain liquidity when families both remit and receive transfers (Hammond, 2010; Crush & Tawodzera, 2017; Owusu & Crush, 2024). Eastleigh exemplifies this circularity: migrants contribute to and rely upon transnational financial flows that link urban livelihoods to broader moral and economic systems. This dissertation draws on these insights to explore how such financial networks influence food access, vulnerability, and adaptation among Somali migrant households in Nairobi.

1.5.2 Refugees, Informality, and Urban Food Systems

The "urban turn" in refugee studies has shifted attention from camps to cities, yet limited research has examined how displaced populations secure food and income in informal urban settings. Across African cities, refugees and migrants rely heavily on informal work and trade, drawing on social networks rather than formal institutions (Awumbila et al., 2017; Crush & Ramachandran, 2024). Informality provides access to livelihoods but also exposes participants to precarity, harassment, and unpredictable regulation. Urban "clean-up" or "beautification" campaigns, often justified in the name of hygiene, order, or security routinely target the same informal spaces that sustain low-income livelihoods (Adama, 2020; Kyed, 2019; Resnick, 2019). Scholars of African urbanism emphasize that informality is not the absence of regulation but a form of governance through which states define and enforce legality selectively (Watson, 2014; Kamete & Lindell, 2010).

For refugees, this dynamic intersects with legal status to create distinct forms of insecurity. Those without work permits or residence papers face heightened risk of harassment and have little legal recourse (Lawanson, 2014; Addi et al., 2024). Since informal trade depends on daily cash flow, even brief disruptions such as raids or market closures can directly lead to food shortages (Resnick, 2017; Giroux et al., 2020). At the same time, migrants are not passive victims but active participants in shaping urban food systems. Research shows that migrant traders diversify diets, introduce new food commodities, and maintain neighbourhood markets through small-scale entrepreneurship (Etzold, 2016; Carrier & Lochery, 2013).

Findings from across the Global South echo these patterns. Migrants play vital roles as both consumers and suppliers in informal food economies (Battersby et al., 2016; McCordic & Raimundo, 2019; Nickanor et al., 2016; Tawodzera, 2018). These systems function as essential safety nets for the urban poor, yet their regulation is often inconsistent and punitive (Kazembe

et al., 2019; Young & Crush, 2019). Governance interventions targeting informal vendors frequently undermine, rather than strengthen, food access, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Crush & Si, 2020; Wegerif, 2020). As Crush, Chikanda, and Ramachandran (2025) observe, such economies reveal "the mutual dependence between migration and informality," underscoring how African cities serve as critical nodes of South-South exchange. Nonetheless, policy frameworks seldom acknowledge migrants as central actors in food systems, reinforcing their invisibility during shocks such as COVID-19 (Crush & Ahmed, 2024). This dissertation directly engages that gap by linking the governance of informality to migrants' everyday access to food, labour, and credit.

1.5.3 Synthesis and Research Gap

Taken together, these literatures reveal both progress and enduring gaps. Migration studies have expanded understanding of transnational networks and livelihoods but often neglect the urban food systems through which these networks operate. Urban food-security research has illuminated market and governance structures but rarely examines how migration and legality condition access. Refugee studies increasingly acknowledge cities as key sites of displacement yet still overlook intra-group differences and transnational dependencies.

At a broader scale, recent scholarship recognizes that the intersections between migration, informality, and food insecurity have become defining development challenges of the twenty-first century (Crush & Chikanda, 2018; Riley & Dodson, 2020; Moniruzzaman and Walton-Roberts, 2022). These studies argue that mobility, livelihoods, and urban governance must be analyzed as interconnected processes rather than separate domains. Integrating migration and food-system governance is therefore essential for understanding how urbanization, inequality, and mobility converge in the Global South (Battersby & Watson, 2019; Thomas-Hope, 2018; Frayne & McCordic, 2015). This dissertation contributes to that effort by connecting regional

migration dynamics with urban governance and household adaptation. It builds on and extends existing scholarship to develop a more integrated understanding of how South-South migration transforms, and is simultaneously constrained by, the informal urban food systems through which migrants sustain their households and communities.

1.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Understanding the relationship between migration, governance, and food security requires a framework that connects theory with grounded conceptual analysis. Scholarship in migration and development has long emphasized the interconnections among mobility, adaptation, and social transformation (Mabogunje 1970; Faist 2000; de Haas 2010, 2021; Castles et al. 2014; Roy 2005; Watson 2014; Crenshaw 1991; Anthias, 2012; Scoones, 1998). Building on this foundation, this dissertation develops an integrated theoretical and conceptual framework that links macro-level migration systems, meso-level urban governance, and micro-level household adaptation. The theoretical dimension anchors the study in established bodies of thought on migration, informality, and intersectionality, while the conceptual dimension translates these traditions into a model suited to the empirical realities of Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh.

This framework conceives food insecurity as a structural outcome of interlocking social, economic, and political processes rather than as a temporary crisis. Migration Systems Theory explains how transnational linkages, remittances, and feedback mechanisms sustain mobility and influence regional integration. Urban Informality and Governance theory locates these dynamics within the institutional and spatial politics of the city, showing how state regulation of informality, both enables and constrains livelihoods. Intersectionality and Livelihoods theory extends the analysis to the household level, illuminating how gender, class, and documentation shape vulnerability and adaptive capacity. These perspectives combined create

a coherent foundation for examining how Somali migrants in Eastleigh navigate the intersection of migration, governance, and food security within overlapping systems of displacement, inequality, and informality.

1.6.1 Migration Systems Theory

Migration Systems Theory provides a structural foundation for explaining the persistence and organization of Somali mobility. Mabogunje (1970) reconceptualized migration as an open and self-adjusting system sustained by feedback between places of origin and destination. Rather than a one-time response to push and pull forces, migration functions as a dynamic process in which information, remittances, and expectations circulate across space, generating patterned flows and institutional adjustments. Family networks, labour markets, and governance structures operate as control mechanisms that both enable and limit these movements.

Faist (2000) expanded this model by identifying the central role of meso-level social networks that link individual agency with structural conditions. Migration, he argues, persists because social ties, trust, and mutual obligation continually reproduce the conditions for movement. These feedbacks, involving money, information, and reciprocity, transform migration from a discrete event into a durable social system. In Eastleigh, such dynamics are evident in the hawala remittance networks, clan-based trading partnerships, and the continuous circulation of goods and people connecting Kenya, Somalia, the Gulf, and the wider diaspora.

De Haas (2010, 2021) reframes migration as an intrinsic dimension of development, structured by people's aspirations and capabilities. Individuals migrate when they aspire to improve their circumstances and possess the means, whether economic, social, or political, to act on those aspirations. Migration therefore represents an expression of constrained freedom. Among Somali migrants, aspirations for security, education, and livelihood are mediated by

capabilities such as legal documentation, access to credit, and inclusion in networks. Food insecurity itself can act simultaneously as a constraint, limiting available resources, and as a motivation, prompting migration in search of stability.

Castles, de Haas, and Miller (2014) extend these insights by linking migration systems to the political economies of receiving societies. They show how incorporation and exclusion are structured by state policies and public perceptions. Somali migrants in Nairobi illustrate this tension: they are economically vital to the city's commercial networks yet remain stigmatized and vulnerable under securitized refugee governance.

In this dissertation, Migration Systems Theory anchors the structural analysis of regional mobility and transnational exchange. It illuminates how remittances, commodity trade, and social ties form regional feedback systems that sustain both markets and households. However, while the framework explains the continuity of these systems, it pays limited attention to how urban governance and intra-community inequalities shape daily experiences of food insecurity. To capture these dimensions, the analysis incorporates the complementary framework of urban informality and governance.

1.6.2 Urban Informality and Governance

Urban Informality theory provides insight into how African cities are governed through selective regulation and spatial differentiation. Roy (2005) argues that informality is not a symptom of absence or failure of the state but a deliberate mode of rule through which authorities decide what is legal, what is tolerated, and what is excluded. In this sense, planning practices actively produce informality by defining its boundaries. In Eastleigh, periodic licensing drives, police raids, and "beautification" campaigns exemplify this regulatory logic, sustaining economic activity while maintaining a state of legal uncertainty.

Watson (2014) expands on this argument by examining how visions of "world-class" and "smart" cities across Africa prioritize speculative development and elite investment while marginalizing informal livelihoods. Nairobi's redevelopment strategies, for example, often threaten the informal markets that provide the majority of its residents with affordable food. Resnick (2017) situates these dynamics within the domain of food-system governance. She demonstrates that informal markets are indispensable for affordable urban food access, yet they are frequently neglected by policymakers and fragmented across bureaucratic mandates. Crackdowns in the name of hygiene or order often reduce access and deepen hunger. In Eastleigh, food vendors operate within a governance framework that simultaneously depends on their activity and criminalizes it

Kamete and Lindell (2010) describe how African governments employ "non-planning" interventions such as demolitions or market evictions to assert control and project modernity, while Benjamin (2008) introduces the concept of "occupancy urbanism" to capture how residents assert legitimacy and claim space through everyday negotiation. These studies illuminate the paradoxical governance arrangements that shape Eastleigh, where migrants rely on informal institutions such as mosque committees and business associations to navigate insecurity and sustain livelihoods.

Within this dissertation, Urban Informality and Governance theory operates at the meso level, clarifying how regulation, policing, and infrastructure decisions affect migrants' access to markets and food. It also draws attention to temporality, showing how crises such as the 2013 security operations and the 2020 pandemic lockdown were used by the state to reconfigure informal spaces. While this framework exposes the institutional contradictions of urban governance, it does not explain why similar constraints produce divergent household outcomes.

To address this, the study turns to intersectionality and livelihoods to examine how inequality, gender, and social networks mediate adaptation.

1.6.3 Intersectionality and Migrant Food Security

Intersectionality provides a framework for understanding how overlapping systems of power shape vulnerability and adaptation. Originally developed in Black feminist scholarship (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), it is now integral to migration studies for analyzing how gender, class, ethnicity, and legal status influence livelihood outcomes (Anthias, 2012; Magliano, 2015; Cleton & Scuzzarello, 2024). Crenshaw (1991) defines intersectionality as the overlapping operation of power structures such as gender, class, race, and legal status that produce distinct patterns of vulnerability. Her distinction between structural and political intersectionality helps to explain why common shocks, including inflation or policing, affect households in uneven ways.

In migration studies, intersectionality has become a valuable analytical tool for understanding how multiple social identities and hierarchies shape migrant experiences (Anthias, 2012; Bürkner, 2012; Magliano, 2015). It helps explain how gender, class, ethnicity, and legal status interact to shape mobility pathways, employment outcomes, and social belonging. Recent contributions extend intersectionality to the study of migration governance, examining how policies and border regimes reproduce layered inequalities (Cleton & Scuzzarello, 2024). The diffusion of the concept across research and policy domains has generated both innovation and critique: while some applications remain grounded in the origins of social justice of intersectionality, others risk diluting its critical edge (Bastia et al., 2023). Within South-South migration contexts, intersections of gender, ethnicity, class, and legal precarity profoundly influence migrants' opportunities for work, community acceptance, and food access.

Food security scholarship has only recently incorporated intersectional thinking, showing that gender, education, income, marital status, and social support jointly influence outcomes (Barak et al., 2024; Barak & Melgar-Quiñonez, 2022). Intersectionality challenges the assumption that vulnerability is uniform within categories such as "migrant" or "refugee." Instead, it reveals how overlapping identities and power relations position different households differently with regard to food access. Migrants and refugees frequently face compounded barriers originating from trauma, limited resources, and complex bureaucratic systems (Steeves et al., 2023; Carney & Krause, 2020). Undocumented migrants can avoid state institutions and social programs out of fear of detection, which undermines their well-being and limits their ability to secure regular meals (Alsharif, 2020; Chekero & Ross, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these vulnerabilities through isolation, income loss, and restricted mobility (Burton-Jeangros et al., 2020). Intersectionality therefore provides a means to analyse how multiple identity axes shape consumer vulnerability and coping strategies (Bauer, 2014; Saatcioglu & Corus, 2015). However, empirical research on food insecurity among migrants in transit or in urban South-South corridors remains sparse, underscoring the need for standardised tools and comparative frameworks (Orjuela-Grimm et al., 2022).

Structural forces also determine how intersectional vulnerabilities unfold. Informal food markets represent both opportunity and risk: they offer income and social networks but operate under constant threat of regulation and displacement (Greiner, 2011). These spaces can foster social capital and solidarity that help migrants cope with adversity (Mbatha & Koskimaki, 2023), although access to such networks varies with transnational ties and social status (Meagher, 2005, 2010 Whitehouse, 2011). Remittances provide another crucial but ambivalent mechanism. Regular inflows can buffer households against local shocks (Monteith & Lwasa, 2017; du Toit & Neves, 2009), yet many households also remit outward, which can deplete local budgets and increase food insecurity. External disruptions such as the COVID-19

pandemic exposed the fragility of these arrangements by closing markets, reducing diaspora incomes, and restricting mobility (Ahmed et al., 2024b; Luiu et al., 2022; Resnick, 2020). Women were particularly affected when caregiving and employment responsibilities collided (Porter et al., 2021). Crises of this scale magnify pre-existing inequalities because migrants with precarious legal status or limited education have fewer options for adaptation.

Within food-security research, intersectional analyses therefore reveal how gender, education, income, and social support interact to determine food access and utilization (Barak & Melgar-Quiñonez, 2022; Carney & Krause, 2020). For this dissertation, intersectionality operates as a cross-cutting analytical lens rather than a stand-alone theory. It helps explain how Somali migrants experience Nairobi's food economy differently depending on gender, household structure, and legal documentation. While the third manuscript engages most directly with intersectionality, the concept underpins the entire study, clarifying how structural inequality and social agency intersect in daily food procurement and coping strategies. By tracing these differences, the analysis highlights diversity within the refugee population and shows how individuals and households navigate urban constraints in socially differentiated ways.

1.6.4 Integrating the Frameworks

Synthesizing these frameworks provides a multi-scalar approach that links regional migration systems, urban governance structures, and household-level adaptation into a single analytical model. This integration allows for the examination of how macro processes of displacement and remittance circulation intersect with meso-level governance dynamics and micro-level strategies of survival. Table 1 summarizes the analytical architecture of this integrated framework and illustrates how each theoretical strand operates across different scales of analysis.

Table 1. Integrated Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.

Analytical Scale	**Guiding Framework**	**Core Process**	**Illustrative Focus in the Study**
Macro-Regional/Structural	Migration Systems Theory (Mabogunje 1970; Faist 2000; de Haas 2010, 2021; Castles et al. 2014)	Feedback among displacement, remittances, and transnational trade sustaining Somali mobility	Regional flows of people, remittances, and food commodities connecting Somalia, Kenya, and the Gulf
Meso-Institutional/Urban	Urban Informality and Governance (Roy 2005; Watson 2014; Resnick 2017; Kamete & Lindell 2010; Benjamin 2008)	Selective regulation of markets and informal economies	Governance of Eastleigh's food markets and the effects of raids, licensing, and COVID-19 restrictions
Micro-Household/Social	Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Anthias 2012; Scoones 1998; Béné et al. 2012; Barak & Melgar-Quiñonez 2022)	Differentiated access, adaptation, and resilience across gender, class, and status	Gendered coping strategies, ayuuto networks, and intra-household food allocation.

This integrated framework also connects temporal dimensions. Long-term regional trends such as conflict, drought, and remittance dependency interact with short-term governance shocks like security operations or pandemic restrictions. Together, these forces shape the everyday adaptive practices of trade, sharing, and savings that define household resilience. Through this synthesis, the dissertation advances three key conceptual insights. First, food security functions as both a driver and consequence of migration systems, linking transnational remittance flows with urban food economies. Second, informality operates as a political mechanism through which states govern mobility and regulate livelihood precarity. Third, intersectional inequalities mediate resilience, producing differentiated outcomes even under similar structural constraints. Collectively, these insights establish an integrated framework for analyzing how urban migrant food insecurity emerges from the enduring intersections of mobility, governance, and inequality.

1.6.5 Relevance to the Dissertation

The integrated theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing Somali migration, governance, and food insecurity in Nairobi's Eastleigh and across the wider Horn of Africa. Each of the three components corresponds to a specific analytical level and directly informs the three empirical manuscripts that make up this dissertation.

At the macro level, Migration Systems Theory situates Somali mobility within enduring regional and transnational linkages among Somalia, Kenya, the Gulf, and the wider diaspora. It explains how remittance flows, commodity trade, and migration histories sustain Eastleigh's economy while binding urban households to rural and transnational networks. This framework grounds Manuscript 1, which employs household survey data to analyze the structural and socio-economic determinants of food security among Somali migrants. It also underscores that

food insecurity must be understood not simply as an indicator of poverty but as a product of the systems of mobility and exchange that sustain urban livelihoods across borders

At the meso level, Urban Informality and Governance theory reveals how Nairobi's institutions regulate migrant livelihoods through selective enforcement and shifting rules. It emphasizes that state policies such as pandemic lockdowns, market closures, and licensing regimes both enable and restrict economic participation. This framework informs Manuscript 2, which examines how governance decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted informal food markets and reshaped household food access. The theory highlights that food insecurity is not only an economic outcome but also a regulatory condition shaped by power, policy, and exclusion.

At the micro level, Intersectionality helps explain the differentiated ways Somali households experience and respond to structural and institutional pressures. They reveal how gender, documentation, and social capital shape adaptation strategies and resilience. Manuscript 3 applies these concepts to interpret qualitative narratives of deprivation and coping, focusing on women's petty trade, ayuuto savings associations, and remittance management. These micro-level dynamics demonstrate that household food security is mediated by identity and agency within the constraints of urban governance and transnational obligation.

The framework also ensures theoretical coherence across the dissertation by connecting macro-level migration systems with the meso-level politics of urban governance and the micro-level realities of household adaptation. The integrated framework thus operationalizes the dissertation's central argument: that food insecurity among urban migrants in the Global South is a structural and relational condition shaped by the intersection of mobility, governance, and inequality. This synthesis contributes to broader theoretical debates on migration and

development and offers new empirical insights into the political economy of food systems in cities of the South.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has laid a conceptual and contextual foundation for the dissertation. It traced Somali migration to Kenya within the wider dynamics of South-South mobility, urbanization, and governance, arguing that protracted displacement, informality, and inequality converge to shape household food security. The chapter also reviewed the evolution of migration and food security scholarship, identifying persistent disciplinary divides that separate migration studies, refugee research, and urban food systems analysis. In addressing these gaps, the chapter articulated a multi-scalar theoretical framework that integrates structure, governance, and agency.

The framework brings together three theoretical strands. Migration Systems Theory explains the regional and transnational patterns that sustain Somali mobility. Urban Informality and Governance theory reveals how states regulate migrants through flexible and selective mechanisms that both enable and constrain economic participation. Intersectionality perspectives capture the differentiated experiences of adaptation within migrant households, showing how gender, class, and documentation status influence resilience and vulnerability. Together, the framework makes it possible to analyze food insecurity not as a temporary crisis or an individual failure but as the outcome of systemic and interconnected processes.

The integrated approach also provides a unifying logic across the three manuscripts that form the core of the dissertation. The first manuscript investigates the structural and economic determinants of food insecurity among Somali migrants in Nairobi. The second examines how governance shocks, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, reconfigured informal markets and

disrupted remittance and food networks. The third explores intersectional experiences of deprivation and adaptation, focusing on how household composition, gender, and legal status shape everyday strategies of survival and resilience. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that urban migrant food insecurity is not an isolated condition but a structural feature of cities where mobility and inequality intersect.

The remainder of the dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 outlines the methodological approach, including the mixed-methods design, data collection procedures, and reflexive considerations of positionality and ethics. Chapter 3 (Manuscript 1) presents the baseline analysis, identifying the socio-economic and spatial determinants of food insecurity among Somali households in Nairobi. Chapter 4 (Manuscript 2) examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on informal food systems, livelihoods, and transnational remittance networks. Chapter 5 (Manuscript 3) deepens the analysis through an intersectional perspective, exploring gendered and documentation-based differences in coping and resilience. Chapter 6 synthesizes findings across the manuscripts, situating them within broader theoretical and policy debates on migration, governance, and food security.

In sum, this introductory chapter provides the conceptual scaffolding for the dissertation. By connecting migration theory, urban governance, and food-systems analysis, it aims to show how mobility, informality, and inequality interact to shape food security in the Global South. The next chapter turns to methodology, outlining how these theoretical insights are operationalized through a mixed-methods study of Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh, linking macro-level structures with the lived realities of households that navigate the everyday uncertainties of food and survival.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction to the methodological design

Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh move through overlapping systems of exchange and survival. They import goods through long-distance commodity chains, transfer money via informal *hawala* networks, and sustain livelihoods through street vending and small-scale trade, all within gendered household hierarchies (Carrier and Scharrer, 2019). These economic, social, legal, and spatial dimensions are deeply interwoven, and any single-discipline method risks flattening their complexity. Understanding this entanglement requires a design that mirrors it, one capable of tracing connections between migration, governance, and food systems without reducing them to isolated variables.

Methodology, in this study, is not treated as a neutral conduit between researcher and reality. It is a historically situated practice shaped by power, positionality, and social context, which determines whose experiences become visible, which silences remain, and whose interpretations are granted authority (Bernal et al., 2018; Bhambra, 2014; Nightingale, 2003; Rose, 1997). A project that seeks to "desilo" and integrate South-South Migration (SSM) studies and Urban Food Security (UFS) scholarship must therefore adopt a design that reflects the braided and contested nature of its subject.

This dissertation employs a mixed-methods approach that interweaves quantitative household surveys with qualitative life-history interviews and remittance-flow diaries. The design was iterative and dialogical, evolving through initial community consultations, a pilot study, and continuous feedback from local research assistants. The survey instruments were developed in the languages and idioms of Eastleigh, ensuring both cultural relevance and conceptual

precision. Local enumerators received detailed training in ethical engagement and technical administration to build trust and consistency in the field.

The study intentionally developed quantitative and qualitative strands in parallel, from instrument design to analysis, to avoid the common separation of "hard data" from "soft narrative." Each method reveals what the other cannot: the survey maps the scope and structure of household vulnerability, while interviews and observation uncover the meanings, constraints, and strategies that give those numbers life (Shafer, 2013). Together they capture both the measurable and the lived dimensions of food insecurity among Somali migrants.

While the household survey used a randomized two-stage cluster design to ensure representative coverage across Eastleigh's three sections, the qualitative sampling was purposive. It included newly arrived and long-term residents, male- and female-headed households, and a full range of documentation statuses. This design captured the intersectional patterns of vulnerability and adaptation that shape migrant livelihoods. In analysis, disaggregation by gender, tenure, and legal status revealed how these factors jointly influence food-security outcomes in urban migrant contexts.

Reflexivity underpinned every stage of the research process. As a researcher with personal ties to Eastleigh, I maintained a field journal to record assumptions, reactions, and emerging insights. Regular debriefings with local assistants helped surface blind spots and challenge implicit biases. By making these positional influences explicit, the research acknowledges that knowledge is co-produced in spaces shaped by power, mistrust, and negotiation.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. Section 2.2 explains the epistemological rationale for adopting a mixed-methods approach and how quantitative breadth and qualitative depth complement one another. Section 2.3 situates the study within Eastleigh's history and

spatial dynamics, explaining why it offers a unique lens on the SSM-UFS nexus. Section 2.4 describes the data-collection process and sampling strategies, including the two-stage cluster survey, purposive interviews, and the protocols that ensured ethical and methodological integrity. Section 2.5 outlines the analytic workflow, from cleaning and scoring the HFIAS, HFIAP, and HDDS indices to thematic coding and integration. Section 2.6 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the 268 respondent households. Section 2.7 reflects on researcher positionality and reflexive practice, while Section 2.8 discusses fieldwork challenges and limitations. Section 2.9 concludes by linking this methodology to the empirical analyses that follow in Chapters 3 to 5.

2.2 Rationale for a mixed-methods approach

The decision to adopt a mixed-methods design arose from both theoretical reflection and empirical necessity. Research on migration and urban food security often relies on disciplinary silos that privilege either numerical measurement or lived experience, yet neither approach alone is sufficient to capture the realities of Somali migrants in Eastleigh. Quantitative household surveys, using standardized indices such as the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS), the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), and the Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP), remain essential for documenting the extent and correlates of food insecurity (Swindale and Bilinsky 2006). These instruments produce reliable, comparable data across time and place (McCordic and Frayne, 2017; Ike et al., 2015). However, they are rooted in positivist epistemologies that often reduce food insecurity to a single measurable dimension. They tell us how frequently households worry about running out of food or skip meals but not how social norms, legal status, or cultural values shape those decisions.

Qualitative inquiry complements these limitations. Ethnographic and semi-structured interviews uncover the reasoning, emotion, and social relations behind statistical patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2003). In Eastleigh, life-history interviews revealed that a single mother might avoid protein-rich foods to preserve funds for remittances, or that halal restrictions and the stigma of violating them produce hidden nutritional deficits even in households that appear food-secure by survey scores. Yet qualitative research alone faces its own constraints: small, non-representative samples may exaggerate unique experiences, and the richness of personal narrative can obscure structural prevalence (Oplatka, 2021; Gao and Deming, 2021). In a community as socially intricate as Eastleigh, where clan ties, *hawala* transfers, and informal regulation intertwine, neither method can independently capture the relationship between structure and agency that defines migrant food security.

