Labour Migration, Cash Remittances, and Household Food Security in the Ghana-Qatar Corridor

Bernard Owusu and Jonathan Crush

Migration & Food Security (MiFOOD)

Paper No. 68

Series Editors: Sujata Ramachandran and Jonathan Crush

Abstract

While the relationship between migration and development has been extensively studied, the connection between migration and food security remains underexplored, particularly in the South-South context. This paper examines the linkages between international migration, cash remittances, and household food security in the Ghana–Qatar migration corridor. Quantitative methods, including multinomial regression analysis, were used to assess household food insecurity using the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) and the Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS). Drawing on a 2023 survey of 200 migrant-sending households in two urban locations in Ghana, Accra and Kasoa, the study investigates household characteristics, the association between remittances and food security, and coping strategies for managing food insecurity. The findings show that these households are predominantly low-income, and more than 80% of migrant households experience some degree of food insecurity. Remittance receipt is strongly associated with improved food access and higher dietary diversity. Food insecurity varies by household structure and income, with female-centred households particularly vulnerable. In response, households adopt coping strategies such as reducing meal sizes and consuming less-preferred foods. The paper argues that migration and food security are closely interconnected. While food insecurity may contribute to migration aspirations, the survey data primarily demonstrate that remittances are associated with improved household food security outcomes. Remittances help alleviate, but do not eliminate, household food insecurity. These findings highlight the need for integrated policy approaches linking migration governance and food security interventions.

Keywords

international migration, remittances, household food security, Ghana, Gulf States, urban livelihoods, gender inequality

Suggested Citation

Owusu, B. and Crush, J. (2026). Labour Migration, Cash Remittances, and Household Food Security in the Ghana-Qatar Corridor. MiFOOD Paper No. 68, Waterloo.

Authors

Bernard Owusu, Balsillie School of International Affairs and Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada: bowusu@balsillieschool.ca

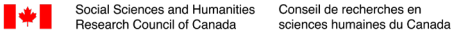
Jonathan Crush, Balsillie School of International Affairs and Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada, and University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa: jcrush@balsillieschool.ca

Cover Image

Informal fruit enterprise stall in urban Ghana. Photo credit: Kojo Kwarteng/Unsplash

Sub-Editor: Marika Jeziorek

Production: Bronwen Dachs Muller



This is the 68th Paper in the Working Paper Series published by the Migration and Food Security (MiFOOD) Network, an international network of researchers and organizations focused on the linkages between food security and international and internal migration in the Global South (www.mifood.org). The seven-year collaborative MiFOOD project is funded by a Partnership Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC Grant No. 895-2021-1004). The research presented in this paper was conducted for the Remitting for Resilience (R2): Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation Through Gender-Inclusive Migrant Remittances Project, funded by the Government of Canada's New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF Grant No. NFRFI-2023-00324).

Published by the MiFOOD Network at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Introduction

In 2013, a prominent Ghanaian media personality and religious leader was arrested by Ghana's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit and charged with human trafficking and fraud for recruiting young Ghanaians for jobs in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia (Bonsu, 2013; Daily Guide, 2013). Her company, SOS Labour Ltd., is a private employment agency based in Tema that advertises itself as a "gateway to exciting career opportunities worldwide" and recruits Ghanaians for overseas employers in North America, Europe, and the Gulf. Police alleged that she used her radio program and church visits to recruit workers for the Gulf states, promising good pay and free accommodation. However, upon arrival, recruits found that the promised jobs did not exist. Instead, they were forcibly confined, had their passports seized, were paraded before "buyers," and were forced into demeaning and hazardous jobs, including sex work. SOS Labour Ltd. denied all the allegations, and in April 2014, the Accra Circuit Court acquitted and discharged the owner on all counts, citing the prosecutor's failure to establish a prima facie case (Republic of Ghana, 2013). Nevertheless, the Ghanaian government temporarily banned recruitment for domestic and service work in the Gulf in 2017, following reports from the Ghana Immigration Service that hundreds of young women had been subjected to inhumane treatment and were stranded in various Gulf countries (Apekey et al., 2018; Brew, 2019; GhanaWeb, 2015).

This high-profile case and the subsequent ban drew public attention to a new form of labour export from Ghana, driven by unemployment, low remuneration, and heightened poverty among lower-income Ghanaian households (Atong et al., 2018; Awumbila et al., 2019a, 2019b). Rahman & Salisu (2023) estimate that there are now at least 75,000 Ghanaian labour migrants in the Gulf, including 27,000 in Saudi Arabia, 24,000 in the UAE, and 8,000 in Qatar. The recruitment of Ghanaians has been facilitated by the proliferation of brokers and recruitment and work-placement agencies in Ghana (Awumbila et al., 2019a; Deshingkar et al. 2019). Most migrants are recruited as domestic workers, security guards, construction workers, tradespeople, and drivers (Atong et al., 2018). In 2017, the occupational profile of migrants in Qatar included labourers (25%), steel fixers (20%), masons (16%), and carpenters (15%) (Apekey et al., 2018).

In the emerging literature on African migration to the Gulf, little attention has been paid to the food security of migrants and their household members at home (Owusu & Crush, 2024). This mirrors a broader gap in the migration literature (Choithani, 2022; Crush, 2013; Ramachandran & Crush, 2023). Most conventional theories of migration tend to neglect food security, treating it, if they do at all, as an upstream factor prompting out-migration or a possible downstream effect of new income-earning or employment opportunities. For example, the canonical Age of Migration, now in its sixth edition and providing a comprehensive synthesis of the economic, political, social, and environmental drivers of international migration, understates the role of food security (de Haas et al., 2020). Food-related pressures appear only indirectly, reproducing a long-standing tendency in migration studies to subordinate food insecurity to broader categories, such as poverty, environmental change, or underdevelopment, rather than seeing it as a proximate and measurable mechanism shaping aspirations and capabilities to move.

Inter-disciplinary scholarship on Ghanaian migration has focused on issues such as the positive implications of remittances for macro-economic growth (Abdulai, 2023; Antwi & Koranteng, 2017; Asafo Agyei, 2021; Oteng-Abayie et al., 2020), use of fintech and financial inclusion (Gatsi, 2020; Guermond, 2022a, 2022b), household deployment of remittances (Akobeng, 2022; Ofori-Appiah et al., 2024, Quartey et al., 2019), gendered impacts of remitting on intra-household dynamics and women's employment (Amoako & Apusigah, 2013; Pickbourn, 2016; Saani et al., 2023; Teye et al., 2023), and the role of remittances in poverty reduction and climate adaptation (Adams & Cuecuecha, 2013; Musah-Surugu & Anuga, 2023; Musah-Surugu et al., 2018). The links between international remittances and food security are underexplored despite their obvious connections.