In practice, this study followed an iterative integration process often described as a "quant-qual-quant" cycle (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Sylvester, 2023). The initial survey identified the prevalence and determinants of food insecurity; thirty participants were then purposively selected for in-depth interviews representing variation in gender, length of residence, and documentation status. Their narratives explained why some households with similar incomes experienced markedly different outcomes. For example, survey data showed no consistent link between received remittances and improved food security. Interviews revealed that many households simultaneously remitted money to drought-affected relatives in Somalia, effectively cancelling the gains from incoming transfers (Ahmed and Crush, 2025). These insights informed a second round of quantitative refinement, introducing a modified "HFIAS-H" index that discounted non-halal calories and better reflected participants' definitions of adequacy. The cycle enhanced both validity and theoretical depth.

A mixed-methods design also addresses the persistent problem of construct validity in food-security measurement (Cochrane, 2017; Mbunga et al., 2023). Standard indices quantify sufficiency but overlook culturally specific practices such as halal compliance, clan-mandated food sharing, or the cost of importing preferred staples. In this study, quantitative analysis showed that length of residence significantly predicted food-security status. Only through qualitative interpretation did it become clear that newer arrivals relied on different credit systems and kinship networks than established residents. These findings prompted revisions to survey items, adding questions on clan-based credit and remittance obligations, and reclassifying dietary categories to include locally meaningful food groups. In this way, the research grounded its metrics in Eastleigh's lived realities rather than in universalized assumptions (Maxwell, 1998; Cafiero et al., 2014).

From a policy perspective, mixed methods offer a bridge between evidence and action. Policymakers require spatially disaggregated data and prevalence estimates, while practitioners and community leaders depend on stories that illuminate context and meaning. Presenting both statistical patterns and human narratives aligns with the translational goals of the MiFOOD project (Crush and Ramachandran, 2023) and enables findings to inform a broader research and policy agenda on the migration–food-security nexus in the Global South (Hoolohan et al., 2021).

Finally, the intersectional nature of Somali migrants' vulnerabilities reinforces the necessity of combining methods. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991; Bauer et al., 2021) reminds us that gender, legal status, and household structure intersect to produce compounded forms of disadvantage. The randomized household survey captured the distribution of these categories across Eastleigh, while purposive selection for follow-up interviews allowed focused exploration of groups identified as particularly vulnerable, such as undocumented female-

headed households. Only through linking disaggregated statistics with life histories could the study trace how a newly arrived widow without documentation experiences food insecurity differently from a long-term resident with partial refugee status.

Overall, the mixed-methods approach in this dissertation is not a methodological preference but an epistemological requirement. It responds to the layered and intersecting realities of Somali migrants' food insecurity in Eastleigh. By combining quantitative breadth with qualitative depth, empirical mapping with causal interpretation, and analytic rigor with reflexive awareness, this design overcomes the limitations of single-method research and provides a foundation for understanding the SSM and UFS nexus in both scholarly and practical terms.

2.3 Situating the study: mixed methods, South-South migration and food security in Eastleigh.

Understanding Somali migrants' experiences of food insecurity in Nairobi's Eastleigh requires a methodological design that is grounded in the neighbourhood's historical, spatial, and socio-legal complexity. Eastleigh is not a homogeneous urban space; it is a mosaic of contrasts where global mobility meets local governance, and where migrants negotiate daily survival amid overlapping regimes of opportunity and constraint. Spatial heterogeneity within the neighbourhood shapes not only who eats but also what, when, and how they eat.

Eastleigh is divided into three informal "sections," each defined by its own patterns of settlement, policing, and investment. Section 1, characterized by dense, low-rise tenements and small kiosks, experiences frequent police raids and heightened surveillance. Section 2, in contrast, features diaspora-financed apartment blocks, modern shopping complexes, and a concentration of businesses that serve as commercial anchors in the city's informal economy.

Section 3 maintains a hybrid character, combining residential plots and local enterprises, and hosting a higher proportion of Kenyan-Somali citizens with greater legal security. Aggregating urban data at broader administrative levels obscures these intra-neighbourhood variations, which in practice shape household nutrition and consumption patterns. For instance, proximity to informal markets may determine daily access to fresh produce, while residents of more heavily policed areas experience chronic dietary limitations (Demmler et al., 2015).

The division of Eastleigh into three sections reflects a locally recognized spatial classification used by residents, and traders, to describe differences in housing density, commercial activity, and exposure to policing, rather than a formal administrative boundary (Carrier, 2017; Varming, 2020). Although Eastleigh is formally divided into Eastleigh North and Eastleigh South, these administrative units were not analytically salient for this study, as everyday livelihood conditions and food access were shaped more clearly along the three locally meaningful sections.

Beyond these local spatial dynamics, Eastleigh is deeply embedded in transnational circuits of exchange that connect it to regional and global economies. The remittance corridors linking Nairobi to South Africa, Europe, North America, and the Gulf States play a decisive but uneven role in shaping local food security (Ahmed and Crush, 2025). Households receive money through mobile-money systems such as M-Pesa or informal *hawala* transfers, both of which are sensitive to external shocks including market fluctuations and the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ahmed et al., 2024). The household survey incorporated a detailed remittance-flow diary that recorded sender location, transfer method, amount, and purpose. When cross-referenced with interview data, it became clear that remittance inflows do not automatically translate into better diets. Many households described outward financial obligations such as supporting drought-affected relatives in Somalia that offset or even exceed

the funds they receive. This complexity highlights the limits of conventional remittance metrics and underscores the importance of tracing the full cycle of transnational financial exchange and its everyday implications for food consumption and well-being.

Eastleigh's governance environment further complicates this landscape. The area exemplifies what Ong (2006) terms "graduated sovereignty," where different categories of residents experience varying degrees of regulation and control. Kenya's encampment policy officially restricts refugees to camps such as Dadaab and Kakuma, yet the partial enforcement of these rules allows thousands to self-settle in Nairobi (Campbell, 2006; Varming, 2020). This coexistence of tolerance and repression defines Eastleigh's political atmosphere. While the state benefits economically from the neighbourhood's commercial vitality, it periodically reasserts control through raids, documentation checks, and restrictive licensing, reflecting broader tensions surrounding citizenship, identity, and urban belonging (Rinelli and Opondo, 2013; Varming, 2020).

Conducting research within such a context required careful planning and ethical sensitivity. Field teams received training in informed consent procedures and safety protocols designed to protect participants and researchers alike. Interviews were conducted in secure and familiar settings, and interview locations were rotated to minimize exposure during police operations. These precautions were essential to building trust and ensuring that undocumented participants could speak freely about their experiences without fear of reprisal.

By embedding both the survey and interview components within this historically grounded and ethically conscious field design, the study established a strong epistemic foundation for understanding the nexus between SSM and UFS. This approach recognizes Eastleigh not only as a field site but as a living system, a microcosm of how mobility, governance, and survival intersect in the contemporary African city

2.4 Data Collection Process and Sampling Techniques

To capture both the prevalence of food insecurity and the lived experiences of Somali migrants in Eastleigh, this study used a dual strategy that combined a stratified cluster household survey with in-depth qualitative interviews. The survey provided a representative statistical foundation, while the interviews uncovered the social and structural mechanisms that shape daily food practices. Every stage of data collection followed rigorous ethical procedures, including institutional approval, informed consent, and continuous quality control.

2.4.1 Quantitative Component

Fieldwork was conducted over two months, from July to August 2022, when formal COVID-19 restrictions had eased and informal markets were active. The survey was designed to achieve a sample size sufficient to estimate proportions within a five-percentage-point margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level. The field team was recruited through the University of Nairobi MiFOOD partnership and consisted of fifteen locally based researchers. In each of Eastleigh's three sections, a team of five enumerators was deployed, composed of three Somali-speaking University of Nairobi student research assistants and two Eastleigh-based community researchers, a structure intended to support trust-building, contextual interpretation, and knowledge co-production within the research team through joint instrument refinement and regular field debriefings. Within each section, enumerators used a random-walk procedure with a fixed skip interval to identify 106 households, yielding 318 completed surveys. Of these, 268 respondents were Somali-born, forming the core analytic sample. The remaining households, composed primarily of Kenyan-Somalis and other residents, were excluded from the primary analysis.

Survey instruments (see Appendix A) were administered on tablets using ODK Collect and uploaded nightly to the Kobo Toolbox server. The questionnaire, adapted from the FANTA and MiFOOD templates, contained six modules:

- **Household demographics and migration history**, capturing age, gender, household composition, birthplace, and years since arrival in Nairobi.
- **Legal and documentation status**, recording possession of Kenyan identification, refugee papers, or informal permits, and experiences with immigration or police authorities.
- **Livelihoods and income diversification**, identifying main and secondary income sources, sector of employment (formal or informal), and coping activities such as petty trade or casual labour.
- **Remittance-flow diaries**, logging inbound and outbound transfers over the preceding six months, including sender and receiver locations, transfer channels (hawala or M-Pesa), amounts, and stated purposes.
- **Standardized food-security metrics**, implementing the HFIAS, HFIAP, and HDDS indicators to assess food access, dietary diversity, and degrees of food insecurity.
- **Recent shocks and coping strategies**, examining household experiences during COVID-19 restrictions, market disruptions, and policing operations, along with responses such as borrowing, skipping meals, or selling assets.

A team of locally recruited enumerators, fluent in Somali, Swahili, and English, received three days of intensive training. This included instrument administration, ethical conduct, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring that data collection was consistent, respectful, and attuned to the local context.

2.4.2 Qualitative Component

The qualitative strand complemented the survey by exploring how statistical patterns translated into lived experience. Thirty in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposive subsample of survey respondents to ensure variation in gender, length of residence, documentation status, and remittance behavior. Each interview lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes and was conducted in Somali, Swahili, or English, depending on the participant's preference. Conversations took place in participants' homes or in trusted community spaces to ensure comfort and confidentiality.

A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix B) explored key themes such as food procurement, market access, relations with local authorities, household decision-making on remittances, and adaptive strategies for coping with shocks. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with detailed fieldnotes documenting tone, pauses, and nonverbal cues.

To contextualize household narratives within broader institutional and policy frameworks, six key-informant interviews were also conducted with municipal officials, NGO staff, and hawala operators. These conversations provided insight into the regulatory environment, informal governance mechanisms, and the transnational infrastructures that shape Eastleigh's food system.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative components created a comprehensive dataset that integrates measurement with meaning. The survey mapped the structural contours of food insecurity, while the interviews revealed how these conditions are lived, negotiated, and resisted in everyday life

2.5 Data Analysis

2.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods enabled a detailed intersectional analysis of Somali migrants' food security in Eastleigh. The household survey provided a statistical foundation for assessing the extent and correlates of food insecurity, while qualitative interviews explored the mechanisms and meanings underlying those findings.

After fieldwork, data were exported from Kobo Toolbox and cleaned in Python to address missing values, outliers, and logical inconsistencies. Categorical codes were standardized across modules to ensure consistency, such as harmonizing "Refused" and "Don't know" responses. Implausible entries, such as unrealistic ages or incomes far exceeding reported expenditures, were verified against field notes and removed when necessary. Duplicate records and incomplete timestamps were also excluded.

Following data cleaning, household responses were scored according to established FANTA protocols. Food insecurity was assessed through nine frequency-of-occurrence questions from the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) Project (Coates et al., 2007). Each response was coded on a scale from 0 (no occurrence) to 3 (often), producing a composite Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) score ranging from 0 to 27 (table 1.). Based on these scores, households were classified into four Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP) categories: food secure, mildly food insecure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure. This classification created the primary dependent variable for further analysis.

Table 1: Table HFIAS Questions and Frequency of Occurrence

Frequency of occurrence question Nos.	**Response**
Q1. Did you worry that your household would not have enough food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3
Q2. Were you or any household member not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of a lack of resources?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3
Q3. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat a limited variety of foods due to a lack of resources?	No
	Rarely (once or twice)
	Sometimes (3 to 10 times)
	Often
Q4. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat some foods that you really did not want to eat because of a lack of resources to obtain other types of food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3
Q5. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2

	Often = 3
Q6. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3
Q7. In the past four weeks, was there ever no food to eat of any kind in your household because of lack of resources to get food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3
Q8. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3
Q9. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food?	No = 0
	Rarely = 1
	Sometimes = 2
	Often = 3

Source : Coates et al. (2007)

Dietary diversity was captured through the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS), which measures the number of distinct food groups consumed in the previous 24 hours. Respondents indicated whether any household member had consumed items from twelve food groups, listed in Table 2. Each affirmative response was scored as 1, producing a total HDDS value between 0 and 12, used as a proxy for nutritional adequacy and diet quality.

Table 2 HDDS Food Groups

HOUSEHOLD DIETARY DIVERSITY SCORE (HDDS) *(Read the list of foods and probe if any member of the household ate the food types yesterday during the day and at night)*		
Types of food	**Yes**	**No**
a. Any pasta, bread, rice noodles, biscuits or any other foods made from flour, millet, sorghum, maize, rice, wheat, or oats (or any other grains)	1	2
b. Any potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, beetroots, carrots or any other foods made from them (e.g. chips, crisps) (or any other roots and tubers) yesterday or night (HDDS)	1	2
c. Any vegetables	1	2
d. Any fruits	1	2
e. Any beef, lamb, goat, camel, chicken, duck, other birds, liver, kidney, or other organ meats	1	2
f. Any eggs	1	2
g. Any fresh or dried fish	1	2
h. Any foods made from beans, peas, lentils, or nuts	1	2
i. Any cheese, yoghurt, milk or other milk products	1	2
j. Any foods made with oil, fat, or butter	1	2
k. Any sugar or honey?	1	2
l. Any other foods, such as condiments, coffee, tea	1	2

Source: Swindale & Bilinsky (2008)

Once the dataset was cleaned and scored, descriptive statistics were calculated to assess the prevalence of food insecurity across the sample. Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests, adjusted for clustering by section, were used to examine associations between food insecurity and household characteristics such as gender, documentation, and remittance receipt. These descriptive analyses revealed that undocumented and female-headed households faced disproportionately higher levels of food insecurity.

To identify the predictors of food insecurity, a multinomial logistic regression model was estimated using HFIAP category as the dependent variable. Independent variables included demographic attributes (age and gender of the household head), socioeconomic indicators (education, employment, and income), migration-related factors (documentation status and years in Nairobi), and household characteristics (size and HDDS). Diagnostics confirmed the absence of multicollinearity (variance inflation factors < 2.5), while model fit tests indicated that the final model explained nearly 40 percent of the variation in food insecurity outcomes.

Interpretation of odds ratios revealed that undocumented households were more than twice as likely to experience severe food insecurity, while each unit increase in HDDS reduced those odds by roughly 15 percent. These findings provided a clear statistical picture of vulnerability but also highlighted the limits of quantitative data alone. To understand why some households with similar profiles experienced very different outcomes, the analysis turned to the qualitative narratives presented in Section 2.5.2

2.5.2 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

To complement the statistical results, thirty in-depth interviews and five key-informant conversations were analyzed thematically in NVivo 12. A detailed codebook and analytic memos ensured consistency and transparency throughout the process. Following Braun and

Clarke's (2006) six-phase protocol, I first immersed myself in the transcripts, reading and re-reading to become familiar with participants' narratives. Guided by an intersectional framework, I began with directed codes such as "gendered sacrifice," "legal precarity," and "remittance moral economy." As the analysis evolved, open coding revealed additional themes including "asset liquidation," "nutrition trade-offs," and "health-seeking under constraint."

Codes were refined and grouped into thirteen interrelated themes that form the analytical backbone of the three manuscripts. Table 3 summarizes these major themes and subthemes.

Table 3. NVivo coding framework: themes and sub-themes.

Themes	Sub-Themes	References
1. Legal Precarity & Enforcement Shocks	Routine police raids; curfew & mobility restrictions; "run now, pay later" credit	48
2. Transnational Moral Economies & Gendered Remittance Burdens	Outbound/inbound timing mismatches; gendered decision-making; cultural staples vs. dietary norms	52
3. Gendered Care Burdens & Extreme Sacrifices	Meal-skipping sacrifices; asset liquidation (jewelry); ayuuto savings group lifelines	43
4. Informal Market Disruptions & Community Credit	COVID-19 market closures; shopkeeper credit; neighbour food-sharing; price-inflation coping	39
5. Agency, Networks & Livelihood Diversification	Tailoring & small shops; clan/mosque solidarity; nutrition knowledge vs. cost; tenure & arrival learning	35

6. Mobility Constraints & Spatial Barriers	Curfew travel restrictions; higher transport costs; fear of checkpoints	34
7. Intra-Household Power & Decision-Making	Patriarchal control of remittances; gendered food allocation; resource-use conflicts	39
8. Psychosocial Stress & Well-Being	Anxiety over scarcity; stigma of aid-seeking; mental health impacts of repeated shocks	31
9. Income & Employment Shocks	Job loss; reduced working hours; halted casual labour; wage theft	46
10. Dietary Quality & Nutritional Trade-offs	Substitution of nutritious foods for staples; reduced meal frequency; micronutrient gaps	38
11. Health Access & Service Disruptions	Foregone medical care; inability to afford medicine; COVID-related health fears	27
12. Gender-Based Violence & Protection Risks	Heightened domestic violence; harassment in markets; safety concerns under lockdown	22
13. Cultural & Religious Food Norms	Halal compliance challenges; fasting obligations under food scarcity; communal feasting pressure	24

2.5.3 Integration of Findings

In this study's convergent-parallel design, quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted concurrently and then merged to produce a holistic understanding of migrant food insecurity. The survey established prevalence and statistical relationships, while the qualitative data revealed the lived mechanisms behind those numbers.

For example, the survey found that 65 percent of households reported rising food expenses during the May 2020 lockdown and that undocumented status more than doubled the odds of severe food insecurity. Interviews explained these findings by exposing the effects of market closures, harassment, and debt cycles that disrupted household economies. Similarly, although remittance receipt showed no consistent statistical benefit, fifty-two interview references to timing gaps and moral obligations demonstrated how outward support to relatives in Somalia often offset the advantages of inbound flows.

When the regression suggested that dietary diversity reduced vulnerability, qualitative evidence revealed how fragile that resilience could be: one police raid or illness could erase weeks of progress. By aligning each statistical finding with its corresponding qualitative theme, the study created a truly integrated analysis that preserved both the scope of quantitative measurement and the depth of qualitative insight.

This iterative dialogue between data types ensured that results reflect not only measurable associations but also the social realities that produce them. The integration of household surveys, life histories, and key-informant interviews provides a coherent empirical foundation for the three manuscripts that follow, each addressing a different dimension of the migration-food security nexus: baseline vulnerabilities, pandemic disruptions, and intersectional governance.

2.6 Household Profile

To contextualize the findings presented in Chapters 3 to 5, this section summarizes the key demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the 268 Somali migrant households surveyed in Eastleigh. The purpose of this profile is to highlight the diversity of household structures, employment conditions, and educational backgrounds that shape the lived realities of urban food insecurity.

Table 4 presents respondent-level characteristics. Male-headed households form the majority (58.6 percent), though women's participation as household heads remains significant at 41.4 percent, reflecting the gendered nature of migration and household organization within Somali communities. Marital status is equally varied, with over half of respondents married (53.7 percent), while a substantial proportion are single (23.5 percent) or divorced (15.3 percent). Educational attainment levels also display considerable diversity, ranging from those with no formal schooling (14.2 percent) to individuals with post-secondary or university qualifications (approximately 50 percent combined). This variation suggests both the presence of long-settled, relatively educated residents and more recently arrived migrants with limited formal education.

Table 4. Respondent characteristics		
Sex of Household Respondents	**No.**	**%**
Male	157	58.6
Female	111	41.4
Marital Status of Household Respondents		
Married	144	53.7
Single	63	23.5

Divorced	41	15.3
Widowed	11	4.1
Separated	8	3,0
Abandoned	1	0.4
Highest Level of Education		
Post-Secondary Qualifications but Not University	101	42.1
Primary (Completed)	50	20.8
No Formal Schooling	34	14.2
Primary (Not completed)	19	7.9
University (Completed)	16	6.7
Secondary (Completed)	13	5.4
University (Not Completed)	3	1.3
Postgraduate	2	0.8
Secondary (Not Completed)	2	0.8
Total	**240**	**100.00**

Table 5 focuses on household-level characteristics. The overwhelming majority of respondents (91.8 percent) reside in apartments or flats, a reflection of Eastleigh's dense urban fabric and limited land availability. Only a small minority live in detached houses or semi-permanent dwellings. Household structures vary, with nuclear families representing the largest share (38.8 percent), followed by male-centred (29.1 percent) and extended families (22 percent). The high proportion of male-centered households aligns with patterns of circular migration and transnational family arrangements common among Somali migrants.

Employment patterns reveal the precarious and stratified nature of livelihoods in Eastleigh. While 17.3 percent of respondents reported full-time work in the informal sector,

unemployment remains high, with 25.9 percent of respondents not seeking work and 20 percent actively searching for it. A smaller share reported formal-sector employment, either in public or private institutions, or self-employment in small enterprises. These figures reflect the limited access to formal jobs among refugees and migrants, as well as the centrality of informal trading and service activities to household income.

Table 5 Household Characteristics	**No**	**%**
Housing Type		
Flat/apartment	246	91.8
House (bungalow)	19	7.1
Semi-permanent informal dwelling	2	0.7
House (maisonette)	1	0.4
Household Structure		**2.**
Nuclear	104	38.8
Male-centred	78	29.1
Female-centred	27	10.1
Extended	59	22.0
Employment		
Unemployed (Not Looking for Work)	66	25.9
Unemployed (Looking for Work)	51	20.0
Full-Time Employment (Informal Sector)	44	17.3
Unemployed (In School)	37	14.5
Part-Time Employment (Formal Private Sector)	18	7.1
Full-Time Self-Employed (Formal Sector)	15	5.9

Part-Time Employment (Informal Sector)	10	3.9
Full-Time Employment (Formal Private Sector)	9	3.5
Part-Time Employment (Public Sector)	4	1.6
Full-Time Employment (Public Sector)	1	0.4
Total	**255**	**100.00**

Finally, Table 6 shows the age distribution of household respondents. The majority fall within the productive working-age range, with 34.6 percent between 25 and 34 years and 25.1 percent between 35 and 44 years. Youth aged 18-24 constitute 12.5 percent of the sample, while only 9.9 percent are aged 55 and above. This demographic profile underscores the youthful character of Eastleigh's migrant population, where economic participation, family responsibility, and migration are deeply intertwined.

Table 6 Age distribution

Age Group	**%**
18-24	12.5
25-34	34.6
35-44	25.1
45-54	17.9
55+	9.9
Total	**100**

Taken together, these tables depict a population characterized by demographic diversity, youthful energy, and economic precarity. Most households operate within Nairobi's informal

economy, relying on trading, remittances, and community support to sustain their livelihoods. The mix of education levels and employment types reflects the coexistence of aspiration and constraint that defines Somali migrants' experience in Eastleigh. These attributes provide an essential empirical foundation for the intersectional and multiscalar analyses developed in the following chapters.

2.7 Reflexivity and positionality

I entered this research as both an insider and an outsider. I grew up in Eastleigh and carry a lived familiarity with its languages, social codes, and everyday economies. That experience shaped how I listened, how trust formed, and which silences I recognized. At the same time, I conducted this work as a doctoral researcher based in Canada, operating within academic protocols, ethical frameworks, and critical distance that are often at odds with community expectations and needs. This dual orientation created both strength and strain. It demanded sustained reflexivity to recognise how power, affiliation, and personal history inevitably influence what is asked, what is heard, and what is written (England, 1994; Holmes, 2020; Miles and Crush, 1993).

2.7.1 Insider and outsider vantage

My childhood and adolescence in Eastleigh meant I could speak Somali, follow clan-based cues, and understand the informal norms that organise daily life. These affinities helped participants feel seen. Many shared sensitive experiences of flight, undocumented status, and policing because they sensed I understood the context behind the words. That proximity supported depth of disclosure and interpretive nuance in ways that would be difficult for a detached observer to achieve (Rose, 1997; Sultana, 2007).

Proximity also carried risks. Familiarity can slide into assumption. I had to resist the temptation to treat new testimonies as confirmation of older memories or to hear through the filter of my own biography. Negotiating that line required deliberate attention to the politics of insider and outsider roles, especially for researchers from the Global South working within their own communities, where power, respectability, and institutional affiliation intertwine in complex ways (Savvides et al., 2014; Noh, 2019; Giwa, 2015; Kusow, 2003). My position as a PhD candidate affiliated with a Northern institution conferred authority in some eyes and raised suspicion in others. A few participants framed requests or disclosures as if academic research could open doors to NGO or state resources. Others tested whether my analysis would represent their struggles fairly. Balancing empathy, clarity, and accountability was essential to avoid imposing my assumptions or silencing contradiction in the search for neat narratives (Sultana, 2007; England, 2004).

2.7.2 Reflexive practices

I treated reflexivity as a method rather than a postscript. From the outset, I kept a detailed field journal that recorded observation, emotion, puzzlement, and decision rationales. When a participant described buying food on credit or selling a small asset to purchase staples, I often felt immediate recognition. I then annotated differences between my memory and the participant's present, which helped prevent projection and protected analytic clarity (Thompson and Burkholder, 2020; Vanner, 2020; Orange, 2016; Malenfant, 2020).

Regular debriefings with local research assistants were equally important. The team included Eastleigh insiders and relative newcomers. They challenged my interpretations when phrasing, tone, or subtext meant something different on the ground than it did in my notes. These exchanges sharpened ethical practice, improved instrument wording, and deepened analysis of power within researcher–participant relations (Thuo, 2013; Ozoguz, 2024).

Throughout coding and drafting, I returned to intersectionality and positionality literatures to keep self-awareness anchored in theory. These readings were a reminder that social location shapes every stage of research, from recruitment to inference (Crenshaw, 1991; Bastia et al., 2021). I actively sought disconfirming evidence, especially where my insider expectations were strong, to surface heterogeneity within Eastleigh's Somali community and to avoid overgeneralisation.

My dual vantage shaped not only access but interpretation. It enabled engagement with topics that are often muted in formal interviews, including gendered sacrifices behind remittances, clan-based moral obligations, and the affective toll of policing and documentation systems (Crean, 2018; Couture et al., 2012). It also required humility about change. Eastleigh today is not the Eastleigh of my adolescence. Migration waves, digitalized trade, real-estate finance, and security practices have altered the social geography of the neighbourhood. Making that recognition explicit helped me avoid nostalgic or static framings of place and people (Breen, 2007; Greene, 2014).

2.7.3 Reflexivity as method and ethic

By sustaining reflexive habits through journaling, team debriefs, and theoretical engagement, I made both my strengths and limits visible. This orientation treats knowledge as co-produced, relational, and situated rather than extracted and objective. It also foregrounds the responsibilities that come with familiarity and affiliation in a context marked by unequal exposure to risk and unequal access to remedy (Thuo, 2013; Nagar and Ali, 2003). My cultural fluency helped open candid dialogue, but it also required systematic questioning of my interpretive authority and continual attention to who benefits from the account the research produces (Bagley et al., 2016).

This stance aligns with the critical realist epistemology of the dissertation. Critical realism assumes that social phenomena have real structures and mechanisms, but that our access to them is mediated through fallible, situated understanding. Positionality is not noise to be eliminated but a condition of knowledge that can be made explicit and analytically productive (DeJaeghere, 2024; Ryan, 2019).

2.7.4 Concluding reflections

Reflexivity strengthened both the ethical grounding and methodological rigour of this project. It clarified how personal history, cultural belonging, and academic training shaped design, fieldwork, and analysis. More importantly, it reframed the relationship between researcher and participant as a conversation about meaning rather than a transaction about data. In a setting as layered as Eastleigh, robust scholarship depends on making those relationships visible and accountable (Holmes, 2020). When coupled with careful self-critique, the insider perspective becomes a resource for deeper, more empathetic, and more precise analysis of South–South migration and urban food security.

2.8 Challenges and Limitations

Fieldwork in Eastleigh presented both practical and ethical challenges that shaped the research process and the nature of the data ultimately collected. Conducting research in a dense, dynamic, and securitized urban setting required constant adaptation, patience, and a sensitivity to the socio-political realities of participants' lives. These challenges became part of the methodology itself, influencing not only what could be studied but how it could be known.

One recurring challenge was navigating Eastleigh's intricate and ever-changing urban landscape (Rinelli and Opondo, 2013). The neighbourhood's narrow alleyways, unmarked passageways, and juxtaposition of informal housing with commercial buildings made

consistent access to households difficult. Enumerators sometimes found that addresses no longer existed, landlords denied entry, or buildings were temporarily closed due to raids or repairs. High residential density and the absence of formal mapping occasionally delayed interviews or prevented follow-ups, reducing opportunities for cross-verification and repeat engagement. These logistical realities mirrored the broader volatility that defines urban migrant life in Nairobi.

Linked to these spatial barriers were persistent security concerns. Periodic enforcement operations and heavy police presence created a sense of unease among both participants and fieldworkers. Enumerators occasionally encountered impromptu roadblocks or were questioned by security officers while carrying tablets or recording equipment. Participants, too, were wary of being seen interacting with researchers, particularly during periods of heightened police surveillance. These incidents underscored the fragility of everyday existence for undocumented migrants while also constraining the geographic and social reach of the sample. In certain neighbourhood "hot spots," interviews had to be rescheduled or abandoned for safety reasons.

A further limitation stemmed from historical mistrust and fears of ethnic profiling (Odero and Abuya, 2023). Decades of scrutiny from state authorities have created a deep-seated wariness among Somali migrants, especially around topics involving legality, policing, and remittances. Even with repeated assurances of confidentiality, some respondents hesitated to disclose sensitive information about bribe payments, documentation, or market raids. Recruiting local research assistants who already held community trust mitigated this concern but could not entirely eliminate it. Underreporting of the most precarious situations therefore remains likely, a reminder that silence is itself a form of data.

The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic further complicated fieldwork (Lusambili et al., 2020). Older participants and those with health vulnerabilities were reluctant to participate in face-to-face interviews. Although telephone interviews were proposed, poor network connectivity and concerns about privacy rendered them impractical. This limited our ability to capture the experiences of particularly isolated or homebound households. The pandemic also disrupted the rhythms of everyday life that might otherwise have supported rapport building, reducing opportunities for extended engagement.

Methodological challenges also arose in determining household representation and addressing recall bias (Bell et al., 2019; Nakata et al., 2010). Establishing who could legitimately speak for a household proved complex in multi-family dwellings or shared compounds. In some cases, joint interviews with spouses or elders were conducted to triangulate responses, but this could not fully reconcile differences in perception or recollection. Retrospective questions about food security, such as the number of skipped meals in the previous month, inevitably depended on memory. Cross-referencing enumerator observations and field notes reduced inconsistencies, yet recall errors remain an unavoidable limitation.

My own dual positionality as both insider and outsider also introduced interpretive constraints. While my background fostered trust and openness, it risked selective blindness to emerging social and economic transformations within Eastleigh. Recent migration waves, generational shifts, and the digitalization of trade have changed the landscape in ways that could escape the notice of a researcher shaped by earlier experiences of the neighbourhood. I addressed this through reflexive journaling, team debriefs, and regular consultation of updated reports and local experts (Thompson and Burkholder, 2020; Vanner, 2020; Orange, 2016). Still, complete objectivity is neither possible nor desirable; awareness of one's limits remains the more honest stance.

Taken together, these challenges, spatial constraints, security risks, mistrust, pandemic disruptions, recall limitations, representational complexities, and positional biases, define the boundaries within which this research must be read. They are not merely obstacles but part of the epistemological terrain of studying migration and food security in contexts of precarity and informality. Despite these constraints, the combination of a stratified household survey, in-depth qualitative interviews, and reflexive practice generated data of sufficient richness and reliability to illuminate the intersectional dynamics of Somali migrants' daily struggles for food security in Eastleigh.

2.9 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has outlined the methodological foundation of this dissertation, which investigates the relationship between SSM and UFS among Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh. The study's mixed-methods design integrates a stratified household survey with purposive, in-depth interviews to capture both the scale of food insecurity and the lived experiences behind it. Grounded in critical realism and intersectionality, the design links empirical observation with interpretive understanding to show how gender, documentation, remittances, and informality shape household vulnerability and adaptation. This approach demonstrates how migration and governance structures intersect with everyday practices of food access and resilience.

Reflexivity has been central throughout the research process. My position as both an insider and an outsider enabled trust and access, while also demanding continuous self-examination. Through reflective journaling, team discussions, and sustained engagement with literature, I worked to acknowledge and minimize potential biases. This reflexive stance strengthened the study's ethical integrity and underscored the value of co-producing knowledge with participants rather than merely collecting it. The research design therefore reflects both

methodological precision and ethical attentiveness to the power dynamics that shape fieldwork in complex urban environments.

Despite the challenges of conducting fieldwork in Eastleigh's dense and politically sensitive context, the combination of stratified sampling, remittance-flow diaries, and iterative integration of quantitative and qualitative findings yielded rich and reliable data. The approach balances statistical rigor with the depth of lived experience, illuminating how structural inequalities and social relations shape urban food insecurity. By combining methodological robustness with critical reflexivity, this study provides a strong empirical and ethical foundation for the next chapters, which apply these methods to analyze the structural, governance, and intersectional dimensions of food security among urban migrants in the Global South.

Transition to Chapter 3

Building on the methodological foundation outlined in this chapter, the next chapter presents the first empirical manuscript, which establishes a quantitative baseline for understanding the food security of Somali migrants in Eastleigh. Using the household survey data collected through the stratified cluster design, Chapter 3 examines the structural and socio-economic determinants of food insecurity, identifying key predictors such as income, education, documentation, and household structure. This analysis provides a statistical overview of vulnerability while situating these patterns within broader debates on SSM and urban livelihoods. The findings form the empirical cornerstone of the dissertation, offering a foundation upon which subsequent chapters deepen the analysis through the lenses of governance, crisis, and intersectionality.

CHAPTER THREE

Manuscript # 1: Disparities and determinants of Somali refugee food security in Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract:

This paper investigates the relationship between refugee migration and urban food security, focusing on Somali migrants in Nairobi, Kenya. Despite the abundance of literature on urban refugees and their economic integration, scant research has addressed their food security challenges. Utilizing a household survey conducted in Nairobi's Eastleigh district, the paper explores the levels, determinants, and spatial variations of food security among Somali refugees. Findings reveal that while migration to Nairobi generally improves food security compared to conditions in Somalia, substantial disparities exist within the refugee population, with a significant portion still facing severe food insecurity. Factors such as household type, household income, education level, and the education and employment status of the household head are significantly associated with food security status. Spatial analysis within Eastleigh highlights pronounced disparities in food security across different sections of the neighbourhood. The study underscores the need for holistic, context-specific strategies to address urban refugee food insecurity, emphasizing the importance of economic empowerment and targeted support for vulnerable groups to achieve sustainable food security outcomes.

3.1 Introduction

The relationship between migration and food security is complex and multifaceted (Choithani, 2017, 2022; Crush, 2013; Sadiddin et al., 2019; Zezza et al., 2011). As a result, South-South migration and food security tend to be viewed as discrete and largely unconnected realms in global policy forums and in the larger literature on both topics (Chikanda et al., 2020; Crush

and Caesar, 2017; Ramachandran and Crush, 2023). The experiences of South-South refugees, who have fled their home countries due to conflict, persecution, or environmental disaster, often involve significant disruption to their social, economic, and cultural networks (Jha et al., 2020; WFP, 2017). The specific circumstances surrounding displacement and refugee status also produce new livelihood challenges (Delgado et al., 2021; Guerra et al., 2019). Flight from conflict and persecution invariably has serious negative consequences for access to income-generating opportunities and overall well-being (Weldemariam et al., 2022). While not exclusive to displaced populations, these challenges are exacerbated by the disruptions that displacement entails (Carney and Krause, 2020; Stelfox and Newbold, 2019).

There are an estimated 26 million registered refugees globally, with as many as 80% facing food insecurity (Nisbet et al., 2022). In 2022, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed food aid to more than 150 million people worldwide, including many refugees and internally dis- placed people. In Kenya, the WFP assists 500,000 refugees in camps to improve their food security through various programs including general food distribution, complementary feeding for pregnant and lactating women for the first 1000 days after conception, supplementary feeding for malnourished children under the age of 5, treatment of acute and chronic malnutrition, free rations for the chronically ill, nutrition support to people living with chronic diseases, institutional feeding, school meals, and food for training young people in vocational skills (WFP, 2017). However, urban refugees in Kenya receive no direct food security support from the organization but rely on informal community support mechanisms to deal with food insecurity and other challenges (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo and Ezeh, 2005).

The abundant humanitarian, policy, and research profile of food insecurity among refugees in camps contrasts with the scarcity of research on the food security challenges of urban refugees, especially in African cities. This is increasingly problematic as an estimated 60% of the world's refugees now live in urban areas. The unaddressed needs of urban refugees make them a 'hidden population' for researchers and policy makers (Verghis and Balasundram, 2019). As Jacobsen (2006) has noted, "refugees living in urban areas face a myriad of protection and livelihood problems not generally encountered in camps." With a few exceptions, the food insecurity challenges confronting urban refugees in Africa have been ignored (Abdollahi et al., 2015; Crush and Tawodzera, 2017; Khakpour et al., 2019; Napier et al., 2018). The food insecurities facing refugees in urban areas are therefore relevant to the conversation on the links between migration and food security in the context of South-South migration.

In Kenya, there is a significant literature on urban refugees focused on such themes as security deficiencies and threats (Aronson, 2011; Whitaker, 2020), refugee protection (Balakian, 2020; Campbell, 2015), dispossession, exclusion, and xenophobia (Bhagat, 2020; Fernandez and Athukorala, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2013), refugee mobilities (Kasujja, 2020), and economic and social integration in Nairobi (Campbell, 2006; Peter et al., 2020; Varming, 2020). In urban Kenya, as Pavanello et al. (2010) point out, refugees are both 'hidden and exposed.' There is also a patchwork of recent studies on Somali migrant livelihoods in Nairobi where participation in the informal economy is flourishing (Carrier and Scharrer, 2019; Johansson, 2020; Omata, 2021). This is most evident in studies of the transformation of Eastleigh, a densely populated neighbourhood and Somali-dominated commercial and residential hub (Carrier, 2017), which has been described as "the archetypal Somali urban space beyond Somalia" (Carrier and Scharrer, 2019, p.15). The Eastleigh district is a densely populated area known as 'Little Mogadishu' where Somali refugees have established a vibrant economic

community. However, alongside this economic vitality, there exist significant food security challenges, particularly among the most vulnerable households.

The food security experiences and challenges facing urban refugees in Kenya have attracted little research attention to date. For example, a 2017 survey of the Nairobi refugee population provided important in- formation on the economic circumstances of refugees, but had little to say about food insecurity, other than the finding that Somali refugee households with higher incomes had more diverse diets (Betts et al., 2018). More recently, a World Bank (2015) survey of refugees in three urban centres in Kenya (including Nairobi) concluded that around 60% of urban refugee households were highly food insecure and used consumption-based strategies to cope with lack of food. But neither provides a detailed analysis and explanation of the food security status of Somali households in Nairobi. Using research findings from our 2022 survey of Somali refugee households in Eastleigh, the paper addresses three important questions: What are the levels and determinants of food security and insecurity among Somali refugees in Nairobi? Are there variations in the experience of food security within the refugee population and, if so, why do these exist? And does food security improve with increased time since migration to and residence in Nairobi?

In the next section of the paper, we discuss the history of refugee migration from Somalia to neighbouring Kenya, and the growth and transformation of 'Little Mogadishu' in Nairobi as an urban refugee hub. In the following section, we present the results of our 2022 household food security survey conducted in Eastleigh with Somali refugee households. We then discuss the reasons for the variable food security outcomes indicated by descriptive statistical analysis and multinomial logistic regression modelling, drawing particular attention to the independent variables that have a statistically significant relationship with the food security status of the

household. The conclusion of the paper returns to the three questions posed above and the implications of the findings for work on the food security of urban refugees in Africa.

3.2 Towards Nairobi

The collapse of the Somali government in 1991 ushered in a pro- longed period of conflict, instability, and political disarray that continues to this day. The turbulent political environment, characterised by ongoing violence, civil war, and the emergence of armed rebel groups, created significant challenges for the Somali population, prompting many individuals and families to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Kenya, which offers safer living conditions and better economic opportunities, emerged as the preferred destination for Somali migrants (Ibrahim et al., 2020; Kumssa et al., 2014; Kumssa and Jones, 2014). Additionally, Kenya's historical and cultural ties with Somalia amplified the attractiveness of Kenya as a destination (Kasujja, 2020; Omeje and Mwangi, 2014; Varming, 2020).

Kenya hosts a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers from neighbouring countries in three main regions of the country (Table 1). According to the latest data from UNHCR, as of July 2024 there were 782,468 refugees and asylum-seekers in Kenya and 521,260 registered refugees. Almost half of the country's refugees and asylum- seekers reside in Garissa (which includes Dadaab refugee camp), while 37% are in Turkana (which includes Kakuma refugee camp). Around 105,000 (or 13% of the total) reside in Nairobi. Over 300,000 (or 53%) of the refugees come from Somalia, followed by South Sudan, and the DRC. Most Somali migrants are located in the two large refugee camps of Dadaab and Kakuma (including the neighbouring Kalobeyi settlement). They come to Nairobi by relocating from the camps where there are very limited economic opportunities or bypassing the camps altogether and moving straight to Nairobi (Miller and Graham, 2021; Omata, 2021). According to the 2019 National Census,

refugees constituted 55% of Eastleigh's total population, with 147,551 out of 268,276 individuals identifying as refugees (Lusambili et al., 2020).

Table 1: Refugees and Asylum-seekers in Kenya, July 31, 2024

Category	**No.**	**Percent**
Refugees	571,260	
Refugees and asylum-seekers	782,468	
Regional Breakdown		
Garissa	385,328	49.2%
Turkana	291,979	37.3%
Nairobi	105,161	13.4%
Country of Origin		
Somalia	303,279	53.1%
South Sudan	187,261	32.8%
DRC	37,391	6.5%
Ethiopia	24,489	4.3%
Burundi	9,232	1.6%
Sudan	6,342	1.1%
Others	2,441	0.4%
Uganda	825	0.1%

(Source: UNHCR, 2024).

The Eastleigh suburb of Nairobi is the primary urban destination for Somali refugees. The UNHCR estimates that there are around 25,000 registered Somali refugees and asylum-seekers in Nairobi, although the precise number of Somalis is unknown since many remain unregistered

and assimilate into the Kenyan Somali community (Im et al., 2017). Most of the Somali population in Eastleigh fled the civil war in Somalia during the 1990s, bringing a strong entrepreneurial spirit that has significantly contributed to Eastleigh's status as a regional commercial hub (Carrier and Lochery, 2013). Geographically, Eastleigh is located in the eastern part of Nairobi, within the Pumwani and Kamukunji Divisions of Nairobi County. It is bordered by high-density residential areas to the west and east and lies along two major roads, Juja and Jogoo. Functionally, Eastleigh is closely linked to Nairobi's Central Business District, serving as one of the city's main commercial districts and hosting various high-density residential areas (Asoka et al., 2013). The neighbourhood's development has been marked by rapid and haphazard gentrification, with new, relatively highrise buildings gradually replacing older structures. This transformation has driven increased demand for housing and facilitated cultural, economic, and social integration (Dok et al., 2020).

Unlike other Nairobi neighbourhoods, Eastleigh's settlement pattern reflects socio-economic stratification within the refugee community itself. This stratification is compounded by factors such as the time since migration, access to employment, education opportunities, and social ties. As a result, the three sections of Eastleigh exhibit varying levels of income, education, and social integration. Since the 1990s, Eastleigh has evolved into a central node in the East African economy, characterized by extensive trade networks connecting the area regionally and globally. Despite the challenges of long-term refugee status and the complexities of legal and social integration, Somali migrants have established a thriving business community in Eastleigh. They own shopping centres, plazas, and street vending enterprises, acting as key wholesalers, intermediaries, and retailers connecting small-scale farmers in rural areas with urban consumers (Carrier and Lochery, 2013; Carrier and Scharrer, 2019). Additionally, Somali migrants have opened numerous restaurants and other food-serving establishments, which have

become popular destinations for both residents and tourists. However, it is important to acknowledge that within this population, there are many extremely vulnerable refugees who struggle to access the area's eco- nomic opportunities.

3.3 Methodology

The paper is based on data from our household survey conducted in Eastleigh in July and August 2022. Eastleigh is formally divided into Eastleigh North and Eastleigh South, and is also commonly described by residents and traders as consisting of three locally recognized sections, namely Sections 1, 2, and 3. An equal number of households (106) were randomly sampled in each of the three sections, giving a total sample size of 318 households. Of these, 268 household heads were born in Somalia, with 99 respondents from Section 3, 88 from Section 1, and 81 from Section 2. A household food security questionnaire was administered to the household head or an adult representative on household demographics, migration history, income and livelihood sources, food sources, and purchasing behaviour, as well as the impact of the COVID- 19 on pandemic household food security. To assess levels of household food security, the survey relied on three metrics: (a) the Household Food Insecurity Access Score (HFIAS) which allocates each household a score between 0 and 27 based on responses to nine frequency-of-occurrence questions; (b) the Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP) score which allocates each household to one of four levels of food insecurity: food secure, mildly food insecure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure; and (c) the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) which allots each household a score between 0 and 12 based on how many food groups were consumed from in the previous 24 hours (Coates et al., 2007; Swindale and Bilinsky, 2006). These three metrics were chosen due to their widespread use and validation in food security research, which ensures consistency and comparability with other studies.

3.4 Survey findings

Most respondents agreed that coming to Nairobi had positively improved their household food security when compared to the situation in Somalia (Fig. 1). While this suggests a nearly universal improvement in relative food security, it does not mean that all refugee households in Nairobi are now food secure. On the HFIAP scale, only 43% of the Somali households were completely food secure (Table 2). The remainder experience varying degrees of food insecurity, including mild (8%), moderate (11%), and severe (38%) food insecurity. Table 2 also compares the Eastleigh results with those for Nairobi as a whole (Owuor, 2018). This random city-wide survey of over 1400 households found a lower overall level of food security (35%) and a higher combined level of moderate to severe food insecurity (58%) compared to the surveyed Somali households in Eastleigh. However, while the percentage of moderate food insecurity was higher in Nairobi, Eastleigh had a significantly greater proportion of households classified as severely food insecure. The mean HDDS was 7.4 out of 12, indicating that the average Somali household in Eastleigh enjoys a reasonably diverse diet, with less than 10% of households having low scores of 4 or fewer (Fig. 2).

Figure 1: Post-migration improvement in household food security

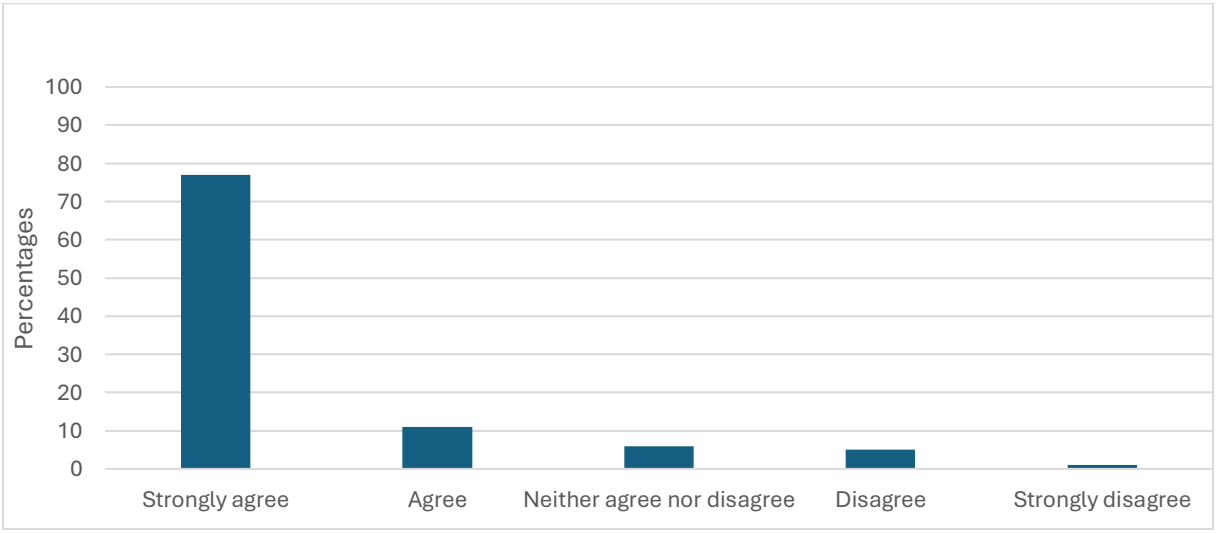
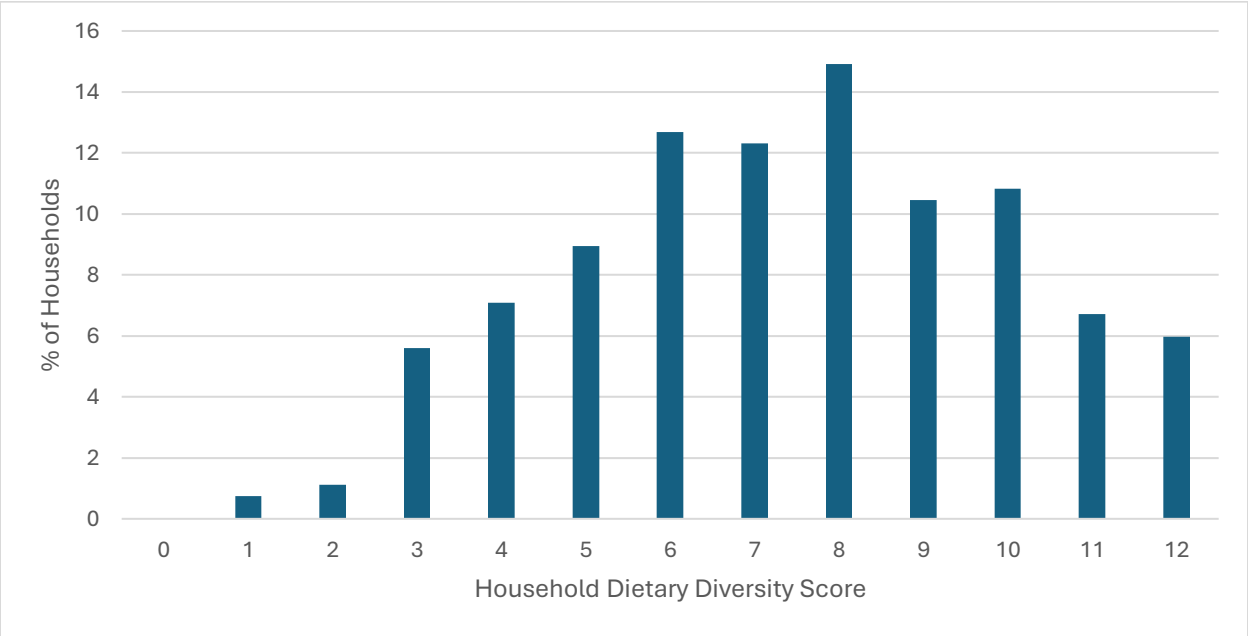


Table 2: Food insecurity prevalence in Somali migrant households

	Eastleigh		Nairobi	
Categories	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Food secure	114	42.5	409	35.0
Mildly food insecure	21	7.9	176	12.6
Moderately food insecure	30	11.2	463	33.0
Severely food insecure	103	38.4	353	25.2
Total	**268**	**100.0**	**1,401**	**100.0**

This comparison requires contextualization because Nairobi-wide food security estimates include other highly precarious populations, notably rural-to-urban migrants living in informal settlements such as Kibera, whose food insecurity is shaped by unstable employment, high food prices, and reliance on rural-urban food transfers and social connectedness Recent evidence from Nairobi's informal settlements shows that rural-urban food remittances and social networks can partially buffer food insecurity among low-income households, even as overall levels of moderate and severe food insecurity remain high (Ayuya, 2024; Onyango et al., 2021). In contrast, Eastleigh's comparatively lower combined moderate-to-severe food insecurity likely reflects its dense migrant commercial economy (Carrier, 2017) and informal food markets, while the high concentration of severe food insecurity within Eastleigh points to sharp internal inequalities linked to refugee status, documentation, and exposure to policing and regulatory enforcement (Bhagat, 2020)

Figure 2: Distribution of HDDS Scores



The variations in the HFIAP and HDDS among Somali households in Eastleigh have a distinctive spatial dimension (Table 3). Of the three areas, Section 1 is the most food insecure with an HFIAS score of 10.5 and 68% of households experiencing severe food insecurity. This section also has the lowest level of dietary diversity, with an HDDS score of 6.0. The socio-economic challenges in Section 1 are stark, as households there have the lowest average income at KSH 47,000, which contributes significantly to the higher levels of food insecurity. In contrast, Section 2 exhibits the lowest levels of food insecurity, with an HFIAS score of 2.4 and only 15% of households severely food insecure. This section also boasts the highest dietary diversity, with an HDDS score of 8.1, and the highest average income at KSH 122,000. Section 3 has an intermediate level of food insecurity, with households here faring better than those in Section 1 but not as well as those in Section 2. Some 38% of food secure households are located in this section, compared to 45% in Section 2 and only 18% in Section 1.