The nexus between migration and food security has remained on the periphery of empirical research in African and Asian migration studies (Choithani, 2022). Until recently, the food security impacts of migration on those left behind were not taken seriously. However, as Smith & Floro (2020a) point out, many African households use internal and international migration as coping strategies to mitigate the risks and threats of food insecurity. Furthermore, Sadiddin et al. (2019, p. 515) argue that "food insecurity is an important determinant of both the desire and the decision to migrate: food insecurity raises the probability of desiring to migrate internationally, with the probability of the desire increasing along with the severity of food insecurity." Additionally, Adjei Mantey et al. (2023) argue that receiving remittances reduces the probability of experiencing food insecurity by 0.4% and 1.2%, while receiving them regularly decreases the likelihood of food insecurity by 1.8% and 3.9%.

There is growing international evidence of a direct connection between migrant remittances and the food security of migrant-sending households (Karamba et al., 2011; Moniruzzaman & Walton-Roberts, 2022; Obi et al., 2020; Zezza et al., 2011). Several studies conclude that remittances spent on food by recipients reduce the most severe forms of food insecurity (Sadiddin et al., 2019; Smith & Floro, 2020a; Smith & Wesselbaum, 2022). Migration is also said to positively influence food and nutritional security in communities and households by increasing household food consumption, purchasing power, and dietary diversity (Choithani, 2017; Crush & Tawodzera, 2017; Sulemana et al., 2019; Zezza et al., 2011). Despite evidence from other parts of Africa that international migration affects food security outcomes, this has not been systematically explored in relation to migration from Africa to the Gulf (Chikanda et al., 2020; Crush, 2013; Sadiddin et al., 2019). As a result, this paper potentially opens up a whole new terrain for comparative study.

The links between migrant remittances and food security are best understood as interconnected components of

household livelihood strategies that operate across space. This paper adopts a translocal livelihoods perspective, which views migrant-sending households as spatially distributed social and economic units whose survival strategies extend across multiple locations and are sustained by remittances and other obligations (Brickell & Datta, 2011; Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013; Ramachandran et al., 2024). Within translocal households, labour migration is one element of a broader repertoire of livelihood strategies. Income earned by migrants in destination countries is transferred through remittances, linking geographically separated sites of livelihood reproduction (Chikanda et al., 2020; Owusu & Crush, 2024). Migration and food security, therefore, have a reciprocal relationship in which food insecurity pressures influence migration behaviour, while remittances in turn reshape household food access and vulnerability over time. Viewing migration and food security through this lens shifts the analytical emphasis away from simple causal relationships between remittances and food security outcomes. In this sense, migration is not solely a response to food insecurity, nor is it a simple solution to it. Instead, it is part of an ongoing process through which translocal households try to stabilise livelihoods and manage economic risks across space.

This paper provides a conceptual and empirical corrective to the food security lacuna in the migration literature and contributes to the emerging literature on migrant remittances and food security in the Global South by examining the food security challenges facing households in Ghana that send able-bodied household members to work in Qatar. Drawing on data from a 2023 survey of 200 migrant-sending households in Qatar conducted in Accra and Kasoa, Ghana, the paper addresses three main research questions: (a) what types of urban Ghanaian households send migrants to Qatar, (b) what is the association between household characteristics, remittance receipts, and food security among these migrant-sending households, and (c) what additional coping strategies do migrant-sending households in Ghana adopt to cope with food insecurity?

Methodology

The data for this paper were collected from March to May 2023. A face-to-face survey of 200 households was conducted in two urban locations in Ghana: Accra, the capital and largest city, and Kasoa, a rapidly growing town in the Central Region. Each household had a member working in Qatar. Participants were recruited through purposive snowball sampling via migrant networks, recruitment agency contacts, and the Ghana Immigration Service. Survey respondents were household heads or their delegates (usually spouses). In addition to collecting data on household demographics and economic activities, the survey gathered key information on each household's food consumption practices and food security levels.

The food security metrics in this analysis included the Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP) and the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS). The HFIAP is based on household responses to nine frequency-of-occurrence questions experienced in the four weeks prior to the survey (Coates, 2013). A score between 0 and 27 was calculated for each household, and a scoring algorithm assigned each household to one of four groups: food-secure, mildly food-insecure, moderately food-insecure, or severely food-insecure. The nutritional quality of household diets was captured by the HDDS, which assessed which foods from 12 food groups were consumed in the 24 hours prior to the survey. The HDDS was calculated by computing the total number of food groups from which food was consumed (Swindale & Bilinsky, 2006). The HDDS scale ranges from 0 to 12, with higher scores indicating a more diverse household diet. Following Baliwati et al. (2015), the HDDS was categorised into high (6-12), medium (4-5), and low (0-3) dietary diversity, and each household was assigned to one of the three groups based on its score. In addition to these descriptive food security statistics, the study modelled the relationship between food insecurity and household variables using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

Food-insecure households tend to adopt a range of coping strategies. In this study, the Coping Strategies Index (CSI) was used to assess households' adaptive behaviours in response to food insecurity (Maxwell et al., 2014). Respondents indicated how many days during the previous week (0–7) they had engaged in a set of predefined coping strategies. For each strategy, a mean frequency score was calculated as the weighted average number of days it was employed across all households. The CSI score ranges from 0 to 7, and the higher the score, the greater the household's reliance on that strategy.