Table 3: Levels of Somali household food security, dietary diversity, and income by section

	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Total
HFIAS	10.5	2.4	3.6	6.8
HFIAP				
Food secure (%)	12.3	65.7	44.3	42.5
Mildly food insecure (%)	4.9	10.1	8.0	7.9
Moderately food insecure (%)	14.8	9.1	10.2	11.2
Severely food insecure (%)	67.9	15.2	37.5	38.4
HDDS	6.1	8.1	7.8	7.4
Average Income (KSH)	47,099	121,944	105,705	

Table 4 identifies a set of independent variables and their relationship with household food security. Food security status is most strongly associated with the year of migration, sex, education level, and employment status of the household head, as well as household type and household income. Household food security tends to increase with the length of time a household head has been in Nairobi. Households with a male head are more food secure than those with a female head (61% versus 39%). As the level of education of the household head increases, so does the food security of the household. Conversely, food-insecure households are more likely to be headed by individuals with lower levels of education. For example, 55% of food-secure households have a head with secondary or tertiary education, compared to only 26% of food-insecure households. Additionally, 62% of food-secure households have heads who are formally or informally employed, compared with 36% of food-insecure households.

Table 4: Relationship between food security and household characteristics

	Food secure (%)	Food insecure (%)	p-value
Household Head			
Year Migrated to Nairobi			
2000 and before	26.2	16.7	0.033**
2001 – 2005	20.4	18.5	
2006 – 2010	24.3	29.6	
2011 – 2015	19.4	16.7	
2016 – to present	9.7	18.5	
Age			
16-24	9.9	14.5	0.190
25-34	34.7	34.6	
35-44	21.8	26.4	
45-54	21.8	15.1	
>54	10.9	9.4	
Sex			
Male	61.2	29.0	<0.001***
Female	38.8	70.4	
Education Level			
No formal education	35.3	56.2	<0.001***
Primary complete	9.8	18.5	
Secondary complete	41.2	21.6	
Tertiary level	13.7	3.7	
Employment Status			

Full-time formal	7.1	3.8	<0.001***
Full-time informal	54.1	32.5	
Part-time	5.1	11.3	
Unemployed	33.7	52.5	
Household Size			
1 person	3.9	3.7	0.847
2-3 people	13.6	15.4	
4-5 people	26.2	21.6	
>5 people	56.3	59.3	
Type			
Female-centred	8.7	30.2	<0.001***
Male-centred	12.6	8.6	
Nuclear	53.4	28.4	
Extended	24.3	32.7	
Monthly Income (KSH)			
<=20,000	4.0	13.7	
20,000 – 50,000	9.1	35.3	<0.001***
50,001 – 100,000	30.3	30.7	
100,001 – 150,000	24.2	12.4	
150,001 – 200,000	17.2	2.6	
>200,000	15.2	5.2	
Spatial Location			
Section 1	9.7	43.2	

Section 2	53.4	27.2	
Section 3	36.9	29.6	<0.001***
Receives remittances			
Yes	72.0	72.2	0.544
No	28.0	27.8	
Sends remittances			
Yes	40.6	25.7	0.011**
No	59.4	74.3	
Dietary Diversity			
Lower (HDDS 0-6)	17.5	48.8	
Higher (HDDS 7-12)	82.5	51.2	<0.001***

Significance level: * p≤ 0.1; ** p≤ 0.05; *** p≤ 0.001

At the household level, monthly income is a strong predictor of food security status. For example, only 13% of food-secure households have a monthly income of less than KSH50,000, compared to 49% of food- insecure households. Household type is also strongly associated with food security status, with only 9% of food-secure households being female-centred, compared with 30% of food-insecure households. A female-centred household refers to a household where a female adult, often a single mother or a woman without a male partner, is the primary decision-maker and provider (Kpoor, 2014). Table 4 also confirms that the spatial location of the household is a good predictor of household food security status. Similar percentages of food-secure and food-insecure households are recipients of remittances. However, food-secure households are better positioned to send remittances elsewhere: 41% of food-secure households are remittance senders compared to only 26% of food-insecure

households. Finally, household food security is also strongly associated with dietary diversity with food-secure households also having higher levels of dietary diversity.

Multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to model the odds of a household with particular characteristics being classified as food insecure (Table 5) The length of residence in Nairobi is not a significant predictor of food insecurity except for new arrivals and long-term residents: households with heads who arrived before 2000 have half the odds of being food insecure compared to post-2015 arrivals (OR: 0.510 95% CI 0.249–1.022). The odds of a female-headed house being food insecure are marginally greater than for male-headed households (OR:1.145 95% CI 0.714–1.843). The level of education of the household head, their employment status, and household income are the strongest predictors of food insecurity. As the level of educational attainment of the head declines, so the odds of household food insecurity consistently increase such that households with heads with no formal education have more than three times the odds of being food insecure (OR: 3.329 95% CI 1.487–7.432).

Table 5: Odds ratios for household food insecurity

	Odds Ratios (OR) (95%CI)
Year Household Head Migrated to Nairobi	
2000 and before	0.510 (0.249 – 1.022) *
2001 – 2005	0.823 (0.393 – 1.696)
2006 – 2010	0.812 (0.438 – 1.475)
2011 – 2015	0.632 (0.327 – 1.202)
2016 – to present (Ref)	
Age of Household Head	
16-24	0.887 (0.368 – 2.132)
25-34	0.842 (0.413 – 1.678)

35-44	0.711 (0.347 – 1.416)
45-54	1.011 (0.481 – 2.097)
>54 (Ref)	
Sex of Household Head	
Female	1.145 (0.714 – 1.843)
Male (Ref)	
Education Level of Household Head	
No formal education	3.329 (1.487 -7.432) ***
Primary complete	2.587 (1.088 – 6.205) **
Secondary complete	2.027 (0.883 – 4.707) *
Post-Secondary/Tertiary level (Ref)	
Employment Status of Household Head	
Full-time formal employment	0.416 (0.063 -2.306)
Full-time informal employment	0.424 (0.077 – 1.794)
Part-time employment	0.877 (0.146 – 4.301)
Unemployed (Ref)	
Household size	
1 person	1.343 (0.394 – 5.384)
2-3 people	0.782 (0.443 – 1.402)
4-5 people	0.813 (0.512 – 1.300)
>5 people (Ref)	
Household type	
Female-centred	1.049 (0.583 – 1.904)
Male-centred	0.637 (0.282 -1.499)

Nuclear	1.465 (0.854 – 2.532)
Extended (Ref)	
Household monthly income (KSH)	
<=20,000	2.951 (1.079 – 8.276) **
20,000 – 50,000	2.746 (1.228 – 6.101) **
50,001 – 100,000	1.570 (0.783 – 3.087)
100,001 – 150,000	0.952 (0.484 – 1.833)
150,001 – 200,000	0.533 (0.231 – 1.210)
>200,000 (Ref)	
Household location	
Section 1	1.621 (0.956 -2.788) *
Section 2	1.007 (0.601 – 1.693)
Section 3 (Ref)	
Receives remittances	
No	0.699 (0.429 – 1.141)
Yes (Ref)	
Sends remittances	
No	1.025 (0.657 – 1.594)
Yes (Ref)	
Dietary Diversity	
Lower (HDDS 0-6)	0.970 (0.604 -1.558)
Higher (HDDS 7-12) (Ref)	

Significance level: * p≤ 0.1; ** p≤ 0.05; *** p≤ 0.001

Households with heads in formal employment are least likely to be food insecure compared to households with an unemployed head (OR: 0.416 95% CI 0.063–2.306). Household income is again one of the strongest determinants of the likelihood of being food insecure: house- holds in the lowest income bracket have nearly three times the odds of being food insecure (OR: 2.951 95% CI 1.079–8.276) than those in the highest income bracket. The spatial location of the household in East- leigh is the other significant predictor of food insecurity as households in Section 1 have higher odds of being food insecure compared to house- holds in Section 3 (OR: 1.621 95% CI 0.956–2.788).

3.5 Discussions

The findings presented in the previous section of the paper begin to shed light on the complex dynamics of food security and insecurity among Somali refugee households in Nairobi, Kenya. Despite the general improvement in food security post-migration, only 43% of the surveyed Somali refugee households in Eastleigh were completely food secure while 38% were severely food insecure. Although these households share a common origin in Somalia, the food security indicators used in the analysis therefore show there is considerable variability among refugee households in Eastleigh. The two strongest predictors of the level of food security proved to be household income and the amount of education of the household head. Education emerges as a critical asset, with higher attainment levels associated with increased food security, echoing findings from previous studies emphasizing the importance of education in mitigating food insecurity (Magan˜a-Lemus et al., 2016; Mutisya et al., 2016). Education generally improves labour market access and employment in Nairobi's formal and informal sectors and clearly aligns with improved odds of food security (Blekking et al. 2020).

The findings on education and household income are consistent with other research highlighting the positive impact of stable employment and regular income on household food security (Haddad, 1992; Do et al., 2019; McCordic et al., 2021). Interestingly, there is little

difference in food security outcomes if the head of household is formally or informally employed. This is likely a reflection of the fact that Eastleigh has a significant informal entrepreneurial economy in which successful refugee entrepreneurs are able to accumulate significant resources and income.

The vulnerability of recent migrants to food insecurity is consistent with scholarly assertions that newcomers face heightened food insecurity risks and that levels of food security improve over time (Berggreen-Clausen et al., 2022; Jha et al., 2020; Orjuela-Grimm et al., 2022). However, the proportion of food insecure households does not consistently decline over time which suggests that households that are severely food insecure when they arrive have a much harder time escaping the food insecurity trap. The existing literature indicates that female-headed households often face increased vulnerability to food insecurity due to factors such as limited access to resources and employment opportunities (Choithani, 2020; Mwaura, 2022). The descriptive statistics do show that female-centred households are disproportionately food insecure, although the strength of the relationship was weaker in the regression model.

Three quarters of the Somali refugee households in Eastleigh receive remittances and over one third also send remittances. Incoming remittances primarily emanate from the Somali diaspora abroad while out-going remittances flow to Somalia as well as relatives in the refugee camps. Contrary to expectations from the migration literature (see Moniruzzaman and Walton-Roberts, 2022), the receipt of remittances by urban refugees had no discernible impact on their food security. Food secure households were much more likely to be remittance senders. While there is an association between dietary diversity and food insecurity, even food insecure households are able to have a relatively varied diet.

Finally, Blekking and Waldman (2024) have recently noted that they found it surprising that current food security metrics are not more spatially explicit. A few empirical studies of urban household food security in Africa have drawn attention to the existence of spatial variations in food security status within a city and even within a single neighbourhood (Blekking et al., 2023; Tuholske et al., 2020). In Nairobi, Mohamed et al. (2016) found a wide range of household-level food security outcomes and high levels of spatial heterogeneity within low-income areas of the city. Here we investigated the spatial distribution of food security and insecurity in Eastleigh by comparing the food security metrics of households in three different locations. The spatial disparities between Sections 1, 2 and 3 underscore the importance of considering localized factors and contexts when addressing food security issues. Another key spatial finding of the analysis is the significant improvement in household food security experienced by Somali migrants upon relocation to Nairobi.

3.6 Conclusion

Urban refugees in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South face considerable livelihood challenges (Koizumi and Hoffstaedter, 2015). While cities offer greater economic opportunities than refugee camps, they are also challenging environments in which to survive (Abdollahi et al., 2015; Ghattas, 2014; Khakpour et al., 2019). One of the consequences of economic marginalization, legal uncertainty, and hostile citizenries in cities is a constant struggle to achieve and maintain food security. At first glance, the Eastleigh estate in the heart of Nairobi, Kenya, is an exception to this characterization. ‘Little Mogadishu’ is a vibrant global, regional, and local commercial and cultural hub in which Somali refugees have clustered and thrived (Carrier, 2017; Carrier and Lochery, 2013; Carrier and Scharrer, 2019). However, there has been little or no research on the question of whether economic dynamism and vitality has translated into food security for all. This paper therefore provides new insights into the food

security status of Somali refugees residing in Nairobi, addressing critical gaps in the literature and contributing to the understanding of urban refugee livelihoods.

The paper provides answers to the three pivotal questions posed at the outset regarding the food security of Somali refugee households, drawing on primary data from our comprehensive 2022 household survey. First, most of the respondents reported a positive change in their food security status compared to their situation in Somalia. However, this does not mean that all households are now food secure. For example, almost two in five Somali households in Eastleigh proved to be severely food insecure. At the same time, less than one in ten households have low levels of dietary diversity which means that a significant number of food insecure households are still able to enjoy a reasonably diverse diet.

Second, although 40% of households were found to be severely food insecure, another 40% are completely food secure, with the remainder experiencing less severe forms of food insecurity. The analysis reveals a complex interplay of factors that determine these variations in levels of food security. Spatial disparities were especially evident, with different sections of Eastleigh showing contrasting levels of food security. Food insecurity was strongly related to the employment status and education of the household. Household income proved to be the strongest determinant of food insecurity. As household income increases, there is a consistent decline in food insecurity. The finding highlights the need for urban refugee support policies that enhance education access, create job opportunities, and improve income levels.

Third, household food security does generally improve with increased time since migration from Somalia. This finding suggests that as Somali refugees integrate over time and acclimate to the local environment, they can better navigate the socio-economic landscape, leading to

improved food security outcomes. The main exception is that very recent migrants are significantly more food insecure than medium and longer-term Nairobi residents. At the same time, severely food insecure households seem less able to break the vicious cycle of poor education, unemployment, and inadequate income.

Overall, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing food security among Somali refugees in Nairobi and underscores the importance of adopting a holistic and context-specific approach to addressing food insecurity in urban refugee settings. By identifying key determinants and disparities in food security outcomes, policymakers and practitioners are in a better position to develop targeted interventions aimed at improving the food security and well-being of vulnerable urban refugee populations. This demands a multipronged policy approach that recognizes the diversity within the refugee population and the multifaceted nature of food insecurity. There is a strong case for evidence-based interventions in Nairobi and elsewhere that facilitate integration, support economic empowerment, and offer tailored support to the most vulnerable segments of the refugee population.

CHAPTER FOUR

Manuscript # 2: Pandemic Shocks and the Food Security of Somali Migrants and Refugees in Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered severe shocks to food security for marginalized populations in urban areas. Somali migrants and refugees in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighbourhood faced disproportionate impacts due to strict containment measures, disrupted food supply chains, and the shutdown of informal markets. These disruptions exacerbated existing socio-economic inequities, leading to heightened food insecurity. This paper examines the multi-dimensional effects of the pandemic on the food security of Somali migrants and refugees, focusing on their access to informal food networks and the broader socio-economic factors influencing their livelihoods. Utilizing a household survey and in-depth interviews conducted in August 2022, the study reveals the compounded impacts of income loss, remittance disruptions, and restricted mobility on food access and consumption. By situating these findings within the context of South-South migration and urban food security, this research offers critical insights into the intersectional vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic. The study highlights the need for resilient, inclusive food security policies and governance frameworks that specifically address the vulnerabilities of urban migrants in times of global crisis.

Keywords: COVID-19, food security, socioeconomic impacts, urban refugees, migration.

4.1 Introduction

Antonio Guterres (2023), the Secretary General of the United Nations, has characterised urban areas as the 'ground zero' of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 90% of the reported cases concentrated at these locations. Urban areas, especially large cities, have been the hotspots of

the coronavirus because of a common set of conditions, such as high population concentrations, overcrowding, and poor health and living conditions (Florida et al., 2021). In major African cities such as Nairobi, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges for urban migrants, especially those with limited mobility due to lack of legal documents (Luiu et al., 2022). Migrant pandemic vulnerability was further compounded by preexisting socioeconomic inequities, exclusionary government responses, and residential segregation (Hitch et al., 2022; Sonono, 2021).

In Kenya, that there were 343,786 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Kenya and 5,689 deaths between January 2020 and July 2023 (WHO, 2023). In response to pandemic, the Kenyan government implemented a series of public health measures to mitigate the spread of the virus. These measures included a nationwide dusk-to-dawn curfew, social distancing mandates, and restrictions on movement between counties (Wangari et al., 2021). The curfew was imposed on March 27, 2020, and a formal lockdown placed over the Nairobi Metropolitan Area from April 6, 2020, to July 6, 2020. Public spaces, schools, non-essential businesses, and religious institutions were closed to limit transmission. The government also prioritized mass testing and expanded health services, particularly in urban areas where densely populated informal settlements posed a heightened risk of infection (Asamba, 2020). However, while these measures were essential in curbing the virus's spread, they disproportionately impacted vulnerable populations, including migrants, refugees, and informal economy workers. These groups, heavily reliant on daily wages from informal markets and with limited access to formal social protection systems, encountered heightened challenges because of these restrictions (Lusambili et al., 2020).

Pandemic curfew measures led to reduced mobility, increased travel costs, and loss of income, worsening poverty and economic vulnerability (Luiu et al., 2022). A series of Kenyan Rapid Response Phone Surveys (RRPS) documented the economic shocks triggered by the pandemic (Pape et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b). Unemployment increased five times from 4% in late 2019 to 18% a year later, and urban unemployment was even higher at 25%. The situation was particularly dire in informal settlements, where overcrowding and lack of basic services made adherence to containment measures difficult (Kibe et al., 2020). Pinchoff et al. (2021) have also highlighted the gendered effects of the pandemic, with women in informal settlements experiencing higher rates of food insecurity, household violence, and forgoing necessary health services. Other research has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to food price inflation and food supply chain disruptions affecting urban lives in terms of food availability and consumption (Kunyanga et al., 2023).

The economic impacts of the pandemic were closely tied to food security challenges, especially for marginalized urban populations. The pandemic triggered significant food price inflation and reduced food diversity, both of which undermined urban livelihoods (Kunyanga et al., 2023; Varma & Sutradhar, 2023). For migrant communities, whose survival depends on informal food markets and networks, the disruption of supply chains proved disastrous (Ahmed et al., 2023; Khoso, 2023). The closure of informal markets due to lockdowns exacerbated food insecurity, further demonstrating the crucial role of unregulated economies in sustaining urban migrant populations. As a result, migrant populations were particularly susceptible to the adverse socio-economic effects of the pandemic, particularly concerning access to food and basic services. Among the hardest-hit areas was Eastleigh in Nairobi, a densely populated migrant and refugee enclave in Nairobi. Eastleigh, known for its vibrant economy driven by informal trade, was disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 containment measures.

On May 6, 2020, the government imposed a full lockdown on Eastleigh as well as Mombasa's Old Town following a surge in COVID-19 cases in both localities (Nation, 2020). This decision came in the wake of an alarming situation in Eastleigh, where an imam, despite knowing his COVID-19 positive status, continued leading prayers and making house visits until his death on April 16, contributing to the area's rapid transmission rates (Saya, 2020). The lockdown led to the closure of all businesses, shopping malls, markets, and public spaces, effectively isolating the neighbourhood. Residents were barred from leaving their homes except for essential purposes, and the police had a heavy-handed presence in enforcing the regulations and the initiation of mass testing campaigns to contain the outbreak (Kinyua, 2020; Yussuf, 2020). Many residents from urban slums in the Kamukunji constituency, where Eastleigh is located, who were already economically marginalized and often depended on daily labour, suddenly found themselves cut off from their sources of income.

The shutdown of markets and businesses caused thousands of traders to lose their primary source of income, plunging many households deeper into poverty and food insecurity (Odenyo, 2020). The lockdown's impact on Eastleigh extended beyond economic deprivation. Residents also faced significant social and health challenges. With many households relying on informal food markets for affordable essentials, the closure of these markets led to severe shortages of basic goods. Meanwhile, disrupted supply chains drove up prices for the limited food available (Njeru, 2020). This deepened pre-existing food insecurity in the area, where many households were already struggling to meet daily nutritional needs (The Conversation, 2020).

This paper assesses the overall impact of COVID-19 on the food security of these Somali migrants using a household survey and in-depth interviews in Eastleigh. By documenting the pandemic-related food access and consumption experiences of Somali migrants, this paper aims to contribute to the emerging body of case study evidence assessing the adverse outcomes of the pandemic shock on vulnerable migrant populations in African cities. Employing both a household survey and in-depth interviews, the paper assesses the overall impact of COVID-19 on the food security of Somali migrants and refugees in Eastleigh. It particularly focuses on the challenges they faced in consuming sufficient quantities and variety of nutritious food during the pandemic. While there have been several studies of the impact of the pandemic on food security in Nairobi's informal settlements (Solymári et al, 2022; Chege et al, 2021; Chege et al, 2022; Merchant et al, 2022; Shupler et al, 2021; Kimani-Murage et al, 2022; Onyango et al, 2024) this is the first to systematically examine the implications for Somali households in Nairobi.

The paper addresses three main questions: first, how did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the food security and livelihood strategies of Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighbourhood, particularly in the context of South-South migration and urban food systems? Second, how did the pandemic disrupt informal food networks and remittance flows, and what were the resulting implications for household food security? And third, how did intersectional factors such as gender, migration status, and socio-economic class exacerbate food insecurity among Somali migrant households during the pandemic? By answering these questions, the paper adds a crucial layer to our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable urban populations, highlighting the need for more informed policies and programmes to support the food security of urban migrants and refugees in African cities.

4.2. Methodology

This study was designed to collect accurate and representative data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Somali households in Nairobi. The mixed methods approach comprised a survey of 268 Somali migrant households and 30 in-depth interviews with a sample of participants. The survey questions covered critical aspects of the lives of the participants, including household demographics, economic conditions, food security, access to clean water and medicine, and other basic needs. The survey instrument also included a series of questions related to the socioeconomic conditions of the household during the COVID-19 pandemic period. In addition, the survey sought to gather information on the frequency of going without enough food to eat, clean water, medicine, electricity, cooking fuel, cash income, loss of income, illness, remittances, food access and food prices.

A team of trained local research assistants with requisite language skills administered the surveys and conducted the in-depth interviews face-to-face with participants. This exercise was conducted in Somali, English, or Swahili, depending on the preference of the participant. The in-depth interviews were designed to gather detailed qualitative information about migrant and refugee household experiences during the pandemic. The in-depth interviews were conducted using an open-ended interview guide, which allowed participants to convey their personal experiences and feelings about the pandemic using their own words. The data collected through the survey and interviews were analysed using descriptive statistics which allowed us to summarise and present the data in a meaningful way. Moreover, thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and patterns circumscribing the experiences of the participants, to gain in-depth and nuanced understanding of the pandemic-related experiences and perceptions of the participants.

4.3 Migrant profile

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic profile of the respondents and surveyed households. Around 59% of the study participants were male and 41% were female. Just over half (54%) were married, 24% were single, and 15% were divorced or separated. Participants resided predominantly in flats or apartments (92%), reflecting the urban environment of the Eastleigh neighbourhood. Only 7% lived in a house. In terms of the household structure, 39% of participants were part of nuclear households, although 22% were living in extended households. Most participating households were male-centred (29%). Ten percent of respondent households were female-centred, that is, with a female head without a male spouse or partner.

TABLE 1: Sociodemographic profile

Sex of household respondents	**No.**	**%**
Male	157	58.6
Female	111	41.4
Marital status		
Married	144	53.7
Single	63	23.5
Divorced	41	15.3
Widowed	11	4.1
Separated	8	3,0
Abandoned	1	0.4
Housing type		
Flat/apartment	246	91.8

House (bungalow)	19	7.1
Semi-permanent informal dwelling	2	0.7
House (maisonette)	1	0.4
Household structure		
Nuclear	104	38.8
Male-centred	78	29.1
Female-centred	27	10.1
Extended	59	22.0

4.4 Pandemic impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Somali households in Eastleigh, Nairobi, with far-reaching consequences for their food security, livelihoods, and overall well-being. The combination of lockdown measures, economic disruptions, and social vulnerabilities created a precarious situation for migrant households already reliant on informal economies and remittance flows. One respondent described the situation as follows:

> *COVID-19 really affected our household, especially in 2020 and 2021. I lost my job working as a shopkeeper in Eastleigh, Nairobi, due to COVID-19. I could not also move freely to look for a job due to COVID-19 containment measures. Police used to arrest and beat people who are found walking outside. For someone like me with refugee documents, I could not move freely as I could easily get arrested. Therefore, I had to stay at home for most of the pandemic period. In addition, the living condition is now harder than before the pandemic. Everything is expensive, and the price of foodstuffs has gone up. The tough economic conditions have had negative effects on my household's food security situation (Interview No. 16).*

This testimonial illustrates the compounded nature of the pandemic's impacts on someone with legitimate documentation. Migrants with irregular legal status faced even greater mobility restrictions and economic hardship. The lockdown measures disproportionately affected migrants whose livelihoods were intertwined with informal economies. For many Somali migrants in Eastleigh, informal work and access to informal food markets are critical for survival. The pandemic's disruption of these lifelines exacerbated already fragile socio-economic conditions, pushing many households deeper into food insecurity.

Table 2 provides a stark reminder of the general economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Somali households in Nairobi, corroborating the broader narrative of financial hardship during this period (Gama et al., 2022). Three-quarters of the participants perceived their economic circumstances as worse or much worse since the onset of the pandemic. This collective sentiment underscores the general financial strain experienced by the Somali community. This finding is consistent with more general patterns, as the pandemic has disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, exacerbating existing inequities (Perry et al., 2022). The impact of the pandemic on the poor has been particularly severe, with a substantial reduction in income and savings (Dang et al., 2020). As such, the ability to meet daily household needs has declined, leading to a reduction in mobility and increased household expenditure (Ashari & Nugrahanti, 2021). This has led to a decline in living standards, including income, employment, and food security, in low- and middle-income countries (Egger et al., 2021).

TABLE 2: Perception of pandemic changes in household economic conditions

	%
Much worse	46.6
Worse	28.1
Much better	13.8
Better	7.8
Remained the same	3.7

4.4.1 Economic Disruptions and Loss of Income

The economic consequences of the pandemic for Somali households were dramatic. Eighty percent of the survey participants reported that their household experienced income losses in 2020 and successive years of the pandemic (with 28% 'strongly agreeing' and 52% 'agreeing') (Table 3). Almost half of the participating households experienced job loss, with members becoming unemployed and unable to find work. The high level of job losses reflected the closure of businesses and the massive slowdown in economic activities as a result of lockdowns and other restrictions. The repercussions of widespread income loss were profound, significantly affecting the ability of households to meet their basic needs:

> *Before COVID-19, I worked in a wholesale food shop to support my wife and our four kids. I was the sole breadwinner of my family, and my income was essential for us to survive. When the pandemic hit, the shop was closed due to lockdown measures, and I lost my job. With no income, we really struggled to put food on the table. Every day was a battle to find enough to eat and make ends meet. The situation was dire, and I often felt helpless. Our savings quickly ran out, and there was no work to be found. The impact on our lives was devastating, and it felt like we were trapped in an endless cycle of worry and hardship (Interview No. 19).*

Despite the economic hardships for most households, a smaller subset of 22% reported that there was an improvement in their household financial status, largely because of their adaptive resilience strategies such as diversifying income sources or increasing reliance on social safety nets, including remittances.

TABLE 3: Economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Members of the household experienced income losses	27.6	52.3	1.1	14.9	4.1
Members of the household became unemployed and could not find a job due to COVID-19	27.0	21.7	33.7	1.1	14.6

4.4.2 Rising Food Prices and Access to Informal Markets

The pandemic's disruption of supply chains and informal food networks had significant consequences for the food security of Somali migrants. Two-thirds of the Somali households experienced an increase in food expenses during the pandemic, which they attributed to the disrupted international and local supply chains and the subsequent food price inflation (Table 4). In May 2020, Eastleigh was designated a COVID-19 hotspot, leading to a complete lockdown of the neighbourhood for a month, during which all markets and food stores were closed (Hiraan Online, 2020; Lusambili et al., 2021). For communities like those in Eastleigh,

which rely heavily on informal markets for affordable food, the closure of these food sources during lockdown was devastating. Informal food vendors, who played a critical role in supplying affordable groceries and fresh produce, were shut down, leaving many households with limited options. The policy left many households unable to access the food they relied on daily, leading to increased reliance on more expensive, formal supermarkets or food aid.

TABLE 4: Food access impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Members of the household had increased food expenses	65.0	2.0	1.9	28.8	0.4
Members of the household found it difficult to access food from informal food vendors	54.4	30.8	9.0	1.1	4.1
Members of the household had less food to eat	30.7	18.0	38.2	9.0	4.1

As many as 85% of households said it was harder to obtain food from informal food vendors this way during the pandemic. As one respondent recalled:

> *We rely heavily on informal food vendors for our daily sustenance, buying cheap groceries and fresh produce to feed our families. However, during the pandemic, Eastleigh was considered a hotspot, and the government closed all food vending shops. This made it incredibly difficult for us to access food. The closure of these vendors, who are our primary source for affordable and fresh food, left us struggling. We couldn't buy*

the groceries and produce we needed, and the alternatives were either too expensive or inaccessible. It was a challenging time for all of us, and at times went hungry because we simply couldn't afford the higher prices in the formal supermarkets (Interview No. 23)

The closure of informal food markets not only affected consumers but also had negative implications for informal vendors themselves. Many vendors, themselves migrants or refugees, lost their primary source of income during the pandemic and were unable to support their own households. One vendor noted how market closure and lost income was compounded by food price hikes:

Before the pandemic, I worked as an informal food vendor, selling meat and groceries in Eastleigh's Jam Street. This job was our main source of income and helped me support my family. When COVID-19 hit, everything changed. The market was shut down, and movement was heavily restricted. I couldn't sell produce anymore, and our income disappeared overnight. To make things worse, the cost of food went up significantly. As a vendor, I saw firsthand how the disrupted supply chains and increased market prices affected everyone. People who used to buy from me struggled to afford basic groceries. My family was no different; we had to pay more for the food we needed, but we had no income to cover these expenses. It was a constant struggle to make ends meet, and every day felt like a battle for survival (Interview No. 30).

4.4.3 Food Insecurity and Household Deprivation

Food inflation in Kenya exacerbated the challenges faced by migrants, who typically have limited financial reserves and rely heavily on the informal sector (Ahmed et al., 2023). As a result, food scarcity became a more pressing issue, with nearly half of the households having less food to eat during the pandemic (Table 5). The table is based on questions drawn from the Lived Poverty Index (Mattes & Patel, 2022) and provides a disarming picture of the extent of household deprivation during the COVID-19 pandemic, with significant sections of the Somali migrant community facing critical shortages. Almost 50% of the households frequently lacked cash income, reflecting the economic turmoil and job losses reported worldwide during the pandemic (ILO, 2021). Additionally, 44% of households reported frequently going without sufficient food and almost half struggled with inconsistent access to clean water and medical treatment.

TABLE 5: Frequency of household deprivation during COVID-19 pandemic.

	Always (%)	Many times (%)	Several times (%)	Just once or twice (%)	Never (%)
How often did this household go without enough food to eat?	15,0	29.2	6.4	1.1	40.8
How often did this household go without clean water for home use?	0.4	48.3	21.1	14.0	16.2
How often did this household go without medicine or medical treatment?	0.8	48.9	10.2	26.3	13.9

How often did this household go without electricity in your home?	13.6	44.2	23.6	8.6	10.0
How often did this household go without cooking fuel (kerosene or gas) your home.	20.0	47.4	6.4	11.2	15.0
How often did this household go without cash income	2.0	33.5	12.0	29.7	24.1

In many instances, households experienced multiple, overlapping deprivation as further evidenced by the narrative of this respondent:

> *In Eastleigh, we usually live in a densely populated neighbourhood that is both commercial and residential. We purchase everything, including food, water, and electricity. During COVID-19, there was a heavy crackdown with strict restrictions on movement in and out of the neighbourhood. This made life extremely difficult for us, as we were deprived of most essentials. We frequently went without sufficient food, and getting clean water became a struggle. The prices of everything went up, and there were times when we had no electricity because we couldn't afford to pay for it. The restrictions isolated us from our usual sources of support and supply, leaving many families in a state of constant need and anxiety (Interview No. 25).*

The high levels of deprivation across these needs suggest a broader systemic failure to protect the most vulnerable during the crisis.

4.4.4 Intersectional Vulnerabilities & Gendered Impacts

The intersection of gender, migration status, and economic precarity created unique vulnerabilities for female-headed households, many of whom were already struggling to provide for their families even before the pandemic, deepening their financial vulnerability, food insecurity, and caregiving responsibilities during the crisis (Arora & Majumder, 2021; Levine et al., 2021; Mohapatra & Nigania, 2024; Wu & Kilby, 2022; Pedraza & Yarris, 2023).

The pandemic underscored the intersectional vulnerabilities that exacerbate food insecurity among Somali migrant households in Eastleigh. Gender emerged as a critical factor shaping the pandemic's impact, with female-headed households disproportionately affected by the loss of income and access to informal food networks. As noted by Pinchoff et al. (2021), women in Nairobi's informal settlements, especially those heading households, faced heightened food insecurity, increased household violence, and reduced access to health services. These challenges were amplified by structural inequalities in access to informal economic opportunities and social protection mechanisms.

For female-headed households, the closure of informal markets and loss of remittances was particularly devastating. These households often relied on daily informal work to sustain themselves and their families, and the cessation of these activities left them with few alternative income sources. As one respondent described:

> *I'm a single mother with three children, and we survive on the small income I make from selling vegetables in the market. When the market was closed during the pandemic, we had no way to earn money, and things became very difficult. The prices of food went up, and I couldn't afford to buy enough to feed my children. We often had to skip meals, and it was a very difficult time for us (Interview No. 17).*

The gendered impacts of the pandemic highlight the need for more inclusive and intersectional governance approaches that account for the specific vulnerabilities of women and other marginalized groups in urban migrant communities. As the pandemic revealed, existing social protection systems were not equipped to address the compounded challenges faced by female-headed migrant households and other vulnerable groups. Therefore, future policies aimed at strengthening food security and social protection in urban contexts need to consider the diverse experiences and needs of different sub-groups within migrant communities.

4.5 Migrant remittances

Remittances are a crucial lifeline for recipients, providing income for basic needs and influencing household behaviour in positive directions (Mishi, 2014). They also enhance the resilience of households, enabling them to cope with various challenges and plan for the future (Sikder et al, 2017). Beyond financial impact, remittances serve as a symbol of the emotional bond between migrants and their families, reflecting a complex typology of relationships (Kaur, 2022). Refugees and asylum seekers are often embedded in multi-directional transnational remittance networks involving several countries of origin and destination where their relatives are placed (Zuntz, 2021). This pattern is also applicable to the research cohort in Nairobi who receive remittances from abroad and themselves remit to support family in Somalia. These complex remittance networks play a vital role in sustaining refugee and migrant households but were badly disrupted by the pandemic.

There has been a contentious debate on whether remittances decreased or increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, much of it conducted at the country-to-country level (Crush & Ramachandran, 2024). A decrease in remittance receipts has substantial negative implications

for recipient households, particularly for food security and the ability of households to cover their basic needs (Owusu & Crush, 2024; Smith & Floro, 2021; Sulemana et al, 2023). Data from the Central Bank of Kenya and other reports indicate that there was an initial slowdown in remittances to the country in the first few months of 2020 but overall, defying predictions remittances to the country remained strong and resilient during the pandemic increasing by 10.7% from USD2.8 billion in 2019 to USD 3.09 billion in 2020, and by 20.2% to reach USD3.72 billion in 2021 (Trading Economics, n.d ; Handoo and Odhiambo, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

Remittances represent a crucial financial lifeline for Somali migrants in Nairobi, even more so at times of crisis. However, Table 6 shows that many of the surveyed Somali households, 71% in all, received less in cash remittances during the pandemic. The remainder had not experienced a decrease, suggesting that that there were variations in the ability of the Somali diaspora to remit to Kenya, some managing to maintain or increase their remittances to help out the recipients, while most were forced to curtail their remitting. One respondent noted how a fall in remittances from a relative in the US had a profoundly negative impact on her family in Nairobi:

> *I receive monthly financial support through remittances from my brother in the US to support my livelihood here in Nairobi. This money is crucial for paying rent, school fees, health expenses, and, most importantly, purchasing food for my family. When COVID-19 hit, my brother initially stopped sending me money because he lost his job due to the pandemic. This had a devastating impact on my ability to cover basic needs for my family. We struggled to make ends meet, and I had to borrow food on credit. However, it wasn't always possible due to the strict lockdown measures, which made it*

difficult to even find someone willing to lend us food. The situation was dire, and I felt helpless as I watched my children forego some meals (Interview No. 12).

TABLE 6: Impact of COVID-19 on remittance inflow

Household received less cash remittances during the pandemic:	%
Strongly agree	41.4
Agree	29.9
Strongly disagree	17.2
Disagree	10.4
Neither agree nor disagree	1.1

The mixed picture that emerges from Table 6 underlines the complex dynamics at play within transnational remittance networks during the pandemic. This calls for a more nuanced understanding of how global crises can differentially impact the economic lifelines of migrant communities, necessitating targeted policy interventions that support both senders and receivers of remittances in times of global economic upheaval (Olivié & Santillán O'Shea, 2022).

4.6 Conclusion

This study has explored the multi-dimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic shock on Somali migrants and refugees in Nairobi, with a focus on food security, livelihood strategies, and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The pandemic significantly disrupted the informal food networks and remittance flows that the migrants rely on for survival, leading to severe food insecurity. Informal networks and remittances, traditionally buffers against economic shocks like job losses, were critically undermined by the pandemic. The findings provide a comprehensive response to the primary research question: How did the COVID-19 pandemic

impact the food security and livelihood strategies of Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh neighbourhood? The paper reveals that job losses, reduced remittances, and disruptions to informal economies heightened food insecurity, with nearly half of respondents reporting going without sufficient food, further exposing the structural weaknesses in urban food systems during COVID-19 (Boadi & Billah, 2024; Crush & Si, 2020; Klassen & Murphy, 2020).

The second question addressed how the pandemic disrupted informal food networks and remittance flows for Somali migrants. Participants described how the shutdown of informal vendors left families without affordable food options, pushing many deeper into food insecurity (Ahmed et al., 2023). The economic downturn in countries where their relatives lived further compounded the issue, as remittances—a crucial financial lifeline—decreased, limiting household ability to purchase essential goods. These disruptions underscore the fragility of informal urban food systems during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic when they tend to be treated by hostile governments as exacerbating rather than mitigating the situation (Boyacı-Gündüz et al., 2021; Carey et al., 2020).

The third question asked how intersectional factors such as gender, migration status, and socio-economic class exacerbated food insecurity. Gender, migration status, and socio-economic class were critical factors that compounded the vulnerabilities faced by Somali migrant households. Female-headed households, already dealing with structural inequalities, were severely affected by market closures and movement restrictions, which increased their food insecurity as they struggled to provide for their families (Pinchoff et al., 2021; Lusambili et al., 2021). Migrants with irregular legal status faced additional barriers in accessing employment and food, while lower-income migrants were hit hardest by economic shocks, further diminishing their ability to meet basic needs. These findings highlight the need for inclusive

governance frameworks and shock-responsive social protections that address the compounded vulnerabilities of marginalized migrant communities, particularly during global crises (Crush & Si, 2020; Doss et al., 2020; Levine et al., 2021; Nyandiko, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global, national, and local food systems which were especially hard on marginalized urban migrants (Chikanda et al., 2020; Klassen & Murphy, 2020). The crisis underscores the urgency of building resilient, equitable, and sustainable urban food systems that can withstand future shocks (Béné et al., 2021; Carey et al., 2020). Addressing these gaps will not only strengthen urban resilience but also provide a more equitable foundation for migrant populations in the Global South. In the Kenyan case, as elsewhere, the implications of the findings go beyond the pandemic. As Africa continues to navigate the pandemic's aftermath, the experiences detailed by Somali migrants in Nairobi serve as a poignant illustration of the challenges that lie ahead for such communities. They underscore the need for policies that address not only immediate food distribution and health concerns but also the underlying structural inequities exposed by the pandemic. The evidence presented here highlights the need for targeted interventions designed to bolster food security and foster economic resilience within urban refugee populations. These interventions need to address the multi-layered impact of the pandemic, acknowledging the vulnerability of migrants to the shutdown of informal economies and the subsequent tightening of food environments. Future research is imperative and should aim to build on these findings, enhancing our strategies to ensure the well-being of migrants. Such work should not only offer relief during global crises but also pave the way for long-term resilience and stability, providing a roadmap for the recovery of migrant communities in the Global South and beyond.

CHAPTER FIVE

Manuscript # 3: Intersectionality in Motion: South-South Migration and Urban Food Security in Nairobi, Kenya.

Abstract

Research on African cities has often examined South-South migration and urban food security as separate issues, overlooking how migrants' legal status, gender roles, and labour market participation jointly shape household food access. This paper applies an intersectional framework to analyze the food-security experiences of Somali migrants in Eastleigh, Nairobi. It builds on previous analyses of baseline vulnerabilities and pandemic-related shocks to highlight how intersecting social categories such as gender, documentation, education, household structure, and remittance flows create distinct patterns of hardship and adaptation. Evidence from thirty in-depth interviews shows that female-headed and newly arrived households experience compounded deprivation, while larger or better-connected families mitigate risk through remittance support. Persistent legal precarity and reliance on informal work reinforce inequalities in access to stable food sources. By integrating intersectionality into migration-food-security research, the paper identifies the structural constraints that shape migrants' everyday lives and calls for multi-level governance approaches responsive to these overlapping inequalities in rapidly urbanizing African contexts.

5.1 Introduction

Cities across the Global South are undergoing rapid and uneven transformation driven by rural and urban migration, population growth, and global interconnectivity (Crush et al., 2020; Grant, 2015). In many African countries, these cities have become economic hubs that attract migrants from rural areas and neighbouring states in search of employment, services, and social mobility (Glaeser & Xiong, 2017; Kessides, 2006;). This demographic expansion has intensified the challenges in urban planning and governance, especially in the provision of housing, infrastructure, and affordable, nutritious food (Kessides, 2006; Rakodi, 2016). Although research on urban food security in Africa has grown, focusing on rising food prices, precarious work, and weak public services, less attention has been paid to how migrant groups experience and shape these vulnerabilities (Chikanda et al., 2020; Crush, 2013).

Recent studies highlight the increasing importance of South-South migration and challenge traditional North-South migration frameworks (Chikanda et al., 2025; Crawley & Teye, 2024; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2024). Nearly half of all migrants from developing countries reside in other developing nations, and most move between neighbouring states (Ratha & Shaw, 2007). These movements require new theoretical and policy approaches because the dynamics of South-South migration differ significantly from those of South-North flows (Nawyn, 2016; Zeleke & Smith, 2024). Displacement caused by conflict or environmental crises remains a major driver of migration, but voluntary mobility in search of opportunities is equally prominent. Migrants arriving in expanding cities often encounter discrimination, exclusion from formal labour markets, and reliance on informal economies for survival (Oka, 2011; Umbyeyi, 2024). Xenophobia and restrictive governance also limit integration and sustainable urban development (Landau, 2007). However, a neglected question concerns how these migrants obtain, prepare, and consume food in unequal and competitive urban settings.

Migration from Somalia to Kenya illustrates this gap. Decades of state collapse, conflict, and climatic shocks have displaced millions of people (Broek & Hodder, 2022; Meharg, 2023; Menkhaus, 2003; Warsame et al., 2022). Although international attention often focuses on the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps, many Somalis move directly to cities such as Nairobi. Eastleigh has become well known for its intense commercial activity and transnational Somali networks that sustain both remittances and cultural identity (Carrier, 2017; Carrier & Lochery, 2013). At the same time, the neighbourhood represents a deep marginalisation. Residents struggle with uncertain legal status, periodic police operations, and minimal access to formal support systems (Campbell, 2006; Carrier & Scharrer, 2019). These conditions not only generate insecurity, but also stimulate entrepreneurship, as migrants depend on small-scale trade, retail activity, and street vending to meet daily needs (Rinelli & Opondo, 2013; Varming, 2020).

This paper builds on two previous articles exploring related dimensions of Somali migrant food security in Eastleigh. The first analyzed spatial and socio-economic determinants of household food insecurity and identified income, duration of residence, and education as key predictors (Ahmed et al., 2024a). The second examined the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, documenting how lockdowns, market closures, and remittance disruptions intensified vulnerability (Ahmed et al., 2024b). However, these studies did not fully explain how social factors such as gender, legal documentation, and household composition intersect to produce different food-security outcomes.

This paper addresses that gap through an intersectional framework rooted in feminist legal scholarship, which conceptualises social categories as interlocking systems of privilege and disadvantage (Crenshaw, 1991). Somali migrants in Nairobi are not a homogeneous group. Outcomes vary between, for example, a recently arrived widow without legal documents and

a long-term resident with secure remittance support. Applying intersectionality to food security allows analysis to move beyond general demographic indicators to an understanding of how overlapping identities and power relations influence access to food (Carney, 2014; Mackay, 2019; Riley & Dodson, 2020). The paper examines how identity markers converge in daily experiences of hunger, coping, and resilience. It also links individual and household practices, such as dealing with policing, legal documentation, or family obligations related to remittances, to broader governance and economic systems that determine resource distribution. The study contributes both conceptual and policy insights by showing how intersectional inequalities shape migrant food security in rapidly urbanizing African settings.

The paper addresses three main questions: first, how do overlapping social positions such as gender, legal status, and household composition shape Somali migrants' food-procurement strategies and vulnerabilities in Eastleigh? Second, which structural or external factors, including governance gaps, informality, and global shocks, intensify or mitigate these vulnerabilities? And third, what policy and programmatic responses can an intersectional analysis inform in order to improve food security among South-South migrants in urban Africa? Addressing these questions advances understanding of the migration-food security relationship and has practical implications for local authorities, humanitarian agencies, and community organizations. By moving beyond aggregate metrics, the paper highlights how intersectional disadvantages trap certain households in chronic insecurity while enabling others within the same neighbourhood, to build more stable and sustainable livelihoods.

5.2 Intersectionality, South-South migration, and urban food security

Research on South-South migration has expanded rapidly in recent years, recognizing that large numbers of migrants now move between countries in the Global South rather than toward traditional Northern destinations (Crush & Chikanda, 2018; De Lombaerde et al., 2014; Ratha & Shaw, 2007; Short et al., 2017). This trend is particularly significant in Africa, where economic change, political volatility, and regional conflict intersect to propel people across multiple borders (Gagnon & Khoudour-Castéras, 2012). Urban centers such as Johannesburg, Nairobi, Lagos, and Accra have absorbed substantial migrant populations, producing complex socio-spatial patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Bakewell & Jónsson, 2011; Landau & Freemantle, 2016; Smiley & Koti, 2010). Although scholarship has begun to explore the developmental implications of South-South migration, there remains limited understanding of how these mobile populations engage with and navigate food systems in rapidly changing cities (Chikanda et al., 2020; Crush & Tawodzera, 2017).

Urban food-security research, by contrast, has focused primarily on locality and governance structures as determinants of access to food (Battersby & Watson, 2018; Haysom, 2021; Tacoli, 2009). However, this focus often overlooks how migrants' legal status or socioeconomic position introduces additional layers of vulnerability (Orjuela-Grimm et al., 2021). The precarious employment of migrants in the Global South is closely tied to food access and affordability (Chikanda et al., 2020; Crush & Ramachandran, 2024; Crush & Tawodzera, 2017; Crush et al., 2012). Many settle in areas with limited infrastructure and weak services, relying on informal work in sectors such as small-scale trade or domestic labor (Awumbila et al., 2017; Tietjen et al., 2023; Vammen, 2023). Informal livelihoods can provide an entry point into the urban economy but rarely offer stability or legal protection (Chen, 2009; Sankaran, 2022; Tsikata, 2009).