The survey design has several features that limit the interpretation of the findings. First, because there is no sampling frame for Ghanaian households with migrants in Qatar, purposive sampling was necessary to access the target population and begin building a profile of the types of households involved in this migration corridor. However, non-probabilistic sampling means the findings are not necessarily generalisable to the entire population of migrant-sending households. Second, the findings on the relationship between migrant remitting and food security are based on cross-sectional survey data. The cross-sectional design does not allow identification of causal relationships as they unfold over time. Without longitudinal panel data, we cannot definitively establish whether remittances improve food security, whether food insecurity influences remittance behaviour, or whether both are jointly determined by other household characteristics. Third, household remittance receipts in Ghana may be endogenous to household characteristics and needs. In effect, households receiving remittances may differ systematically from those that do not in ways that also influence food security outcomes. Therefore, it is difficult to establish whether remittances themselves improve food security or whether the observed relationship reflects underlying differences between households. Finally, the regression model relies on a binary measure of household food insecurity derived from the HFIAP classification. While converting the four-part HFIAP scale into a dichotomous variable simplifies analysis and interpretation,

it may mask important differences in the severity of food insecurity. Despite these limitations, the study is the first to provide new empirical evidence on the association between migration, remittances, and household food security in the Ghana–Qatar migration corridor.

Results and Discussion

Among surveyed households with a member in Qatar, one-third were extended families. Another 26.5% were nuclear families, 23.5% were male-centred (a male head with no female spouse or partner), and 15.5% were female-centred (a female head with no male spouse or partner). The dominance of the extended family structure is attributable to the high cost of housing in Accra and traditional settlement arrangements in Ghana that encourage communal living (Awumbila et al., 2017). Nearly three-quarters of surveyed households reside in standalone houses, the most common housing type in the Accra Metropolitan Area (Table 1). Another 11% live in hostels, 8% in townhouses, and 7% in traditional dwellings, with or without built-on rooms.

The mean annual household income for migrant-sending households was GHS22,687 (USD1,646). By comparison, the average household income for Accra as a whole is around GHS63,000 (USD5,575.22) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019, p. 213). The quintile distribution in Table 1 shows that 79% of the households had annual incomes of USD5,575.22 or less, possibly suggesting that most Qatar-bound migrants come from lower-income households. As many as 80% of the households had received remittances from Qatar in the year prior to the survey. Although amounts varied across households, remittances were the most important source of household income, accounting for USD 673.54 per annum, or one-third of total household income (Figure 1). Other important sources of household income included formal wage employment (USD597.17 per annum), and casual work (USD455.77 per annum).

How sampled households spend their remittance receipts from Qatar provides insights into the association between migration and food insecurity. The survey found that 58% of households use remittances to fund children's education. Other common uses include financial transactions, such as savings (29%), loan repayment (19%), clothing (18%), and the purchase of building materials such as cement (8.23%), wood (5.06%), bricks (5.06%), and paint (2.53%). However, the most common use of remittances is food purchases, with 88% of surveyed households using the funds to increase household food consumption. Despite the inflow of remittances, only 17% of these households were completely food secure according to the HFIAP classification (Table 2). Over half were mildly food insecure, and another 28% were moderately food insecure, with only 1% being severely food insecure. Thus, over 80% of the surveyed households experience some degree of food insecurity.

Table 1: Surveyed Household Characteristics

Household characteristics	No. of households	Percentage
Housing type		
House	142	71.0
Hostel/compound	21	10.5
Townhouse	16	8.0
Traditional with built on rooms	9	4.5
Traditional	5	2.5
Flat	4	2.0
Room in a house	2	1.0
Squatter hut/shack	1	0.5
Household structure		
Female-centred	31	15.5
Male-centred	47	23.5
Nuclear	53	26.5
Extended	66	33.0
Household income		
Quintile 1 (USD0–580.67)	40	20.6
Quintile 2 (USD581.37–1,061.85)	39	20.1
Quintile 3 (USD1,062.56–1,660.16)	37	19.1
Quintile 4 (USD1,661.58–2,838.43)	39	20.1
Quintile 5 (USD2,839.13–11,952.72)	39	20.1
Remittances received		
Yes	158	80.0
No	40	20.0

Figure 1. Average Surveyed Household Income from All Sources

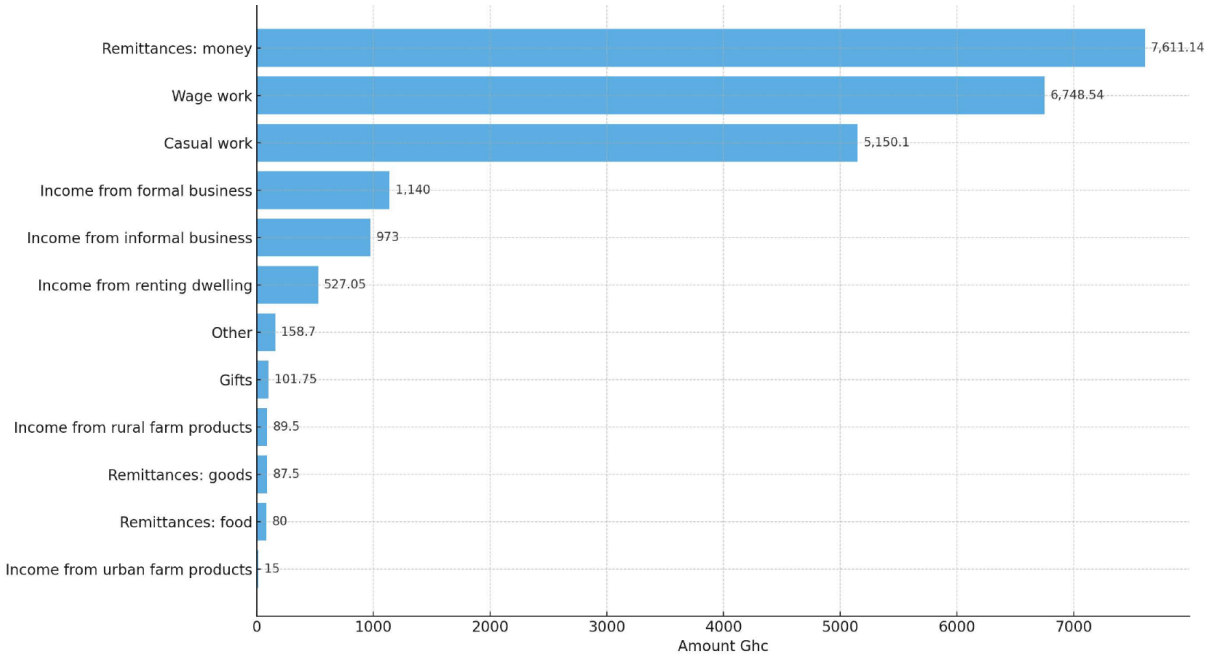
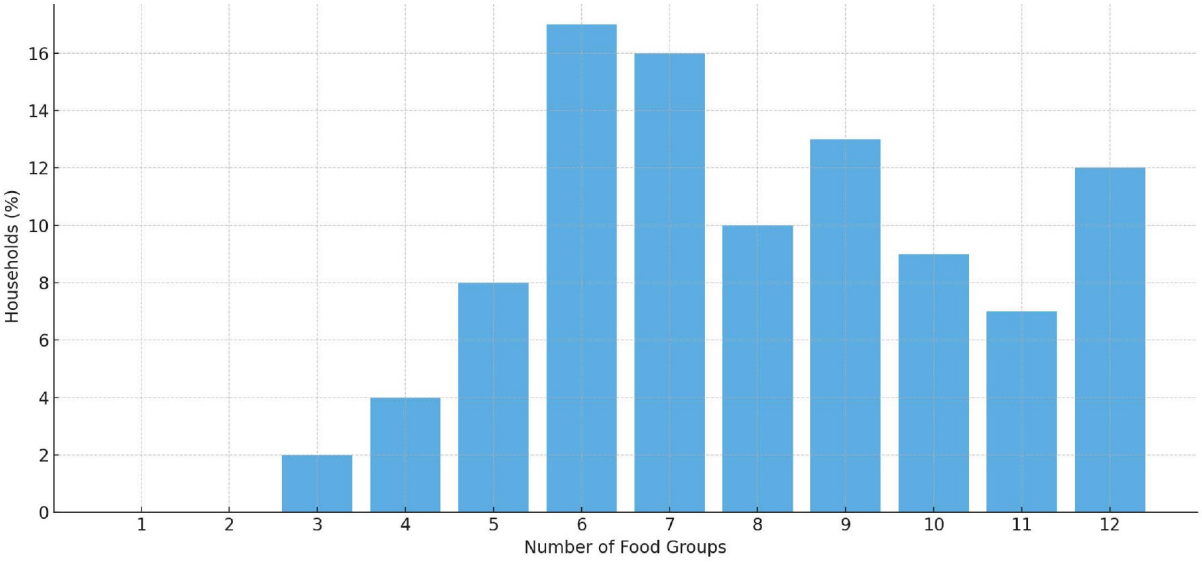