Street and market vendors often face police harassment, restrictive bylaws, and extortion (Dragsted-Mutengwa, 2017; Gaibazzi, 2017; Kyed, 2019; Resnick, 2020). Such actions frequently seek to sanitize public space and impose modernist visions of urban order (Adama, 2020). Migrants without documentation are especially vulnerable, as they lack legal recourse when authorities confiscate goods or evict them (Addi et al., 2024; Lawanson, 2014). Because daily income directly determines the ability to purchase food, any disruption in informal earnings has an immediate impact on dietary quality and diversity (Giroux et al., 2020; Resnick, 2017). Households may therefore sacrifice nutritional adequacy by substituting cheaper staples for protein-rich or diverse foods to meet other essential needs such as rent or medical care.

Migrants are not only consumers in these urban food systems but also key suppliers. Many operate grocery stalls, restaurants, or transnational distribution chains that connect rural producers with urban markets (Etzold, 2016; Giroux et al., 2020). In Eastleigh, Somali traders have built extensive commercial networks that include halal meat markets and specialized imports such as flour and spices (Carrier & Lochery, 2013). These enterprises diversify local diets and extend cultural food repertoires for both migrants and host populations. However, migrant-led food businesses generally operate outside formal regulatory frameworks, which limits access to credit, constrains supply chains, and exposes operators to inconsistent enforcement of health and safety rules (Ahmed et al., 2015; Moyo, 2014).

Within this broader urban context, intersectionality offers a critical framework for analyzing how overlapping social positions shape migrants' experiences of vulnerability and adaptation. Grounded in Black feminist scholarship (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Davis, 2014), it emphasizes that categories such as gender, class, race, and legal status interact across individual, institutional, and structural domains to produce distinct configurations of power. Applied to the study of migration and food security, intersectionality directs attention away from single-

axis explanations and toward the relational processes through which inequality is reproduced in cities like Nairobi. This framework therefore provides the conceptual foundation for examining how multiple systems of identity and governance converge in Eastleigh's migrant food economy.

There are three central themes in applying intersectionality to food security among South-South migrants. The first is the persistence of informality, which shapes economic participation and interacts with education and legal status to determine the stability of income. The second is the role of remittances, which embody gendered and cultural norms of resource distribution and can either reduce or intensify household food insecurity depending on broader transnational obligations. The third concerns the effect of external shocks, which expose the fragility of migrant resilience by eroding the limited safety nets that households construct. Health crises, economic downturns, or policy shifts therefore have unequal consequences across intersecting identities such as gender, class, and migration tenure.

These patterns are reinforced by broader structural and institutional forces. Informal food markets, for instance, represent both opportunity and vulnerability: they provide income, social belonging, and access to food, yet they exist under constant threat of regulation and displacement (Greiner, 2011). Migrants' access to such markets often depends on social networks, clan affiliations, and transnational ties, which can either strengthen resilience or deepen exclusion (Mbatha & Koskimaki, 2023; Meagher, 2010; Whitehouse, 2011). Remittances likewise reveal this duality. Regular inflows can buffer families against local shocks, but outward transfers rooted in moral or religious obligations may deplete already scarce household resources (Monteith & Lwasa, 2017; du Toit & Neves, 2009).

The COVID-19 pandemic made these tensions more visible, closing markets, disrupting mobility, and reducing diaspora earnings (Ahmed et al., 2024b; Luiu et al., 2022; Resnick,

2020). As a result, households, especially those headed by women or recent arrivals without documentation, bore disproportionate hardship when caregiving duties collided with income loss (Porter et al., 2021). Intersectionality thus highlights how gender, legality, and social class combine with structural shocks to create overlapping systems of constraint and limited agency.

Building on this foundation, the paper positions intersectionality as a transformative framework for understanding how Somali migrants in Eastleigh engage with food systems and urban governance. Rather than treating "Somali refugees" or "urban poor" as homogeneous categories, this approach examines how gender, documentation, household composition, education, and transnational ties interact to shape distinct outcomes. It also identifies often overlooked forms of resilience, such as female-headed households that draw on ayuuto savings groups or recent arrivals who access informal credit through diaspora associations. This analytical perspective highlights both enduring inequalities and the adaptive capacities embedded within migrant communities. By integrating intersectionality into South–South migration research, the paper contributes a more nuanced understanding of how structural forces, social hierarchies, and everyday practices intersect to determine who secures food and who remains at the margins.

5.3 Methodology

This paper focuses on Somali migrant households in Eastleigh, a Nairobi neighbourhood often referred to as "Little Mogadishu" because of its concentration of Somali-owned businesses, cultural centres, and diaspora networks (Carrier, 2017). Many residents fled Somalia's prolonged conflict and environmental instability, settling in Nairobi in search of safety and economic opportunity (Im et al., 2017). Eastleigh's vibrant informal economy, hawala remittance systems, and clan-based communal ties create a distinctive context to examine how

overlapping social identities and legal status influence household food security (Carrier & Scharrer, 2019).

A mixed-methods approach (Almeida, 2018; Shorten & Smith, 2017) guided data collection between July and August 2022. The first phase consisted of a household survey of 318 households, 268 of which identified Somalia as their country of origin. The questionnaire gathered demographic and socioeconomic data, including education, employment, and monthly expenditures, as well as migration histories and standardised food-security indicators such as the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), the Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP), and the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) (Coates et al., 2007). This quantitative component provided an initial mapping of vulnerabilities across household types and established a baseline for further qualitative exploration.

Building on the survey results, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with Somali migrant household heads to capture the lived experiences behind the survey patterns. A purposive sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of diverse subgroups defined by marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed), gender, documentation, educational background, and remittance practices (receiving or sending funds). The interviews were conducted in Somali, Swahili or English, according to the preference of the participants, and explored daily food procurement strategies, family obligations related to remittances, encounters with local authorities and perceptions of how gender, legal status, and other identities shape household food security. Confidentiality and voluntary informed consent were maintained throughout the process in recognition of the ’ vulnerable legal and social positions of the participants.

The interview transcripts were analysed using NVivo 12 to identify recurring themes such as market closures, domestic labour, and police raids. The intersectionality framework guided this stage of the analysis by systematically categorising data along key axes of difference, including gender, household structure, documentation status, and education level. A comparative matrix was developed to trace overlapping identities between participants, revealing patterns of vulnerability and resilience. This mixed-methods iterative design captures both aggregate trends in Somali migrant food insecurity and the complex ways in which intersecting social factors shape or mitigate hunger within Eastleigh's dynamic urban environment.

5.4 Intersectional dimensions of Somali migrant food security

The interviews conducted in Eastleigh demonstrate that no single factor, such as gender, migration status, or household income, can fully explain the variation in food security among Somali migrants. Respondents consistently described how overlapping social positions shaped both their daily food-access strategies and the vulnerabilities that could force households to skip meals. Although the survey results indicated clear correlations between income, location and dietary diversity (Ahmed et al., 2024b), the interviews revealed a more complex reality in which gendered family roles, education, legal status and remittance obligations combined to produce distinct outcomes. Some participants also portrayed migration itself as paradoxical, as it provided safety from conflict while introducing new urban hardships. One respondent reflected on the following.

> *Back home, we had only small shops and were often cut off by the fighting. We struggled to buy enough food, and when droughts came, it felt impossible to feed the children well. In Nairobi, there are more shops and markets, and sometimes family members abroad send money, so we don't have to worry about going hungry. It is still challenging with rent and other expenses but moving here changed how we eat and gave us better options to manage our meals every d*ay *(Interview No. 2)*

Her observation captures the dual nature of South-South migration. Relocation improved market access, but introduced financial pressures such as rent and childcare that shaped daily trade-offs.

5.4.1 Gender, marital status, and household structure

A recurring theme in the interviews was the heavy load borne by female-headed households that combined childcare and income generation within an unstable informal economy (Choithani, 2020; Jinnah, 2020; Kersh, 2020;). Nine of the 30 interviewees fell into this category. Most were widowed or divorced, had limited formal education, and relied on low-margin trades such as street vending. Their earnings rarely covered food and emergency expenses. As one widow explained:

> *When my husband died, I was left alone with four kids. I sell vegetables on the roadside, but it's never enough. If one child gets sick, I can't work that day, so we eat less. Sometimes, I skip meals altogether so they can have enough (Interview No. 22).*

Her experience illustrates how widowhood, caregiving, and informal labour combine to deepen precarity. Without legal identification, she avoided travelling beyond Eastleigh for cheaper produce, further restricting her choices. This pattern reflects studies showing that female heads of households often face double responsibilities, earning income while ensuring children's nutrition despite irregular wages (Carney, 2017; Delisle, 2008; Grijalva-Eternod et al., 2012; Madzorera & Fawzi, 2020). Some women resorted to desperate measures:

> *My children needed to eat, and it broke my heart to see them hungry. I ended up selling my gold earrings just so we could buy groceries that week. I never imagined giving up something so precious, but there weren't any other options left (Interview No. 6).*

Such an extreme step underscores how female heads , particularly those bereft of spousal support, shoulder the entirety of household survival. The dual role of wage-earner and caregiver leaves them with little recourse when income drops, forcing them to liquidate personal assets to maintain the nutrition of their children. These pressures intensified during the pandemic shock:

> *I'm a single mother with three children, and we survive on the small income I make from selling vegetables in the market. When the market was closed during the pandemic, we had no way to earn money, and things became very difficult. The prices of food went up, and I couldn't afford to buy enough to feed my children. We often had to skip meals, and it was a very difficult time for us (Interview No. 17).*

Her testimony shows how pandemic restrictions removed her only source of income, exposing the fragility of informal livelihoods. Even basic tasks such as buying food were complicated by fatigue and limited infrastructure.

> *I start my day at five in the morning to open the shop, then come home in the afternoon to cook. I want to buy fresh vegetables at the bigger market, but it's too far, and I'm too tired. So we end up with more rice and meat. I wish I had a fridge and more time to shop around, but this is how we manage. It's hard when my children ask for a variety of foods, and I have to settle for what's convenient and affordable at the moment. Sometimes I use my neighbour's fridge…We help each other when we can, but sometimes everyone is struggling (Interview No. 18).*

This participant's story reveals how time poverty, fatigue, and limited facilities reduce dietary diversity even for working mothers. However, some women managed to build modest safety nets through community networks. A divorced mother explained how rotating savings groups and remittances offered some protection.

> *I moved here from Kismayo when I divorced my husband, determined to give my two daughters a better life. At first, it was extremely tough. I only had a little money saved, and my relatives back home couldn't help much. But I joined an ayuuto group in Eastleigh with other Somali women, some refugees and others longtime residents, and together we pool our earnings. When it's my turn to receive the lump sum, I stock up on staple foods like flour, rice, and oil, and pay down our rent. I also use part of it to invest in my small tailoring business. One of my brothers in South Africa sends me remittances sporadically, which helps with school fees for my girls. These days, I feel stronger because I've built a support system through the mosque, neighbours, and the women's group. I'm still worried about the high cost of living, but at least now I'm not alone. I can make plans, even save a bit for emergencies. It's not easy being a single mother, but I'm proud that I can keep my family secure despite the hardships (Interview No. 28)*

Her account shows that localised networks and intermittent remittances can help offset structural disadvantages. Across the interviews, female-headed households ranged from situations of extreme deprivation to modest stability, depending on documentation status, community ties, and access to external support

Two-adult households did not always experience better food security. Several married participants described power imbalances in resource allocation, particularly around transnational obligations. Patriarchal norms often gave men control over remittance decisions while women managed shrinking domestic budgets (Zakariah-Akoto et al., 2024; Muraya et al., 2017). As one mother of three explained:

> *My husband decides how much money we send to his family each month, but I'm the one who has to stretch what remains. Some months, we have enough for meat; other months, we reduce portions so we can remit more (Interview No. 1).*

Cultural and familial duties to relatives abroad often took precedence over household dietary needs, echoing findings from other transnational contexts (Hannaford, 2016; Wong, 2006). Another respondent emphasized how fragile these arrangements are:

> *Nairobi is better than war, but we survive day by day; there's no cushion if our brother abroad loses his job or if government policy changes. My husband works a small stall in Eastleigh, selling clothes on the street, but one police raid or market shutdown can take away our income overnight. We're grateful for safety here, yet we live with the constant worry that any shift in diaspora remittances or local regulations could unravel everything we've built (Interview No. 3)*

Her reflection demonstrates how legal frameworks, police crackdowns, and tenuous support from the diaspora can come together to threaten fragile stability of a household, even in a married setup that might seem more secure outward. Any policy change or remote financial hiccup can quickly erode the ability to buy groceries or maintain a balanced diet, highlighting how marital status, documentation, and transnational ties form a precarious safety net in the best case.

5.4.2 Education, documentation, and economic precarity

Education emerged as an important but insufficient buffer against food insecurity. Some respondents used their formal schooling qualifications and skills to open small businesses or secure steadier work, supporting research that education can help migrants move beyond survival-level informality (Kuépié et al., 2006; Girsberger, 2017). Yet the advantage was easily undermined by legal precarity. As one participant explained:

> *With my college diploma from back home, I opened a small tailoring shop in Eastleigh. Our earnings are reliable enough that I never miss my ayuuto (savings group) turn. I meet with my ayuuto group every month, and while it's tough to part with the money, when I receive the full payout, I can do so much. I bought extra food for my family, clothes for my three children, and even sent some money to my mother in Somalia. It's the only way we manage when everything else is so expensive. But it's fragile. One police raid looking for documents could shut me down (Interview No. 20).*

Her ability to afford vegetables, and occasionally meat, stems both from running a relatively stable microenterprise and her participation in a rotating savings group, both reflecting how formal credentials and social networking yield moderate financial gains. Another divorced mother who joined a savings group explained that she had "a little more security" through communal and familial ties but still balanced precariously on the edge of financial collapse each month (Interview No.28).

Undocumented migrants in Africa face numerous challenges, including legal, emotional, and practical difficulties (Opfermann, 2020). They often experience discrimination, fear, and loneliness (Opfermann, 2020; Bloch, 2008). The precarious situation of these migrants is exacerbated by restrictive immigration policies, which can push them into street vending and

increase their vulnerability (Lakika, 2023). Participants without any recognized legal status in this study described recurrent police harassment and abrupt losses of income and stock, leading to immediate food insecurity. The persistent threat of unannounced police checks and immigration raids reveals the fragile nature of this buffer. As such, migrants often lack any official avenue to contest business closures or property seizures, meaning that one legal sweep can derail months of gradual progress. In practical terms, raids would reduce her earnings in an instant, threatening both the variety and regularity of her household's diet.

> *I never finished primary school in Somalia. Here I am struggling to get refugee documentation. I only sell clothes on the street. If the police come, I run. Sometimes they take my goods. Without that day's sales, I can't buy food for my children (Interview No.5).*

Thus, lack of education and documented status, and informal vending converge to erode any safety net the respondent might otherwise have. A single confiscation event directly translates into fewer groceries for the evening meal and unfed children, illustrating how precarious labour conditions intersect with legal insecurity to reinforce cyclical food insecurity. The razor-thin margins of street vending leave little room for error, making each police encounter a potential tipping point into full-blown deprivation.

5.4.3 Transnational remittances: lifeline and liability

Regular remittances from relatives abroad in the Gulf states, South Africa, and North America, are a critical determinant of household food security (Ahmed & Crush, 2025). The interviews showed how such support can shield families from localized economic shocks, echoing prior work identifying diaspora remittances as a stabilizing force for migrants in Global South contexts (Moniruzzaman, 2022; Obi et al., 2019). For example:

My sister in Canada sends money every month. We pay rent first, then buy flour and rice. Without her help, I couldn't manage these rising prices (Interview No.7).

For a single mother with minimal local income, these inbound funds provide a partial firewall against food inflation. However, diaspora earnings and remitting fluctuate with overseas job markets, and recipients are perpetually uncertain and anxious about whether next month's remittance will suffice or even arrive (Bettin et al., 2014; Rougier & Yol, 2019). In effect, inbound transfers may mitigate food insecurity, but they also create dependency on external economic conditions beyond local control. However, local shocks such as job loss can completely erase the margin of survival:

My husband lost his market job in Eastleigh's Garissa Lodge, and my uncle abroad couldn't send money on time. Sometimes we couldn't afford fresh vegetables or enough cooking fuel. The neighbours helped, but they were struggling, too. We never imagined it could get so hard so quickly (Interview No.5).

Her narrative exemplifies layered precarities where a local economic shock (losing a market job) combined with a temporary halt in inbound remittances, placed the household at the mercy of neighbourly goodwill. But even good-willed neighbours face their own struggles, underscoring the communal nature of food crises.

While inbound flows secure a measure of stability for some households, outbound remittances linked to social or religious imperatives strain other households' budgets. Participants portrayed these payments not as optional extras but as deeply ingrained obligations toward kin back in Somalia:

We try to buy vegetables and meat when we can, but during months when we have to send a bigger remittance, like last month, when a drought struck our village and we

> *needed to support my parents back home , we cut back by reducing meat, skipping breakfast, or stretching meals to last longer. Staple foods like rice and beans become our main diet, fresh produce and fish are too expensive to buy regularly, and sometimes we share smaller portions so the children can eat first. Balancing our budget is a constant challenge, and while we do our best to support our relatives, it's stressful knowing that even at home we're making sacrifices to get by (Interview No. 8).*

Outbound remittances, understood as moral and familial duty, frequently mean reduced local consumption (Owusu-Sekyere, 2014).

Many of the participants attributed their ongoing hardships to the pandemic's long-term impact on overseas employment and local prices (Ahmed et al., 2024b). The pandemic exacerbated economic strain for Somali migrants in Nairobi who rely heavily on inbound remittances to manage everyday expenses, including rent and food:

> *I receive monthly financial support through remittances from my brother in the US to support my livelihood here in Nairobi. This money is crucial for paying rent, school fees, health expenses, and, most importantly, purchasing food for my family. When COVID-19 hit, my brother initially stopped sending me money because he lost his job due to the pandemic. This had a devastating impact on my ability to cover basic needs for my family. We struggled to make ends meet, and I had to borrow food on credit (Interview No. 12).*

Her account showed how the global economic shock of the pandemic intersected with familial norms of obligation, forcing her to ration meals and borrow food.

Migrants, particularly women, often face difficult decisions in balancing economic needs with moral imperatives to provide for family abroad (Aranda, 2003; Merla, 2014). Their choices are influenced by cultural norms, gender roles, and institutional contexts in both origin and destination countries (Contreras & Griffith, 2012; Hughes et al., 2020). Remittances play a crucial role in maintaining transnational family ties but can also create tensions and difficult negotiations between senders and receivers (Sinatti, 2014; Wong, 2006).

Migration from Somalia to Kenya can also challenge traditional gender roles and family structures, leading to new caregiving arrangements and emotional struggles (see Coe, 2013; Drotbohm, 2015). But gendered decision-making power also shape remittance practices. In several interviews, women described that they bear primary responsibility for budgeting and meal preparation, while men have authority over financial transactions, including outward remittances. For example:

> *My husband decides how much money we send to his family each month, but I'm the one who has to stretch what's left to cover our own needs. Sometimes, I worry we won't have enough for a balanced diet here in Nairobi, but I know it's our duty to support his relatives back home. My brother in South Africa also tries to send money whenever he can, and that extra help is crucial for groceries and bills. But when the remittance arrives late, we are forced to cut back. We skip meals, reduce portions, or go into debt just to keep food on the table. The financial pressure is constant, and even though remittances provide a lifeline, they are unpredictable, making it difficult to plan for stability (Interview No. 11).*

One mother weighed the possibility of returning to Somalia to escape Nairobi's high cost of living but ultimately remained, fearing she would sacrifice the relative availability of food in the city:

> *I still have family back home, but they struggle with both the fighting and the lack of rain. If I went back, I worry we'd lose the stable food supply my children have here. In Nairobi, at least we have choices in the market, and sometimes my relatives abroad send extra money when things are tight. Going home might be cheaper for housing, but the food situation is much harder. It's a big risk to give up what we have built here." (Interview No.24)*

Her dilemma shows that migration decisions can simultaneously improve daily nutrition options while introducing new vulnerabilities such as rent expense, reliance on unpredictable remittances, and the constant possibility of confrontation with police. Thus, even the notion of returning to Somalia is weighed against the threat of losing basic urban market access and occasional diaspora support.

Overall, these narratives highlight the complexity of the interplay between global economic pressures, local resource needs, and familial obligations in shaping the experiences of transnational families and their care practices. Food security in Eastleigh is produced through a dynamic interaction of local and transnational conditions shaped by gender, marital status, documentation, education, and cultural duty. Female-headed households often faced the greatest deprivation, though collective savings groups and intermittent remittances provided some relief. Married couples contended with gendered hierarchies and obligations to extended kin that reduced dietary diversity. Education created opportunities but was undermined by police harassment and regulatory uncertainty. Remittances, whether incoming or outgoing,

simultaneously stabilized and destabilized households by linking their food access to global markets and moral obligations.

5.5 Moving beyond single-axis explanations

The interview findings illustrate that Somali migrant families in Eastleigh must navigate multiple, overlapping challenges and constraints. An intersectional perspective brings coherence to these diverse strands of vulnerability and resilience. Within the context of South-South migration and urban food security, intersectionality reveals how social, economic, cultural, and legal identities interact to shape each household's capacity to secure food sustainably and deepens understanding of the lived realities underlying quantitative patterns. Neither gender, migration status, nor education alone determines which households become food insecure. For instance, one female-headed household may face severe deprivation, while another may maintain dietary variety through support from diaspora networks. Similarly, education can improve earning potential, yet undocumented status can nullify this advantage when police raids or business closures occur. Intersectionality therefore compels a view of food security as a dynamic condition shaped by converging social positions, extending beyond the narrower frameworks typical of migration or food-system research (Choithani, 2020; Crush, 2013;).

From a theoretical standpoint, intersectionality exposes hierarchies embedded in patriarchal, legal, and socioeconomic systems that structure vulnerability in Eastleigh. The narratives of widowed and undocumented mothers show how disadvantages multiply when transnational obligations such as outbound remittances are added to local constraints. These patterns caution against demographic reductionism, where labels such as "female," "refugee," or "low-income" obscure the ways structural and cultural forces interact to create distinct forms of

marginalization. As scholars have observed, such simplification risks rendering certain migrant groups invisible within both policy and academic discourse (Cleton & Scuzzarello, 2024; Davis, 2014; Polzer, 2008;). Intersectionality thus redirects attention from categorical analysis to the lived intersections of inequality.

Intersectionality also clarifies how informal work and legal status combine to produce uneven vulnerability. Urban informality in Africa is often portrayed as a uniform survival strategy, yet in practice it is differentiated by documentation, education, and access to networks (Banks et al., 2020). In Eastleigh, the possession or absence of valid identification often determines who is treated as a legitimate trader and who becomes subject to policing, reflecting wider anxieties about belonging in precarious urban spaces (Rasmussen & Wafer, 2018). Street vendors without formal education or refugee documentation endure frequent raids and confiscations that directly translate into hunger (Interview No.5). In contrast, petty traders or tailors with partial documentation or modest schooling navigate the same landscape with marginally greater security, often relying on clan or religious ties to sustain their livelihoods (Carrier, 2017).

These findings reveal a form of constrained agency in which migrants mobilize limited resources, rotating savings groups, and diaspora ties to offset structural barriers to food security (Kim, 2020; Scharrer, 2020). Intersectionality explains why resilience is so uneven: some families diversify their diets or stabilize consumption, while others, though sharing similar social categories, face recurrent deprivation. Agency here denotes persistence within constraint rather than freedom from it. This insight challenges binaries of dependency and empowerment by showing that migrant strategies are always mediated through intersecting systems of power.

Remittances are frequently portrayed in the literature as drivers of welfare and development, raising incomes and improving living standards (Andersson, 2014; Dharmadasa & Karunarathna, 2022; Feld, 2021; Koç & Onan, 2004; Quartey, 2006), even though they are "no panacea for solving more structural development problems" (de Haas, 2007, p.27). The Somali households in Eastleigh reveal a more complex reality. Inbound transfers often enhance food access, allowing families to purchase vegetables and protein, yet outbound remittances tied to social and religious obligations can simultaneously erode household budgets (Ahmed & Crush, 2025).

Intersectionality helps explain these dual effects. Transnational obligations intersect with gender norms and marital hierarchies, as seen in families where men decide remittance amounts while women adjust consumption accordingly (Interview No.11). Single mothers depending on smaller or irregular transfers experience an acute moral and financial dilemma, torn between aiding relatives in Somalia and feeding their own children. This complexity challenges linear assumptions that remittances automatically improve food security (Mazwi, 2022) and reveals instead a moral economy governed by identity and obligation.

Global crises such as COVID-19 further expose this fragility. The pandemic disrupted overseas employment, reduced remittance flows, and triggered cascading effects on household consumption, leading to skipped meals and asset sales (Interview Nos.6,.14). Intersectionality traces these linkages from global labour markets to local households, showing how macroeconomic shocks become embodied through intersecting vulnerabilities of gender, education, and legality. This approach aligns with multi-level migration studies that situate household decisions within broader transnational systems while sharpening the focus on how these systems are mediated by social position (Anthias, 2012; Maestripieri, 2021; Saatcioglu & Corus, 2015).