Table 2: Prevalence of Surveyed Household Food Insecurity		
Food security category	**No. of households**	**Percentage**
Food secure	32	16.5
Mildly food insecure	105	54.1
Moderately food insecure	55	28.4
Severely food insecure	2	1.0
Total	194	100.0

In contrast to the food security scores, dietary diversity (a proxy for nutritional quality) was relatively high, with a mean household score of 8 out of 12 (Figure 2). This indicates that the average household consumed foods from eight food groups in the 24 hours before the survey. In total, 87% of surveyed households had high dietary diversity, 11% had moderate, and only 2% had low dietary diversity. Household food security and dietary diversity scores are also positively associated: for example, 94% of food-secure households had high dietary diversity, compared with 78% of food-insecure households.

The most common strategies for coping with food insecurity among households were eating less-preferred, inexpensive foods, limiting portion sizes, and reducing the number of daily meals, with each occurring more than 2 days per

Figure 2: Dietary Diversity of Surveyed Households



week on average (Figure 3). Households purchased food on credit at least once per week on average. Borrowing food or going a whole day without eating occurred occasionally, while extreme responses, such as begging for food or eating wild foods, were rare. This pattern suggests that most households manage food shortages through moderate rationing and dietary adjustments, rather than through desperate coping measures.

To identify which household types are more vulnerable to food insecurity, the four food security categories are cross-tabulated with key household characteristics in Table 3. The incidence of severe food insecurity is very low among these households (only two of 200 surveyed), suggesting that remittances may be mitigating the worst effects of food insecurity. Household structure, income, and remittances appear to be associated with food security levels. Regarding household structure, food security shows a distinct gender bias. Female-centred households have the lowest level of food security (9% of households), compared with 17%-19% in the other three household types. Food security scores for those living in houses are distributed across the food security categories. They have the lowest overall food security, with 11% food-secure, 57% mildly food-insecure, and 32% moderately food-insecure. However, the number of households in most other dwelling types is too small to draw definitive conclusions about associations with dwelling type.

Income is usually strongly associated with household food security. As Table 3 shows, as household income increases, so does the prevalence of food security. Households in Quintiles 2 and 3 have the lowest levels of food security, while better-off households in Quintiles 4 and 5 have markedly better food security. However, households in the lowest-income quintile (Quintile 1) have food security levels almost as high as those in the upper quintile (Quintile 5) and higher than those in Quintiles 2-4. This reflects the presence of single-person households in the lowest-income tercile, which have much lower food and other costs. Nevertheless, food insecurity is found even among higher-income households, suggesting that income alone may not insulate households from food-related vulnerabilities. The table also shows that households receiving remittances account for over 90% of the food-secure category. Only 5% of non-remittance recipients are food secure, compared with 20% of those who receive remittances. Similarly, 82% of remittance recipients are food-secure or experience mild food insecurity, compared with 53% of those who do not receive remittances.

The results of logistic regression modelling are presented in Table 4. The results reflect conditional associations rather than causal effects. After controlling for receipt of remittances, household structure, dwelling type, and income quintile, several variables remain statistically associated with household food insecurity status. The coefficients and odds ratios suggest that higher-income households have higher odds of being food secure. For example, when households in the lowest-income quintile are the reference group, those in the higher-income fourth and fifth quintiles have much lower odds of being food insecure (ORs of 0.46 and 0.30, respectively). However, households in the second and third quintiles do not differ significantly from the lowest quintile once other factors are held constant. These results suggest that higher income is generally associated with improved food security status, but that the relationship is not strictly linear.