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that intersectionality provides a critical framework for interpreting the intertwined social, economic, and legal factors shaping Somali migrant food security in Nairobi. It reveals how patriarchal norms, informal economies, documentation regimes, and transnational obligations converge to determine who eats, how often, and at what cost. By analyzing these intersections rather than treating variables in isolation, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of the South-South migration and urban food security nexus. This paper therefore positions intersectionality as an analytical lens for explaining differentiated vulnerability.

5.6. Conclusion

This paper argues that intersectionality provides a rigorous framework for understanding how Somali migrants in Eastleigh navigate urban food security within interconnected gendered, legal, and socioeconomic constraints. Building on two earlier manuscripts that established baseline disparities (Ahmed et al, 2024a) and examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ahmed et al, 2024b), this paper explores how multiple social positions combine to shape distinct experiences of deprivation and resilience. The findings confirm that food security cannot be explained by income or demographic factors alone. Instead, it results from the interaction of female-headed status, limited education, undocumented residence, and transnational remittance obligations. These conditions intensify vulnerability, while partial documentation, higher education, savings groups, and sustained diaspora support offer limited protection. The evidence shows that broad categories such as “urban refugees” or “migrant communities” fail to reflect the diversity of household realities and the structural inequalities that sustain them.

In response to the first research question, which asked how overlapping social identities shape food insecurity, the paper examines how gender, documentation, and household composition

interact to determine access to food and coping capacity. Some households maintain stability through social networks and remittances, while others with similar demographic profiles experience persistent scarcity. The second question focuses on how structural factors, including informality, policing, and external shocks, interact with these identities. These unpredictable forces reinforce each other, with even minor disruptions such as delayed remittances or police raids destabilizing households already managing low income or caregiving pressures. The third question considered what responses or strategies emerge from these intersectional conditions. The interviews show that migrants rely on collective savings groups, diaspora support, and informal credit to navigate systemic exclusion. These strategies demonstrate agency under constraint but cannot replace inclusive urban policies or formal legal protections. Together, these findings advance the broader objective of linking South-South migration to urban food systems and highlighting how migrants' daily practices are conditioned by intersecting structures of power.

Future research should extend this analysis through longitudinal and comparative approaches to trace how documentation reforms, remittance dynamics, and urban governance influence migrant food security over time. Comparative studies between Eastleigh and other African cities could reveal whether similar intersectional configurations occur across different contexts of South-South migration. Collaboration among local authorities, NGOs, and diaspora organizations will be essential for designing inclusive interventions informed by empirical evidence. By situating Somali migrants within broader processes of urban transformation, this paper demonstrates that intersectional identities are lived realities shaping who achieves dietary stability and who experiences chronic hunger. Addressing these layered inequalities is fundamental to creating an equitable and sustainable food system in the Global South and to advancing the overarching MiFOOD aim of connecting mobility, governance, and everyday survival.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation has examined the complex interconnections between South-South migration, urban governance, and food security through the case of Somali migrants and refugees in Nairobi's Eastleigh. Situated within the wider transformations of Sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) urbanization, it demonstrates that migrant food insecurity is not a transient humanitarian concern but a structural expression of how mobility, inequality, and informality are governed in the Global South. Across SSA, cities have become the primary arenas where migration, climate stress, and economic restructuring converge (Sakketa 2023; Frayne & McCordic 2015). Nairobi exemplifies these dynamics as rapid demographic growth intersects with deep spatial inequality, producing hybrid urban spaces that are at once sites of opportunity and exclusion. Somali migrants in Eastleigh embody these contradictions, acting as agents of regional trade and transnational exchange (Carrier, 2017; Carrier and Scharrer, 2019) while confronting persistent marginalization and regulatory uncertainty (Varming, 2020). Their experiences provide a revealing microcosm of broader debates on African urbanism, governance, and postcolonial development.

The study reconnects migration research and food systems scholarship, fields that have often evolved in parallel. While migration work has emphasized labour, remittances, and development, and food security studies have focused on production and access, few analyses link mobility to the everyday food practices of migrants in cities where formal oversight is limited and informal economies dominate (Crush, 2013; Choithani, 2017). Building on the MiFOOD research agenda (Crush et al., 2020; Ramachandran & Crush, 2023) and debates on urban food governance and Southern urbanism (Battersby & Watson, 2019; Watson, 2009; Roy, 2005), the dissertation reframes migrant food insecurity as a relational outcome of

governance, economy, and social hierarchy. In doing so, it positions food insecurity as an analytical bridge between migration studies and urban governance, showing how mobility and hunger illuminate the workings of inequality in twenty-first-century African cities.

In this final chapter, I synthesize the central findings of the dissertation and link them to the original research objectives. The discussion highlights the study's theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions, followed by its policy relevance for migration and urban food-security governance. It also acknowledges the study's limitations and outlines directions for future research aimed at deepening understanding of the South-South migration and food-security nexus in Sub-Saharan African cities

6.2 Scholarly Contributions

This study investigated how South-South migration, urban governance, and food security intersect in Nairobi's Eastleigh, focusing on Somali migrants whose livelihoods are defined by informality, displacement, and transnational exchange. It pursued three interrelated objectives. The first was to examine the structural and socio-economic determinants of household food insecurity. The second was to analyze how a major governance shock, the COVID-19 pandemic, affected informal food systems and remittance networks. The third was to apply an intersectional framework to explain how gender, documentation, and household structure shape vulnerability and coping strategies.

Although each objective was addressed through a separate empirical manuscript, they are united by a common goal: to situate food security within the broader systems of migration and governance structure. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that urban migrant food insecurity cannot be reduced to income poverty alone. Rather, it is produced through interlocking

economic, political, and social hierarchies that determine who participates, who is excluded, and how migrants adapt within Nairobi's informal food economy.

6.2.1 South-South Migration and the Urban Food Security Nexus

The first manuscript (Chapter 3) established a quantitative baseline for understanding Somali migrants' food security conditions in Nairobi. Using a representative household survey of 268 Eastleigh households, it found that only 43 percent were fully food secure, while nearly two in five experienced severe food insecurity. Statistical analysis demonstrated that income, education, employment, and the gender of the household head were the most powerful predictors of food-security outcomes. Spatial analysis within Eastleigh revealed pronounced micro-geographies of vulnerability, where households in areas with weaker infrastructure and heavier policing were most food insecure.

These findings extend the literature on migration and food security by highlighting the urban dimension of South-South migration, an aspect often overshadowed by studies focused on rural remittances or agrarian livelihoods (Crush 2013; Choithani 2017). Earlier research in Southern Africa (Frayne & McCordic 2015; Crush et al. 2012) documented widespread urban food insecurity among low-income residents. This dissertation demonstrates that migrant status adds an additional layer of structural precarity through legal exclusion and restricted access to credit or formal employment. It therefore complements comparative work on Zimbabwean migrants in South African cities (Crush & Tawodzera 2017) and extends these insights to the East African context.

Conceptually, the analysis reframes South-South migration not as a linear path toward integration but as a cyclical negotiation between partial inclusion and persistent exclusion. Migration to Nairobi improves food access relative to conditions in Somalia yet embeds

migrants in precarious markets governed by discretionary regulation. The chapter thus challenges the developmentalist view of migration as progress, instead portraying it as a continuous balancing of opportunity and constraint within a highly unequal urban system.

6.2.2 Governance Shocks and Informal Food Systems

The second manuscript (Chapter 4) examined how the COVID-19 pandemic reconfigured urban livelihoods and food systems. Drawing on household survey data and thirty in-depth interviews, it revealed that curfews, lockdowns, and market closures disproportionately affected migrants dependent on informal economies. More than 80 percent of households reported income loss, while two-thirds experienced rising food prices and reduced access to affordable markets.

The analysis contributes to the growing literature on pandemic-related urban vulnerability (Luiu et al. 2022; Kunyanga et al. 2023; Lusambili et al. 2021). Unlike many studies that treat informal workers as a homogeneous group, this chapter exposes the layered vulnerabilities faced by migrant households navigating legal precarity. Governance tools designed for public-health containment such as police patrols, licensing restrictions, and market shutdowns functioned simultaneously as mechanisms of exclusion. In this way, the chapter bridges research on crisis governance (Roy 2005; Watson 2014; Resnick 2017) and migration precarity, showing that emergency interventions often reproduce the same hierarchies they aim to alleviate.

Empirically, the chapter documents how informal food markets function as both livelihood sources and community safety nets. When these spaces were closed during the pandemic, households lost not only income but also access to culturally appropriate foods. This finding reinforces the argument that informality, far from being peripheral, is central to the resilience

of African urban systems. Theoretically, it underscores that the governance of informality is not an administrative challenge but a political process that determines who eats, who sells, and who remains invisible in urban policy frameworks.

6.2.3 Intersectionality, Identity, and Household Adaptation

The third manuscript (Chapter 5) applied an intersectional lens to explain why households occupying similar socio-economic positions of low income, migrant status, or residence in Eastleigh experience food insecurity differently. Through thirty life-history interviews, it identified gender, documentation, education, and transnational obligations as interlocking determinants of adaptation. Female-headed households, particularly those newly arrived or undocumented, faced the most acute deprivation, often skipping meals or selling personal assets. Yet some women leveraged community networks and ayuuto savings groups to build limited buffers against shocks, exemplifying agency within constraint.

This intersectional analysis makes two key contributions. First, it links intersectionality to food systems research, an emerging but still underdeveloped area in Global-South scholarship (Barak & Melgar-Quiñonez 2022; Riley & Dodson 2020). Second, it illuminates how social identities intersect with transnational obligations: outbound remittances, rooted in moral duty and kinship norms, often reduced local consumption and deepened household strain. The chapter thus moves beyond descriptive vulnerability toward conceptual innovation, positioning intersectionality as a methodological bridge between structural analyses of governance and household level studies of coping. It demonstrates that food insecurity is not an individual shortcoming, but a socially produced condition embedded in gendered power, legality, and transnational moral economies (Crenshaw 1991; Anthias 2012).

6.2.4 Cross-scale synthesis and contribution

Taken together, the three manuscripts offer a multi-scalar and mixed methods account of urban migrant food insecurity in the Global South. They show how macro-level migration systems, meso-level governance practices, and micro-level identities operate as interlinked mechanisms shaping access to and control over food. The first contribution is theoretical: by synthesizing Migration Systems Theory, Urban Informality, and Intersectionality, the dissertation constructs a single analytical frame that connects structure, institution, and agency. The second is empirical: it provides rare mixed methods evidence from an African city where refugees and citizens co-produce hybrid food economies, capturing spatial and social heterogeneity that city-wide datasets obscure. The third is conceptual: it positions food security as both a driver and a consequence of migration, challenging silos that separate economic participation from social well-being. These insights align with recent "new directions" in South-South migration research that foreground Southern urbanism, informal economies, and migrant agency (Chikanda et al., 2025), and set up the theoretical implications of the dissertation discussed in the next section.

6.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

This dissertation advances theoretical understanding at the intersection of migration, governance, and food security by integrating macro-level migration systems, meso-level governance processes, and micro-level household adaptation. This multi-scalar approach crosses disciplinary boundaries, revealing how structural forces and social identities combine to shape food insecurity in urban contexts of the Global South.

First, Migration Systems Theory (Mabogunje 1970; Faist 2000; de Haas 2010, 2021; Castles et al. 2014) explains the feedback loops linking remittances, networks, and trade that sustain regional mobility but have rarely been applied to informal urban settings. By embedding it within the politics of urban informality (Roy 2005; Watson 2014; Resnick 2017), this study shows that African cities do not merely host migrants, they govern them through selective inclusion and spatial control. Informality thus emerges not as failure but as a mode of governance that structures access, legality, and belonging.

Second, the intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 1991; Anthias 2012; Scoones 1998; Béné et al. 2012) connects structural forces with lived realities. In Eastleigh, mechanisms such as ayuuto savings groups and informal credit illustrate what Béné et al. (2012) call "resilience under constraint," sustaining daily life without dismantling underlying inequalities. The integration of these frameworks demonstrates that food insecurity is not an individual deficit experienced equally by all residents but an outcome of intersecting structural, institutional, and social processes that define vulnerability in conditions of urban transformation. By positioning intersectionality as both method and theory, the dissertation exposes how gender, legal status, and class intersect to create distinct food-security outcomes. Female-headed households without legal documentation face structural barriers distinct from those confronting male-headed or documented households, while moral remittance obligations link local scarcity to transnational responsibility. Intersectionality therefore serves as an analytical bridge connecting structural analysis to lived experience, demonstrating that vulnerability is relational and historically contingent.

Third, by grounding these insights in Nairobi's political economy, the dissertation contributes to Southern urban theory which has tended to ignore questions of food security. Global food-security discourse remains dominated by productionist and formal-sector models (FAO 2019). Yet, as Battersby and Watson (2019) and Crush and Ramachandran (2024) argue, urban food access in the South is mediated through informal trade and social networks. Eastleigh exemplifies this hybridity. Somali migrants, operating in blurred spaces of legality, generate new circuits of commerce and solidarity that sustain the city's food system. This reframes informality as both a site of vulnerability and innovation.

Finally, in synthesizing these perspectives, the study offers a conceptual grammar for the migration-food nexus. Migration influences food security through income, remittances, and networks, while food insecurity itself drives mobility and dependence on transnational circuits (Choithani 2017; Crush 2013; Moniruzzaman & Walton-Roberts 2022). Viewing these as mutually reinforcing processes embeds food security within broader questions of justice, governance, and citizenship, transforming it from a technical to a political problem rooted in inequality and urban belonging.

6.4 Methodological Reflections

This dissertation contributes methodologically to the study of South-South migration and food security by showing that complex social realities cannot be captured through a single method or disciplinary lens. Understanding how mobility, governance, and food insecurity intersect requires a mixed methods design that connects quantifiable indicators of deprivation with the meanings migrants attach to their experiences of food, work, and survival.

First, the mixed methods design was selected for its capacity to link empirical precision with interpretive depth. Quantitative surveys using the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), the Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP), and the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) (Coates et al. 2007; Swindale & Bilinsky 2006) provide verified cross-cultural measures of prevalence and severity. Yet these indices, rooted in positivist traditions, do not capture the cultural, moral, and relational dimensions of food insecurity among migrants. To complement these findings, qualitative life history interviews and ethnographic observations examined how households experience and narrate hunger, adaptation, and obligation. These accounts revealed how remittance duties, religious observance, and gendered divisions of labour shape household strategies. The iterative integration of the results of the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research was a recursive process of reflection and analysis (Maxwell 2012). Survey data guided interview selection, and interview insights informed interpretation of the quantitative patterns, producing a coherent and adaptive research design.

Second, quantitative data captured the empirical surface of food insecurity through indicators such as skipped meals or restricted diets, while qualitative evidence revealed the structural drivers that sustain it, including restrictive refugee policies, gendered labour markets, and remittance expectations. Neither statistics nor narratives alone can explain social reality. Instead, both provide distinct but complementary ways of understanding how food insecurity is produced and sustained.

Third, reflexivity and positionality were central to the study's design. As a Somali Kenyan researcher with personal ties to Eastleigh, I entered the field as both an insider and an outsider. My linguistic fluency and cultural familiarity facilitated trust and openness, yet proximity also risked bias or over-identification. To address this, I maintained a reflexive field journal and

held regular debriefings with local research assistants who offered critical feedback. These practices align with feminist and decolonial epistemologies that view knowledge as co-produced rather than extracted (Rose 1997; Sultana 2007; Nagar & Ali 2003). Local assistants, many of whom were Eastleigh residents, played active roles in refining survey instruments, clarifying ambiguous responses, and interpreting community dynamics. Their collaboration demonstrated that shared authorship of knowledge enhances both methodological rigour and ethical accountability.

Fourth, integrating validated quantitative indices with narrative evidence showed that statistical and interpretive methods can be combined to reflect both measurable and experiential dimensions of deprivation. Including remittance flow diaries in the survey design provided a novel means of tracking inbound and outbound transfers simultaneously, addressing a gap identified by Crush (2013) and Moniruzzaman and Walton-Roberts (2022). Stratifying the Eastleigh sample into three sections enabled a fine-grained spatial analysis that revealed how policing, infrastructure, and tenure interact with social vulnerability. The analytical process, combining Python-based statistical modeling with NVivo-assisted thematic coding, demonstrated the value of a braided analysis that integrates quantitative precision with qualitative interpretation.

6.5 Policy Implications and Practical Significance

The findings have significant implications for policy and practice in urban governance, migration management, and inclusive development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Food insecurity among urban migrants arises less from production deficits than from exclusionary governance, legal precarity, and unequal market access. Addressing these structural conditions requires rethinking food security as a matter of justice and governance rather than agricultural production and supply.

First, urban food policy must move beyond its rural production bias. Most urban residents, including migrants, purchase rather than produce their food, making affordability and access the critical dimensions of security (FAO 2019; Reardon et al. 2015). Policies that criminalize informality through evictions or "modernization" campaigns dismantle the very systems that feed low-income populations (Resnick 2017; Battersby & Watson 2019). Instead, municipal authorities should recognize informal vendors, traders, and small-scale food operators as legitimate economic actors. Participatory vendor councils, transparent licensing, and fair enforcement can strengthen both accountability and resilience. Embedding informal markets within urban food planning would secure livelihoods and stabilize access to affordable, culturally appropriate food.

Second, migration governance in Kenya needs to align with the realities of urban integration. The 2021 Refugee Act provides a framework for inclusion but remains constrained by securitization and uneven implementation (Agwanda 2022; Otieno et al. 2022). Somali refugees and migrants already drive Eastleigh's and Nairobi's economy as traders and entrepreneurs, yet their legal status restricts full participation. Granting work permits, enabling business registration, and expanding access to credit and banking would convert informal contributions into recognized productivity, enhancing refugee self-reliance and city revenues. Such reforms echo global calls for inclusive urban citizenship, which recognize migrants as co-producers of urban life rather than temporary guests.

Third, informality should be governed as a developmental resource rather than treated as a policy failure. Informal markets, remittance systems, and microenterprises sustain livelihoods and ensure food circulation but remain stigmatized or ignored. Tiered licensing, simplified taxation, and microfinance programs tailored to small traders could formalize benefits without undermining flexibility. Development partners such as FAO, UN-Habitat, and WFP can

reinforce these approaches by embedding informal sector governance within regional food system resilience agendas. This reframing of informality, from problem to productive ecosystem, would align local economic realities with inclusive policy design.

Fourth, gender and intersectionality must become central to urban and migration policy. Female-headed and undocumented households face layered vulnerabilities shaped by gender, legal status, and care responsibilities. Addressing these inequalities requires multi-dimensional interventions: targeted cash transfers, microcredit, affordable childcare, and vocational support for women in informal trade. Community-based organizations already operate trusted savings and food sharing networks; partnerships with these groups would extend program reach and legitimacy. Embedding intersectional analysis into policy design would better ensure responses reflect diverse household realities and advance equity goals consistent with the African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2, 5, and 11).

Finally, transnational linkages, particularly remittances, require coherent regulation and facilitation. Remittances underpin many migrant households but are often costly and insecure. Streamlining digital transfer systems and reducing transaction fees would improve their efficiency and developmental impact. Partnerships among central banks, mobile operators, and diaspora associations can enhance financial inclusion while supporting household resilience. At the regional level, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union should integrate migration–food-security metrics into their frameworks, institutionalizing the connection between mobility, markets, and livelihoods within South–South migration systems.

Taken together, these policy directions call for bridging humanitarian assistance and urban governance. Migrant food insecurity is systemic, not episodic, and cannot be resolved through temporary relief programs. Sustainable progress depends on aligning migration, inclusion, and food policy within a rights-based framework that recognizes migrants as integral to urban economies. By embracing informality, ensuring gender equity, and coordinating transnational linkages, African cities can transform vulnerability into resilience and advance a more just and inclusive urban future.

6.6 Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study's primary strength lies in its contextual depth, yet this same specificity limits the generalizability of its findings. Eastleigh's distinctive combination of transnational trade, religious cohesion, and securitized governance makes it a unique empirical setting. Comparative research across other African migration hubs such as Bellville in South Africa, Dzaleka in Malawi, or Addis Ababa could determine whether the dynamics observed here reflect broader regional patterns or remain context-specific.

First, the two-stage cluster survey ensured representative coverage within Eastleigh but likely undercounted transient and undocumented migrants. Fear of exposure may also have shaped self-reporting on sensitive issues such as income, policing, and legal status. Moreover, as with most self-reported and recall-based surveys, respondents may have understated deprivation or misremembered details of food consumption and expenditure. In Eastleigh, where discussing hunger or poverty carries social stigma, some participants may have portrayed their situations more positively, influencing the accuracy of reported food security conditions. Future research could combine respondent-driven sampling with longitudinal panels to capture evolving patterns of household food security over time and across shocks. Quantitative self-reporting may also understate deprivation due to recall bias or social stigma (Coates et al., 2007).

Qualitative interviews, while rich in detail, reflect the voices of participants confident enough to speak, potentially excluding those experiencing deeper crises for which there are no words. These limitations highlight the importance of pursuing longitudinal, participatory, and multi-sited approaches that can capture the evolving and intersectional nature of urban migrant food insecurity. Methodological rigour in this context depends not only on technical accuracy but also on reflexivity, transparency, and sustained ethical engagement with the communities whose experiences ground the research.

Second, standardized indices such as the HFIAS, HFIAP, and HDDS provide useful measures of food access but have limited cultural sensitivity to food utilization. Somali dietary norms, halal observance, fasting practices, and moral economies of sharing complicate the direct application of global measures of utilization. Developing culturally grounded and intersectionally sensitive food utilization indicators that incorporate these local realities would improve validity and make findings more actionable for policy.

Third, conceptualizing informality as a single category risks obscuring its internal hierarchies and varied governance logics. Future studies could disaggregate informal labour, finance, and regulation to examine how each interacts with migrant food security. Emerging digital forms of informality such as mobile-money transfers, online food trade, and platform-based livelihoods also warrant closer study for their growing influence on urban migrant economies.

Fourth, operationalizing intersectionality continues to pose methodological challenges. While this study demonstrated how gender, documentation, and household structure intersect to shape vulnerability, quantifying such relational processes remains difficult. Future research could integrate demographic variables with indicators of discrimination, belonging, and social capital to capture inequality as an interactive rather than additive phenomenon. Participatory and co-

created methodologies, which enable migrants to define their own experiences of vulnerability, would further strengthen intersectional analysis.

Fifth, longitudinal and transnational designs would deepen understanding of how migrant food security is embedded in wider global networks. Linking Nairobi to sending and receiving sites such as Mogadishu, Cape Town, Dubai, London, or Minneapolis would clarify how remittance flows, moral obligations, and transnational dependencies shape food access across borders (Crush & Caesar, 2017; Moniruzzaman & Walton-Roberts, 2022). Such designs would help conceptualize food security as a genuinely translocal process that links urban consumption, transnational obligations, and global labour markets.

Finally, bridging disciplinary divides between migration studies, food-systems research, and urban governance remains essential. The persistence of these silos constrains theoretical and policy innovation. Collaborative, multi-sited research networks could institutionalize the integrated framework advanced in this dissertation, ensuring that future scholarship captures the full complexity of South-South migration, urban inequality, and food insecurity. By advancing participatory, comparative, and intersectional approaches, future studies can extend the contribution of this work and continue to build a more grounded, Southern-centered understanding of migration and food systems.

6.7 Concluding Reflections

This dissertation aimed to trace how South-South migration, governance, and food security intersect in the everyday realities of Somali migrants in Nairobi's Eastleigh. It showed that migrant food insecurity is not a temporary disruption but a structural feature of urban governance in the Global South. Migration offers safety and livelihood opportunities while

simultaneously embedding migrants within precarious systems of informality, exclusion, and selective regulation.

The integration of migration systems, urban informality, and intersectionality across the three manuscripts provides a framework that connects regional mobility, city governance, and household adaptation. Empirically, the study contributes rare mixed-method evidence from an African urban setting. Conceptually, it redefines food insecurity as a political and relational condition produced at the intersection of law, economy, and social hierarchy.

Informality emerges as both constraint and resource, a governance mechanism that enforces inequality while enabling survival through trade, remittances, and mutual aid. Intersectionality deepens this understanding by showing how vulnerability is differentiated by gender, legal status, and household form. Resilience, therefore, is not evenly distributed but socially produced, revealing how migrants navigate urban marginality with creativity and persistence.

A further contribution lies in the study's grounding in African realities and employing participatory, reflexive methods. As such, the research contributes to the gradual decolonization of migration and food systems scholarship by demonstrating that rigorous, contextually grounded inquiry can emerge from within the very communities it studies, challenging Northern dominance in knowledge production.

Looking ahead, comparative, spatial, and longitudinal studies should explore how changing governance regimes, digital remittance infrastructures, and climate pressures reshape the migration-food nexus across African and other Southern cities. Such research would help build a cross-regional understanding of how mobility and inequality are mediated through everyday systems of food, work, and care.

Ultimately, this dissertation reaffirms that food security cannot be separated from the politics of mobility, belonging, and justice. The experiences of Somali migrants in Eastleigh remind us that food is more than sustenance, it is a claim to dignity, citizenship, and participation in urban life. Building equitable and resilient cities in the Global South requires recognizing migrants not as outsiders but as indispensable participants in the social and economic fabric of urban Africa.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Review

July 06, 2022
Dear Jonathan Crush
REB # 7249
Project, "Household Food Security and Somali Migrants in Nairobi"
REB Clearance Issued: July 06, 2022
REB Expiry / End Date: June 30, 2023
The Research Ethics Board of Wilfrid Laurier University has reviewed the above proposal and determined that the proposal is ethically sound. If the research plan and methods should change in a way that may bring into question the project's adherence to acceptable ethical norms, please submit a "Request for Ethics Clearance of a Revision or Modification" form for approval before the changes are put into place. This form can also be used to extend protocols past their expiry date, except in cases where the project is more than four years old. Those projects require a new REB application.