The model found that household structure is associated with food insecurity. Using female-centred households as the reference group, other household types exhibit lower odds of food insecurity. The association is strongest and statistically significant for extended households. These findings confirm a gendered dimension of vulnerability among migrant-sending households, with female-centred house-

Figure 3: Food Coping Strategies of Surveyed Households

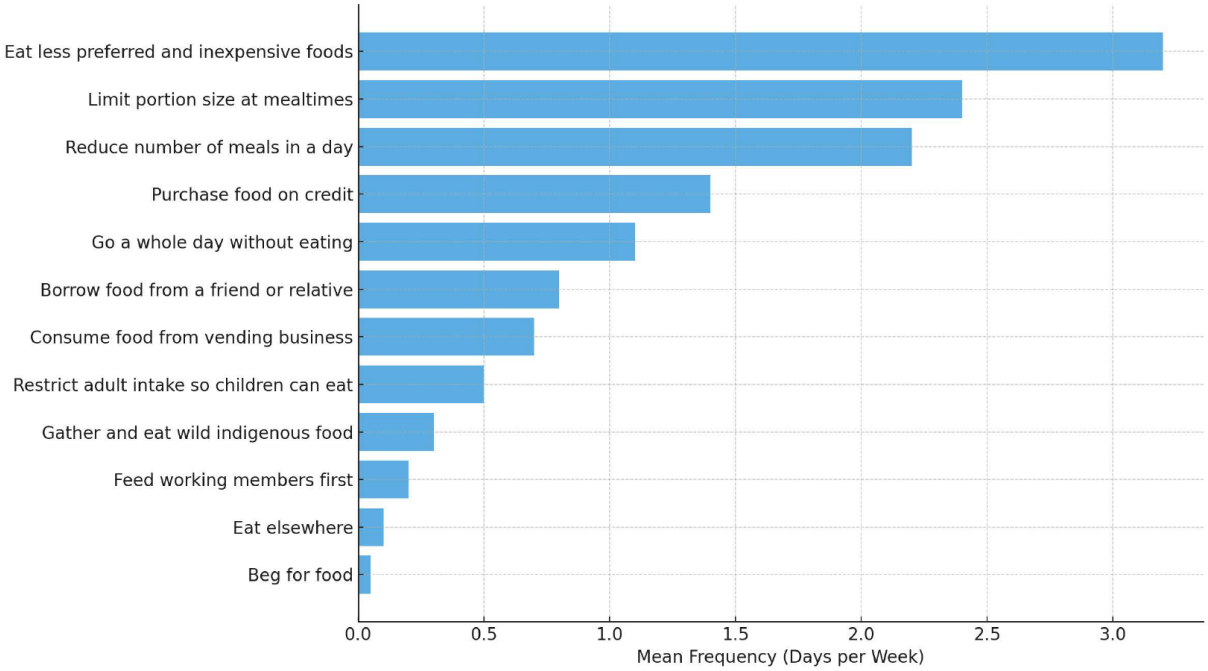


Table 3: Household Characteristics by Food Security Status				
	Food secure (%)	**Mild food insecurity (%)**	**Moderate food insecurity (%)**	**Severe food insecurity (%)**
Household structure				
Female-centred	8.8	64.7	20.6	5.9
Male-centred	18.2	61.3	20.5	0.0
Nuclear	17.3	53.9	28.8	0.0
Extended	18.8	43.7	37.5	0.0
Household dwelling				
House	10.6	56.8	31.9	0.7
Flat	33.3	50.0	16.7	0.0
Traditional dwelling homestead	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0
Traditional dwelling with room	28.6	42.8	28.6	0.0
Hostel/compound	31.6	42.1	26.3	0.0
Townhouse	33.3	46.7	13.3	6.7
Household income quintiles				
Quintile 1	22.0	58.5	17.1	2.4
Quintile 2	10.5	57.9	28.9	2.7
Quintile 3	10.8	59.5	29.7	0.0
Quintile 4	15.4	43.6	41.0	0.0
Quintile 5	23.1	51.3	25.6	0.0
Remittances received				
Yes	19.5	55.8	24.7	0.0
No	5.0	47.5	42.5	5.0

Table 4: Logistic Regression Results of Household Food Insecurity				
	coef	**Odds Ratio**	**P-Value**	**Confidence Interval**
Household Income Quintiles (Ref. Income Quintile 1)				
Quintile 2	0.499	1.07	0.652	(-1.667) - (2.665)
Quintile 3	0.073	2.00	0.938	(-1.787) - (1.934)
Quintile 4	0.057	0.46	0.960	(-2.136) – (2.249)
Quintile 5	-1.212	0.30	0.217	(-3.133) – (-0.710)
Household Structure: (Ref. Female-centred)				
Male-centred	-1.566	0.21	0.246	(-4.213) – (1.081)
Nuclear	-1.271	0.28	0.148	(-2.992) – (0.450)
Extended	-1.905**	0.34	0.039	(-3.709) – (-0.100)
Household Dwelling: (Ref. Traditional Household dwelling)				
Flat	-0.062	0.12	0.960	(-2.480) – (2.355)
House	-2.654*	0.07	0.078	(-5.602) – (0.294)
Hostel/compound	-1.016	0.36	0.306	(-2.963) – (0.931)
Townhouse	0.908	2.48	0.432	(-1.359) - (3.175)
Remittances received (Ref. No)				
Yes	-2.830***	0.06	0.001	(-4.460) - (-1.200)
*p ≤ 0.01***; p ≤ 0.05 **; p ≤ 0.1**				

holds exhibiting comparatively greater exposure to food insecurity. Households reporting remittance inflows from Qatar have substantially lower odds of food insecurity than households not receiving remittances. However, the correlation between remittance receipt and food security status in this selected sample of migrant-sending households does not provide evidence of the causal impact of remittances per se. Overall, the regression results indicate that food insecurity among these migrant-sending households is statistically associated with income position, household structure, and receipt of remittances.

Discussion

There is now a growing body of evidence from across the Global South about the close causal relationship between international migration, remittances, and food security (Crush & Ramachandran, 2024; Moniruzzaman, 2022; Obi et al., 2020; Regmi & Paudel, 2017; Sulemana et al., 2019, 2022). The consensus from the literature is that migrant remittances are positively associated with recipient households' food security. In Ghana, the same conclusion has been reached regarding internal migrant remittances (Abdul-Korah, 2011; Antwi-Agyei & Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). However, as Smith & Floro (2020a, p. 1198) point out, international remittances generally have a much greater influence on food security than domestic remittances. Research on international remittances and food security in Ghana is relatively sparse (Adjei Mantey et al., 2023; Karamba et al., 2011), and the relationship has rarely been studied with reference to the increasingly well-travelled corridor between Ghana and the Gulf (Owusu & Crush, 2024).

The first research question addressed in this paper concerned the types of Ghanaian household that sends family members to work in Qatar. The surveyed households are predominantly lower-income urban families whose limited economic resources make migration an essential livelihood strategy. The survey shows that their self-reported mean annual income is GHS22,687 (USD1,883.11). To put this in context, the average household income in Accra is GHS63,000 (USD5,229.54). Around 80% of the surveyed households have annual incomes below GHS35,000 (USD2,905.45), with 21% in the lowest income bracket, GHS0–6,999 (USD0–580.67). Only 21% are in the highest income quintile, GHS34,200–144,000 (USD2,839.13–11,952.72). These households, therefore, appear to be significantly worse off economically than the average urban household in Accra. This suggests that Qatar-bound migration may largely be pursued by low-income households under considerable financial strain. These households also have a diverse structure. Extended family units constitute the single largest group, with significant numbers of nuclear, male-centred, and female-centred households. Despite this diversity, most are united by their economic vulnerability and reliance on translocal remittances for their livelihoods and food security.

Second, we asked about the levels of food security these migrant-sending households experience and any conditional association with remittances. There is significant variation in food security and insecurity among the surveyed households, with less than 20% completely food-secure, 54% mildly food-secure, 28% moderately food-insecure, and only 1% severely food-insecure. Despite incomes that are much lower than the city average, the severity of food insecurity among them is much lower than in Accra as a whole. Tuholske et al. (2020), for example, found that 30% of low- and middle-income households across the city were severely food insecure. This may reflect the importance of remittances in boosting household consumption through food purchases.

In the associated area of dietary diversity, the profile of migrant-sending households and the general population appears much narrower. A study by Dzudzor, Gerber, and Asante (2024) used the HDDS and found that the average dietary score of Accra households was 7.0-7.5 out of 12, which is relatively high, especially given the rapid diffusion of ultra-processed foods (Kushitor et al., 2023, 2025; Mockshell et al., 2022). In Nairobi, Kenya, for example, the mean dietary diversity score is 6.0 (Owuor, 2018); in Maputo, Mozambique, it is 4.1 (Raimundo et al., 2018); and in Windhoek, Namibia, it is only 3.2 (Crush et al., 2021). The surveyed households had a significantly better mean HDDS score of 8.0, with 51% scoring 8.0 or more. This indicates that migration to Qatar is associated with a marginal improvement in an already diverse diet.

Comparative evidence suggests that women in migrant-sending households with autonomous decision-making power and control over remittance receipts and expenditures are more likely to spend them on household food purchase and a diversified diet, leading, in turn, to improved household food security outcomes (Uddin et al., 2025; Yabiku et al., 2010). At the same time, there is also evidence that female-headed households experience significantly worse food security outcomes than their male-headed counterparts (Choitani et al., 2019; Riley & Dodson, 2016; Szabo et al., 2022; Tayal, 2019). As elsewhere, female-centred migrant-sending households in this survey are the most vulnerable to food insecurity (Dunga, 2020; Tayal, 2019). The lower level of food insecurity among male-centred households is due to these households being headed by unmarried men and smaller in size, which means fewer mouths to feed.

The logistic regression model shows that the odds of a particular migrant-sending household being food secure or insecure are statistically associated with household structure, household income, and whether a household receives remittances from Qatar. The model confirms a clear gendered pattern with female-centred households having higher odds of experiencing food insecurity.Income is also associated with food insecurity, although the relationship is not strictly linear. Thus, households in the fourth- and fifth-income quintiles are significantly less likely to be food insecure, but households in the lowest income quintile have better-than-expected odds of being food secure, as many are smaller, single-person households with lower food requirements. Remittances, however, emerge as the most powerful predictor of household food security. Households

receiving remittances have reduced odds of being food insecure compared with those that do not, although the relationship is not necessarily causal.

The third and final question addressed in this paper is which strategies households adopt to mitigate food insecurity. The CSI was not designed for, nor does it capture, the full range of potential behaviours. For example, it does not capture behaviours related to remitting, such as appeals to migrants for larger and more frequent remittances. The most common food-related coping strategies among the surveyed households include eating less preferred or less expensive foods, reducing portion sizes, and cutting down on the number of meals consumed per day, all of which occurred, on average, more than two days per week. The average household also purchased food on credit at least once a week. Less frequent strategies included borrowing food from neighbours or relatives and prioritizing children's food consumption over that of adult household members. Thus, these households tend to respond to food insecurity through adaptive adjustments, likely supplemented by the stabilising impact of remittances.

Conclusion

While prior studies in Ghana have addressed both internal and international migration dynamics, few have examined how these patterns relate to food insecurity, particularly in the context of migration from Ghana to the Gulf. Food insecurity remains a pervasive challenge in Ghana, and international migration is often viewed as a strategy for improving household livelihoods and reducing economic vulnerability. This paper examines the relationship between remittances and household food security among migrant-sending households in the Ghana–Qatar migration corridor. Using survey data from 200 households in Accra and Kasoa, the study identifies patterns of food insecurity, explores factors associated with household vulnerability, and examines the coping strategies adopted by households experiencing food insecurity. Ultimately, migration to the Gulf is itself a coping mechanism for boosting household income to meet basic needs, such as food and children's education. Migration to Qatar, therefore, potentially offers significant relief from food insecurity for translocal migrant-sending households in Ghana. However, among the surveyed households, levels of food security remained low. By contrast, levels of dietary diversity were relatively high. Household type, income, and remittance receipts were all statistically associated with household food security and insecurity. Although the findings cannot be generalised to all Ghanaian households with migrants in Qatar, they provide important insights into the relationship between migration, remittances, and food security in urban Ghana. As migration from African countries to the Gulf continues to expand, further research is needed to better understand how translocal livelihood strategies shape household well-being and food security across diverse migration corridors.

References

Abdulai, A. (2023). The impact of remittances on economic growth in Ghana: An ARDL bound test approach. *Cogent Economics & Finance, 11*(2).

Abdul-Korah, G. B. (2011). 'Now if you have only sons you are dead': Migration, gender, and family economy in twentieth century northwestern Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 46*(4), 390-403.

Adams, R. H., & Cuecuecha, A. (2013). The impact of remittances on investment and poverty in Ghana. *World Development, 50*, 24-40.

Adjei Mantey, K., Awuku, M. O., & Kodom, R. V. (2023). Revisiting the determinants of food security: Does regular remittance inflow play a role in Ghanaian households? A disaggregated analysis. *Regional Science Policy & Practice, 15*(6), 1132-1147.