Please note that you are responsible for obtaining any further approvals that might be required to complete your project.

Laurier REB approval will automatically expire when one's employment ends at Laurier.
If any participants in your research project have a negative experience (either physical, psychological or emotional) you are required to submit an "Adverse Events Form" within 24 hours of the event.

You must complete the online "Annual/Final Progress Report on Human Research Projects" form annually and upon completion of the project. ROMEO will automatically keep track of these annual reports for you. When you have a report due within 30 days (and/or an overdue report) it will be listed under the 'My Reminders' quick link on your ROMEO home screen; the number in brackets next to 'My Reminders' will tell you how many reports need to be submitted. Protocols with overdue annual reports will be marked as expired. Further, the REB has been requested to notify Research Finance when an REB protocol that is tied to a funding account has been marked as expired. In such cases Research Finance will immediately freeze funding tied to this account.
All the best for the successful completion of your project.
(Useful links: ROMEO Login Screen ; REB Students Webpage; REB Connect Webpage)

Yours sincerely,

Jayne Kalmar, PhD
Chair, University Research Ethics Board
Wilfrid Laurier University

Appendix B: Survey Consent From

My name is (**Insert name).** I am working as a Research Assistant for a research project being conducted by the University of Nairobi, Department of Geography, Population and Environmental Studies. We are talking to people in Eastleigh Area of Nairobi about their food sources, food consumption patterns and access to food. We shall also seek related information on social and economic aspects of the household and household members. Your household has been randomly selected for this interview, and we would like to discuss these issues with yourself, or an adult member of your household. Your opinions will help us to get a better understanding about household food security issues in this area. There are no right or wrong answers. The survey/interview will take about 45 minutes. Your answers will be kept absolutely confidential and so feel free to tell us what you think. You have the right to terminate this survey/interview at any time, and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions you might not want to respond to.

Data downloaded will be stored on a private password protected computer and will be retained for a 5-year period following the completion of our research. Research findings will be published in the forms of journal articles, conference proceedings, research reports, and policy briefs.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board (REB#4462). If you have questions or concerns about the ethical conduct of this research please contact "Jayne Kalmar, PhD, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-1970, extension 3131 or REBChair@wlu.ca"

For all other questions, or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to contact Professor Jonathan Crush at email address jcrush@balsillieschool.ca in English or Dr. Sam Owuor at samowuor@uonbi.ac.ke in swahili.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Sign-off

Appendix C: In-Depth Interview Guide

MiFOOD URBAN FOOD SECURITY PROJECT
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is (Insert name). I am working as a Research Assistant for a research project being conducted by the University of Nairobi, Department of Geography, Population and Environmental Studies. We are talking to people in Eastleigh Area of Nairobi about their food sources, food consumption patterns and access to food. We shall also seek related information on social and economic aspects of the household and household members. You have been randomly selected for this interview and we would like to discuss these issues with you. Your opinions will help us to get a better understanding about household food security issues in this area. There are no right or wrong answers. The interview will take about 45 minutes. Your answers will be kept absolutely confidential and so feel free to tell us what you think. You have the right to terminate this interview at any time and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions you might not want to respond to. If you are willing to participate in this interview, we can now continue. If you are not willing, we thank you for your time. Are there any questions you may wish to ask?

1. **Demographic history of the respondent**
    - Birth year and where born
    - Education history
    - Family formation history, if any
    - Household composition

2. **Migration history of the respondent**
    - Year came to Kenya and Nairobi
    - Details of journey to Kenya and Nairobi
    - Details of reasons for coming to Kenya and Nairobi
    - Status in Kenya and whether planning to stay in Kenya and Nairobi permanently and why
    - If there are plans to go back to Somali or migrate to another country and why
    - Expectations before coming Kenya and Nairobi and whether the expectations have been met

3. **Income and livelihood sources**
    - Details of economic activities and sources of income
    - Details of other sources of livelihoods
    - Details of social networking among the community, in relation to livelihoods
    - Details about social grants and aid

4. **Relations with family back in Somali**
    - If respondent and household members have family and relatives back in Somali and their relations

- Whether in contact with them and forms and regularity of contact
- Details of remittances (to-and-from) and food flows (to-and-from) between the two localities
- Details of food security issues about family and relatives in Somali.

5. **Household food security issues**
    - Details of food sources, regularity of using the sources and reasons for choice of sources
    - Details on major foods purchased, their regularity and reasons for these types of foods
    - Details of food consumption patterns, their regularity and who makes decisions on what is eaten
    - Details of expenditure patterns on food
    - Details of urban farming, if any
    - Details of social networking in relation to food exchanges and transfers
    - Details on purchase of cooked foods and processed foods
    - Knowledge on healthy diets and food-related diseases
    - Details on how food prices affect food availability and access
    - Details of food shortages, food (un)availability and (in)accessibility in the household
    - Details of coping strategies with food shortages, (un)availability and (in)accessibility

6. **Impact of COVID-19 on household food security**
    - Details of household members affected by COVID-19
    - Details of COVID-19 impact on household food availability and access
    - Details of COVID-19 impact on household income sources
    - Details of coping strategies with the negative impacts of COVID-19

I have finished my questions. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask?
Thank you very much for your valuable time and information

Appendix D: Survey instrument

QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER	

MiFOOD URBAN FOOD SECURITY PROJECT
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

FOR OFFICIAL USE

QUESTIONNAIRE BACK-CHECKED BY:	**Name**	**Day**	**Month**	**2022**
DATA-ENTRY EDITED BY:	**Name**	**Day**	**Month**	**2022**

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE INTERVIEWER

INTERVIEWER	**Name**	**Code**	
LOCATION OF INTERVIEW (Section 1, Section 2 or Section 3)	**Name of section**		
DATE OF INTERVIEW	**Date**	**Month**	**2022**
START TIME OF INTERVIEW	**HH:MM**		
SECTION SUPERVISOR	**Name**		

PROJECT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

READ OUT ALOUD
My name is **(Insert name)**. I am working as a Research Assistant for a research project being conducted by the University of Nairobi, Department of Geography, Population and Environmental Studies. We are talking to people in Eastleigh Area of Nairobi about their food sources, food consumption patterns and access to food. We shall also seek related information on social and economic aspects of the household and household members. Your household has been randomly selected for this interview and we would like to discuss these issues with yourself, or an adult member of your household. Your opinions will help us to get a better understanding about household food security issues in this area. There are no right or wrong answers. The interview will take about 45 minutes. Your answers will be kept absolutely confidential and so feel free to tell us what you think. You have the right to terminate this interview at any time and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions you might not want to respond to.

Are you willing to participate?

Yes	1	**Continue**

No	2	**IF NO: READ OUT: Thank you for your time. Goodbye.**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Are there any questions you wish to ask before we begin?

SECTION A: HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS CHARACTERISTICS										
This is the first section of our questions. The section will seek information on all people living in this household, including people who are usual members of the household but who are away in school, working or are away for other reasons										
PNO	**1 Head**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
1a Relation to household head [1] Head [2] Spouse/partner [3] Son/daughter [4] Father/mother [5] Brother/sister [6] Grandchild [7] Grandparent [8] Other relative [9] Non-relative *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										
1b Sex [1] Male [2] Female *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										
1c Age *(Enter age (in years) at last birthday but 0 for those under 1 year and if older than 96, record 96)* *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										
1d Marital status [1] Unmarried [2] Married [3] Living together/cohabiting [4] Divorced [5] Separated [6] Widowed *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										
1e Highest level of education [1] No formal schooling [2] Primary (not completed) [3] Primary (completed) [4] Secondary (not completed) [5] Secondary (completed) [6] Post-secondary qualifications but not university [7] University (not completed) [8] University (completed) [9] Postgraduate *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										
1f Work status (wage employment) [1] Full-time employment (public sector) [2] Full-time employment (formal private sector) [3] Full-time employment (informal sector) [4] Full-time self-employed (formal sector) [5] Part-time employment (public sector) [6] Part-time employment (formal private sector) [7] Part-time employment (informal sector) [8] Part-time self-employed (informal sector) [9] Unemployed (looking for work) [10] Unemployed (not looking for work) [11] Unemployed (in school) *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										

1g Where born *(If answer is NOT "Kenya", skip to Q2a)* [1] Kenya [2] Uganda [3] Tanzania [4] Somali [5] Another foreign country *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*										
1h Year moved to Kenya *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't Know; [99] Missing)*										
1i Reasons for moving to Kenya *(Probe for up to three main reasons)* [1] Conflict/war at place of origin [2] Drought/climate change impacts at place of origin [3] Hunger at place of origin [4] Lack of land for farming at place of origin [5] Political asylum/safety reasons [6] Moved with family/joined family [7] Family related matters at place of origin [8] Work/employment opportunities in Kenya [9] Education opportunities in Kenya [10] Medical opportunities in Kenya [11] Democratic space and peace in Kenya *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't Know; [99] Missing)*										
1j Year moved to Nairobi *([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't Know; [99] Missing)*										

SECTION B: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS			
This is the second section of our questions. The section will seek information on household type, structure, income and expenditure			
2a	**Housing type** *(Observe and record which one of the following housing types best describes type of dwelling this household occupies)*	**Housing type**	**Code**
		a. House (Maisonette)	1
		b. House (Bungalow)	2
		c. Flat/Apartment	3
		d. Permanent single room dwelling units	4
		e. Semi-permanent informal dwelling units	5
2b	Household structure *(Probe and record which one of the following best describes the*	**Household structure**	**Code**
		a. Female Centered *(No husband/ male partner in household, may include relatives, children, friends)*	1

	household structure of this household)	b. Male Centered *(No wife/ female partner in household, may include relatives, children, friends)*	2
		c. Nuclear *(Husband/ male partner and wife/ female partner with or without children)*	3
		d. Extended *(Husband/ male partner and wife/ female partner and children and relatives)*	4

2c(i)

2c(ii)

Household income in the last one (1) month

(Probe for each income category and record total income where it applies. Leave blank for categories that do not apply, including if "Refused to answer" or "Don't Know")

(a) Income category	**(b) Code**	(c) Amount (to nearest KES)
a. Full-time employment	1	
b. Part-time employment	2	
c. Self-employment	3	
d. Income from formal businesses	4	
e. Income from formal businesses	5	
f. Income from renting dwelling units	6	
g. Income from sale of farm products (if urban/rural farmer)	7	
h. Cash remittances (regular financial support from family and friends)	8	
i. Government social grants (pension, disability, etc)	9	
j. Non-government grants and aid	10	
k. Merry-go-rounds (*chamaAyuuto*)	11	
l. Any other income(s)	12	

2d

Household expenditure in the last one (1) month

(Probe for each expenditure category and record total expenditure where it applies. Leave blank for categories that do not apply, including if "Refused to answer" or "Don't Know")

(a) Expense categories	**(b) Code**	(c) Amount **(to nearest KES)**
a. Food and groceries	1	
b. Housing (rent, mortgage)	2	
c. Water	3	
d. Electricity	4	
e. Cooking fuel (firewood, paraffin, gas)	5	
f. Medical expenses	6	
g. Transport	7	
h. School fees	8	
i. Remittances	9	

2e	**How often does this household send money back home to family and relatives?** *(If answer is 'Never', skip to Q2i)*	Frequency	**Code**
		Never	1
		More than once a month	2
		Once a month	3

	(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)	A few times a year	4
		Once a year	5
		Occasionally (less than once a year)	6
2f	**If yes, for what purpose does this household send money back home** *(Please select all that apply)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	Purpose	**Code**
		For family and relatives' household use	1
		For family and relatives' school fees	2
		For development and investment purposes	3
		For other purposes (please specify)	4
2g	**Which method does this household use to send money back home** *(Please select all that apply)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Method**	**Code**
		I take it while going back home	1
		Through people/family/relatives travelling back home	2
		Through M-PESA mobile money transfer	3
		Through money transfer company (e.g. Western Union, MoneyGram)	4
		Through the bank	5
2h	**On average, approximately how much does this household send back home per month?** *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Amount (KES)**	**Code**
		Less than KES 20,000	1
		KES 20,001 – KSH 40,000	2
		KSH 40,001 – KSH 80,000	3
		KSH 80,001 – KSH 100,000	4
		KSH 100,001+	5
2i	**How often does this household send food items back home to family and relatives?** *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	Frequency	**Code**
		Never	1
		More than once a month	2
		Once a month	3
		A few times a year	4
		Once a year	5
		Occasionally (less than once a year)	6
2j	**How often does this household receive money from family or friends abroad?** *(If answer is 'Never', skip to Q3a)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	Frequency	**Code**
		Never	1
		More than once a month	2
		Once a month	3
		A few times a year	4
		Once a year	5
		Occasionally (less than once a year)	6
2k	**If yes, how does this household spend the money it receives from friends and family abroad** *(Please select all that apply)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	Purpose	**Code**
		For food	1
		For education (school fees)	2
		For medical attention (hospital)	3
		For development and investment purposes	4
		For other purposes (please specify)	5
2l	**Which method do they use to send money?** *(Please select all that apply)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Method**	**Code**
		Brings it himself/herself when visiting Kenya	1
		Through family member or friend visiting Kenya	2
		Through M-PESA mobile money transfer	3
		Through money transfer company (e.g. Western Union, MoneyGram)	4
		Through Hawala	5

		Through the bank	6

2m	**Approximately how much in total did this household receive in the past 12 months from family and friends abroad?** *(Probe for total amount in the last 12 months)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Amount (KES)**	**Code**
		Less than KES 50,000	1
		KES 50,001 – KSH 100,000	2
		KSH 100,001 – KSH 150,000	3
		KSH 150,001 – KSH 200,000	4
		KSH 200,001+	5
2n	**Do you agree with the statement that receiving money from family and friends abroad has a positive impact on your household food security?** *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	Impact of receiving money	**Code**
		Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Neither agree nor disagree	3
		Disagree	4
		Strongly disagree	5
2o	**Which countries abroad do the family and friends who send you money live?** *(Record the countries names) ([97] Refused to answer; [98] Don't know; [99] Missing)*		

	SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY
	This is the third section of our questions. The section will seek information on household's food security

3a	**HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY ACCESS SCALE (HFIAS)** ***(Read the question and probe for one answer in each case)***	**No**	**Rarely (once or twice)**	**Sometimes (3 to 10 times)**	**Often (more than 10 times)**
	a. In the past four weeks, did you worry that your household would not have enough food?	1	2	3	4
	b. In the past four weeks were you or any household member not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of a lack of resources?	1	2	3	4
	c. In the past four weeks did you or any household member have to eat a limited variety of foods due to a lack of resources?	1	2	3	4
	d. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat some foods that you really did not want to eat because of a lack of resources to obtain other types of food?	1	2	3	4
	e. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat a smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?	1	2	3	4
	f. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member have to eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?	1	2	3	4
	g. In the past four weeks, was there ever no food to eat of any kind in your household because of lack of resources to get food?	1	2	3	4
	h. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go to sleep at night hungry because there was not enough food?	1	2	3	4
	i. In the past four weeks, did you or any household member go a whole day and night without eating anything because there was not enough food?	1	2	3	4
	j. In the past week, did you or any household member eat a cooked meal less than once a day?	1	2	3	4

3b	**HOUSEHOLD DIETARY DIVERSITY SCORE (HDDS)** ***(Read the list of foods and probe if any member of the household ate the food types yesterday during the day and at night)***		
	Types of food	**Yes**	**No**
	a. Any pasta, bread, rice noodles, biscuits or any other foods made from flour, millet, sorghum, maize, rice, wheat, or oats (or any other grains)	1	2
	b. Any potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, beetroots, carrots or any other foods made from them (e.g. chips, crisps) (or any other roots and tubers) yesterday or night (HDDS)	1	2
	c. Any vegetables	1	2
	d. Any fruits	1	2
	e. Any beef, lamb, goat, camel, chicken, duck, other birds, liver, kidney, or other organ meats	1	2
	f. Any eggs	1	2
	g. Any fresh or dried fish	1	2
	h. Any foods made from beans, peas, lentils, or nuts	1	2
	i. Any cheese, yoghurt, milk or other milk products	1	2
	j. Any foods made with oil, fat, or butter	1	2
	k. Any sugar or honey?	1	2
	l. Any other foods, such as condiments, coffee, tea	1	2

3c	**MONTHS OF ADEQUATE HOUSEHOLD PROVISIONING (MAHP)**

	In the past 12 months, were there months in which this household did not have enough food to meet its family's needs? *(If NO, skip to Q3e)*		**Yes** 1	**No** 2
3d	**If yes, which were the months (in the past 12 months) in which this household did not have enough food to meet its family's needs?** *(Do not read the list of months but instead work backward from the current month)*	**Months in which household did not have enough food to meet needs**	**Yes**	**No**
		a. January	1	2
		b. February	1	2
		c. March	1	2
		d. April	1	2
		e. May	1	2
		f. June	1	2
		g. July	1	2
		h. August	1	2
		i. September	1	2
		j. October	1	2
		k. November	1	2
3e	**EXPERIENCE OF FOOD PRICE CHANGES** **Over the past year, has this household gone without certain types of food because of the price of food (it is unaffordable)?** *(If "Never" skip to Q3g)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Frequency of going without food**	**Code**	
		Never	1	
		About once a month	2	
		About once a week	3	
		More than once a week but less than every day of the week	4	
		Every day	5	
3f	**If yes, which types of foods have you gone without in the past one year because of the price of food?** *(Probe and record accordingly)*			
	Types of food		**Yes**	**No**
	a. Any pasta, bread, rice noodles, biscuits or any other foods made from flour, millet, sorghum, maize, rice, wheat, or oats (or any other grains)		1	2
	b. Any potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, beetroots, carrots or any other foods made from them (e.g. chips, crisps) (or any other roots and tubers)		1	2
	c. Any vegetables		1	2
	d. Any fruits		1	2
	e. Any beef, lamb, goat, camel, chicken, duck, other birds, liver, kidney, or other organ meats		1	2
	f. Any eggs		1	2
	g. Any fresh or dried fish		1	2
	h. Any foods made from beans, peas, lentils, or nuts		1	2
	i. Any cheese, yoghurt, milk or other milk products		1	2
	j. Any foods made with oil, fat, or butter		1	2
	k. Any sugar or honey		1	2
	l. Any other foods, such as condiments, coffee, tea		1	2
	m. None of the above			

3g		**Problem**	**Yes**	**No**

	Did any of the following problems prevent this household from having enough food to meet your family's needs in the past one year?	a. COVID-19 pandemic	1	2
		b. Death of a working household member	1	2
		c. Serious illness of a household member	1	2
		d. Serious accident of a household member	1	2
		e. Loss of employment for a household member	1	2
		f. Reduced income of a household member	1	2
		g. Relocation of the family	1	2
		h. Reduced or stopped remittances from family/relatives	1	2
		i. Taking in orphans of deceased parent(s)	1	2
		j. Floods, fire and/or other environmental hazards	1	2
		k. Increased cost of living	1	2
		l. End of a social grant	1	2
		m. Crime/theft	1	2
		n. Political problems/issues	1	2
		o. Xenophobia	1	2

3h	**In the past 7 days, how many days did this household do any of the following?**	**Coping strategies**	**No. of days (0-7)**
		a. Rely on less preferred and less expensive foods	
		b. Borrow food or rely on food help from relative/friend	
		c. Purchase food on credit	
		d. Consume food from vending business	
		e. Send household members to eat elsewhere	
		f. Beg for food	
		g. Limit portion size at mealtimes	
		h. Restrict consumption for adults so children could eat	
		i. Reduce number of meals eaten in a day	
		j. Go a whole day without eating	

3i	**Do you agree with the statement that sending money back home negatively affects your household food supply in Nairobi?** *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Impact of sending money back home**	**Code**
		Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Neither agree nor disagree	3
		Disagree	4
		Strongly disagree	5

3j	**Do you agree with the statement that coming to Nairobi has positively improved this household's food security situation compared to back home?** *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Impact of migrating to Nairobi**	**Code**
		Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Neither agree nor disagree	3
		Disagree	4
		Strongly disagree	5

3k	**Do you agree with the statement that going back home would negatively affect this household's food security situation?** *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Impact of migrating to Nairobi**	**Code**
		Strongly agree	1
		Agree	2
		Neither agree nor disagree	3
		Disagree	4
		Strongly disagree	5

SECTION D: HOUSEHOLD FOOD SOURCES

(This is the fourth section of our questions. The section will seek information on household food sources)

Where does this household normally obtain its food?
(Probe from the list of food sources and record appropriately in (a) "Food code" column)

b) How often does the household normally obtain its food from these sources?
(Probe the frequency that food is obtained from the source as given by respondent and record appropriately in (b) "Frequency" column)

Source of food	(a) Food code	(b) Frequency of food obtained from this source					
		At least five days a week	At least once a week	At least once a month	At least once in six months	Less than once a year	Never
a. Supermarket (Tuskys, Nakumatt, Uchumi, Naivas)	1	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Neighbourhood shop, grocer or butchery (other than a supermarket)	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Neighbourhood informal markets or street vendors	3	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Neighbourhood kiosk	4	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Designated fast food outlets (Steers, Java, KFC)	5	1	2	3	4	5	6
f. Restaurant	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
g. Designated formal city markets	7	1	2	3	4	5	6
h. Food from own farm (urban or rural)	8	1	2	3	4	5	6
i. Food provided by other family members and relatives	9	1	2	3	4	5	6
j. Food provided by friends and neighbours	10	1	2	3	4	5	6
k. Food from a community food kitchen	11	1	2	3	4	5	6
l. Food donation from church or organization	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
m. Food borrowed or begged from others	13	1	2	3	4	5	6

How often does this household receive food items from family and relatives back home? *(If answer is 'Never', skip to Q5a)* *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Frequency**	**Code**
	Never	1
	More than once a month	2
	Once a month	3
	A few times a year	4
	Once a year	5
	Occasionally (less than once a year)	6

How important is the food items received from home important to this household? *(97 Refused to answer; 98 Don't Know; 99 Missing)*	**Frequency**	**Code**
	Not important at all	1
	Slightly important	2
	Moderately important	3
	Very important	4
	Extremely important	5

SECTION E: IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This is the fifth and last section of our questions. The section will seek information on issues dealing with COVID-19

5a	**What was the economic conditions of this household during the COVID-19 pandemic period compared to before?**	**Economic conditions during COVID-19**	**Code**
		Much worse	1
		Worse	2
		The same	3
		Better	4
		Much better	5
	During COVD-19 pandemic period, how often did this household go without the following		

5b	**Lived poverty index conditions**	*Never*	*Just once or twice*	*Several times*	**Many times**	**Always**
	a. Enough food to eat	1	2	3	4	5
	b. Enough clean water for home use	1	2	3	4	5
	c. Medicine or medical treatment	1	2	3	4	5
	d. Electricity in your home	1	2	3	4	5
	e. Enough cooking fuel (gas, kerosene)	1	2	3	4	5
	f. Cash income	1	2	3	4	5

5c	**Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about the COVID-19 pandemic**					
	Conditions	*Strongly agree*	*Agree*	*Neutral*	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
	a. I became unemployed and was unable to find a job because of COVID-19	1	2	3	4	5
	b. Other members of this household became unemployed and were unable to find a job because of COVID-19	1	2	3	4	5
	c. This household experienced a loss of income because of COVID-19	1	2	3	4	5
	d. Members of this household became ill because of COVID-19	1	2	3	4	5
	e. This household received less cash remittances from abroad during COVID-19 period	1	2	3	4	5
	f. This household had less food to eat during COVID-19 period	1	2	3	4	5
	g. Food became much more expensive during COVID-19 period	1	2	3	4	5
	h. It was more difficult to access food from informal food vendors during COVID-19 period	1	2	3	4	5

I have finished my questions. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask?
Thank you very much for your valuable time and information.

End Time of Interview	HH : MM

Appendix E: Some Fieldwork Photo

Somali Migrant Street Vendor, Eastleigh: A woman selling vegetables along Eastleigh's busy alleys, illustrating how informal trade sustains migrant livelihoods and serves as a vital link in Nairobi's urban food system.

Eastleigh's Garissa Lodge: A bustling commercial hub where formal and informal economies intersect, reflecting the entrepreneurial dynamism and regulatory ambiguities that define migrant-driven urban markets in Nairobi.

Residential and Commercial Buildings in Eastleigh: Structures where living spaces and trading centers coexist, reflecting Eastleigh's role as a transnational hub linking commerce, migration, and everyday urban life

Nairobi's Informal Food Economy: A vital network of street vendors and market traders on which most Nairobi residents and migrants depend for their daily food access and affordability.

Local Research Assistants with Professor Sam, MiFOOD Kenya Principal Investigator, at the University of Nairobi: A collaborative team engaged in field coordination and data collection, exemplifying the project's commitment to local capacity building and co-production of knowledge.

Local Research Assistant Training at a Somali Migrant-Owned Café in Eastleigh: A preparatory session held in a community space that fostered trust, cultural sensitivity, and mutual learning between researchers and participants in the heart of the migrant neighborhood.