Akobeng, E. (2022). Migrant remittances and consumption expenditure under rain-fed agricultural income: Micro-level evidence from Ghana. *Oxford Development Studies, 50*(4), 352-371.

Amoako, E. E., & Apusigah, A. A. (2013). Gender, migration and remittances in Ghana: An overview. *Ghana Journal of Development Studies, 10*(1-2), 15-43.

Antwi, S. O., & Koranteng, E. O. (2017). International remittances and economic growth in Ghana: Does the measure of financial development matter? *International Journal of Technology and Management Research, 2*(1), 46-59.

Antwi-Agyei, P., & Nyantakyi-Frimpong, H. (2021). Evidence of climate change coping and adaptation practices by smallholder farmers in northern Ghana. *Sustainability, 13*(3), 1308.

Apekey, A. D., Agyeman, P., & Abilodepey, A. (2018). *Women's labour migration on the Africa-Middle East corridor: Experiences of migrant domestic workers from Ghana*. Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. https://gaatw.org/publications/Ghana-Country_Report.pdf

Asafo Agyei, S. (2021). The dynamics of remittances impact: A mixed-method approach to understand Ghana's situation and the way forward. *Social Sciences, 10*(11), 410.

Atong, K., Mayah, E., & Odigie, A. (2018). *African labour migration to the GCC States: The case of Ghana, Kenya,* Nigeria, and Uganda. ITUC-Africa.

Awumbila, M., Teye, J. K., & Yaro, J. A. (2017). Social networks, migration trajectories and livelihood strategies of migrant domestic and construction workers in Accra, Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 52*(7), 982-996.

Awumbila, M., Teye, J., Kandilige, L., et al. (2019a). *Connection men, pusher, and migrant trajectories: Examining the*

dynamics of migration industry in Ghana and along routes into Europe and the Gulf States (Working Paper No. 65), Migrating Out of Poverty Consortium, University of Sussex.

Awumbila, M., Deshingkar, P., Kandilige, L., et al. (2019b). Please, thank you and sorry: Brokering migration and constructing identities for domestic work in Ghana. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45*(14), 2655-2671.

Baliwati, Y. F., Briawan, D., & Melani, V. (2015) Validation household dietary diversity score (HDDS) to identify food insecure households in industrial area. *Pakistan Journal of Nutrition, 14*(4), 234-238.

Bonsu, A. (2013, 7 February). Four more report ordeal from Asie Ocansey. *Graphic Online.*

Brew, E. R. (2019). Economic migration to the Gulf States: The case of Ghanaian women migrants (Unpublished M.A. thesis). University of Ghana.

Brickell, K., & Datta, A. (Eds.) (2011). *Translocal geographies: Spaces, places, connections*. Ashgate.

Chikanda, A., Crush, J., & Tawodzera, G. (2020). Urban food security and South-South migration to cities of the Global South. In *Handbook on Urban Food Security in the Global South* (pp. 261-281). Edward Elgar.

Choithani, C. (2017). Understanding the linkages between migration and household food security in India. *Geographical Research, 55*, 192–205.

Choithani, C. (2019). Gendered livelihoods: Migrating men, left-behind women and household food security in India. *Gender, Place & Culture, 27*(10), 1373–1394.

Choithani, C. (2022). *Migration, food security and development*. Cambridge University Press.

Coates, J. (2013). Build it back better: Deconstructing food security for improved measurement and action. *Global Food Security, 2*(3), 188-194.

Coates, J., Swindale, A., & Bilinsky, P. (2007). *Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) for measurement of food access: Indicator guide: Version 3.* Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project, Academy for Educational Development.

Crush, J. (2013). Linking food security, migration, and development. *International Migration, 51*(5), 61-75.

Crush, J., & Ramachandran, S. (2024). Mapping the linkages between food security, inequality, migration, and development in the Global South. In *The Palgrave Handbook on South-South Migration and Inequality* (pp. 567-586). Palgrave Macmillan.

Crush, J., & Tawodzera, G. (2017). South-South migration and urban food security: Zimbabwean migrants in South African cities. *International Migration, 55*(4), 88-102.

Crush, J., Nickanor, N., & Kazembe, L. (2021). *Urban food system governance and food security in Namibia* (HCP Discussion Paper No. 49). Hungry Cities Partnership.

Daily Guide. (2013, March 26). Radio pastor busted for human trafficking. *Modern Ghana*. https://www.modernghana.com/news/454954/radio-pastor-busted-for-human-trafficking.html

de Haas, H., Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (2020). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world* (6th Edition). Red Globe Press.

Deshingkar, P., Awumbila, M., & Teye, J. (2019). Victims of trafficking and modern slavery or agents of change? Migrants, brokers, and the state in Ghana and Myanmar. *Journal of the British Academy, 7,* 77-106.

Dunga, H. M. (2020). An empirical analysis on determinants of food security among female-headed households in South Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies, 12*(1), 66-81.

Dzudzor, M. I., Gerber, N., & Asante, F. A. (2024). Food safety and dietary diversity in African urban cities: Evidence from Ghana. *BMC Public Health, 24*(1), 888.

Gatsi, J. G. (2020). Effects of international and internal remittances on financial inclusion in Ghana. *Financial Markets, Institutions and Risks, 4*(3), 109-123.

Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). (2019). *Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) 7: Main report*. Ghana Statistical Service.

GhanaWeb. (2015, March 3). *Over 2,000 Ghanaian ladies stranded in Gulf States.* GhanaWeb. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Over-2-000-Ghanaian-ladies-stranded-in-Gulf-States-348845

Greiner, C., & Sakdapolrak, P. (2013), Translocality: Concepts, applications and emerging research perspectives. *Geography Compass, 7*, 373-384.

Guermond, V. (2022a). Whose money? Digital remittances, mobile money and fintech in Ghana. *Journal of Cultural Economy, 15*(4), 436-451.

Guermond, V. (2022b). *Remittances and financial inclusion: Contested geographies of marketisation in Senegal and Ghana.* Routledge.

Karamba, W. R., Quiñones, E. J., & Winters, P. (2011). Migration and food consumption patterns in Ghana. *Food Policy, 36*(1), 41-53.

Kushitor, S. B., Alangea, D. O., Aryeetey, R., et al. (2023). Dietary patterns among adults in three low-income urban communities in Accra, Ghana. *PLoS One, 18*(11), e0293726.

Kushitor, S. B., Okoibhole, L., Vaughan, M., et al. (2025). Changes in food quality and habits in urban Ghana: Evidence from a mixed-methods study. *BMC Public Health, 25,* 2556.

Maxwell, D., Vaitla, B., & Coates, J. (2014). How do indicators of household food insecurity measure up? An empirical comparison from Ethiopia. *Food Policy, 47*, 107-116.

Mockshell, J., Ogutu, S. O., Álvarez, D., et al. (2022). How healthy and food secure is the urban food environment in Ghana? *World Development Perspectives, 26*, 100427.

Moniruzzaman, M. (2022). The impact of remittances on household food security: Evidence from a survey in Bangladesh. *Migration and Development, 11*(3), 352-371.

Moniruzzaman, M., & Walton-Roberts, M. (2022). Tracing the links between migration and food security in Bangladesh.In *Handbook on Migration and Welfare* (pp. 470-487). Edward Elgar.

Musah-Surugu, J. I., & Anuga, S. W. (2023). Remittances as a game changer for climate change adaptation financing for the most vulnerable: Empirical evidence from northern Ghana. In *Remittances as Social Practices and Agents of Change* (pp. 343-368). Palgrave Macmillan.

Musah-Surugu, I. J., Ahenkan, A., Bawole, J. N., et al. (2018). Migrants' remittances: A complementary source of financing adaptation to climate change at the local level in Ghana. *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management, 10*(1), 178-196.

Obi, C., Bartolini, F., & D'Haese, M. (2020). International migration, remittance and food security during food crises: The case study of Nigeria. *Food Security, 12*(1), 207-220.

Ofori-Appiah, E. D., Dwumor Kessey, K., & Oduro-Ofori, E. (2024). Expenditure decisions on international remittances received by households in Ghana. *Cogent Social Sciences, 10*(1).

Oteng-Abayie, E. F., Awuni, P. A., & Adjei, T. K. (2020). The impact of inward remittances on economic growth in Ghana. *African Journal of Economic Review, 8*(3), 49-65.

Owuor, S. (2018). *The state of household food security in Nairobi, Kenya* (HCP Report No. 11). Hungry Cities Partnership.

Owusu, B., & Crush, J. (2024). Translocality, remittances, and food security in the Ghana-Qatar migration corridor. *African Human Mobility Review, 10*(3), 155-177.

Pickbourn, L. (2016). Remittances and household expenditures on education in Ghana's Northern Region: Why gender matters. *Feminist Economics, 22*(3), 74-100.

Quartey, P., Ackah, C., & Lambon-Quayefio, M. P. (2019). Inter-linkages between remittance and savings in Ghana. *International Journal of Social Economics, 46*(1), 152-166.

Rahman, M., & Salisu, M. (2023). Gender and the return migration process: Gulf returnees in Ghana. *Comparative Migration Studies, 11*, 18.

Raimundo, I., McCordic, C., & Chikanda, A. (2018). *The state of household food security in Maputo, Mozambique* (HCP Report No. 10). Hungry Cities Partnership.

Ramachandran, S., & Crush, J. (2023). Food security, equitable development and South–South migration: Towards a research agenda. *International Migration, 61*, 341-344.

Regmi, M., & Paudel, K. P. (2017). Food security in a remittance-based economy. *Food Security, 9*, 831-848.

Republic of Ghana (2013). The Republic v Naa Osie Ocansey. Case No. D21/913/13.

Riley, L., & Dodson, B. (2016). Gender, mobility and food security. In *Rapid urbanisation, urban food deserts and food security in Africa* (pp. 113-126). Springer.

Ramachandran, S., Crush, J., Tawodzera, G., et al. (2024). Pandemic precarity, crisis-living and food insecurity: Female Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa. In *Research handbook on migration, gender and COVID-19* (pp. 180-195). Edward Elgar.

Saani, M. R., Abdulai, A., & Salifu, M. (2023). Unemployment and remittances nexus in Ghana: The gender perspective. *Cogent Economics & Finance, 11*(2).

Sadiddin, A., Cattaneo, A., Cirillo, M., et al. (2019). Food insecurity as a determinant of international migration: evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. *Food Security, 11*, 515-530.

Smith, M. D., & Floro, M. S. (2020a). The effects of domestic and international remittances on food insecurity in low- and middle-income countries. *Journal of Development Studies, 57*(7), 1198-1220.

Smith, M.D., & Floro, M.S. (2020b). Food insecurity, gender, and international migration in low-and middle-income countries. *Food Policy, 91*, 101837.

Smith, M. D., & Wesselbaum, D. (2022). Food insecurity and international migration flows. *International Migration Review, 56*(2), 615-635.

Sulemana, I., Anarfo, E. B., & Quartey, P. (2019). International remittances and household food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Migration and Development, 8*(2), 264-280.

Sulemana, I., Bugri Anarfo, E., & Doabil, L. (2022). Migrant remittances and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa: The role of income classifications. *International Migration Review, 57*(2), 681-706.

Swindale, A., & Bilinsky, P. (2006). *Household dietary diversity score (HDDS) for measurement of household food access: indicator guide.* Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project, Academy for Educational Development.

Szabo, S., Ahmed, S., Wiśniowski, A., et al. (2022). Remittances and food security in Bangladesh: An empirical country-level analysis. *Public Health Nutrition, 25*(10), 2886-2896.

Tayal, D. (2019). Gender inequality, reproductive rights and food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa: A panel data study. *International Journal of Development Issues, 18*(2), 191-208.

Teye, J. K., Darkwah, A. K., Thorsen, D., et al. (2023). Negotiating gender roles and power relations through the management of international migrant remittances in a patriarchal community in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 60*(1), 36-50.

Tuholske, C., Andam, K., Blekking, J., et al. (2020). Comparing measures of urban food security in Accra, Ghana. *Food Security, 12,* 417-431.

Uddin, M. B., Shrestha, K., & Zwi, A. (2025). Nexus between foreign remittances and women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh. *Migration and Development, 0*(0).

Yabiku, S. T., Agadjanian, V., & Sevoyan, A. (2010). Husbands' labour migration and wives' autonomy, Mozambique 2000–2006. *Population Studies, 64*(3), 293-306.

Zezza, A., Carletto, C., Davis, B., et al. (2011). Assessing the impact of migration on food and nutrition security. *Food Policy, 36*(1), 1-6.