

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY FOR REMITTANCE
RECIPIENTS AS LIVELIHOOD SOURCE OF INCOME IN LESOTHO: THE CASE OF
LILALA COMMUNITY.

BY Mateboho Flory Seliane (Student number 200501478)

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Award of MA in Development Studies,
Department of Development Studies. National University of Lesotho

Supervisor: Professor Maxwell Musingafi

July 2022

Certification

This is to certify that this dissertation of Mateboho Seliane of student number 200501478 has been completely read and approved to have met the requirements of the Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Humanities, and National University of Lesotho for the award of Master of Arts in Development Studies.

Supervisor: Professor Maxwell Musingafi

Head of Department

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for giving me strength and perseverance to complete this hard work and for making it possible when I thought it was all impossible. My sincerest gratitude goes to supervisor Professor Maxwell Musingafi who guided me throughout this work. I would also like to humbly thank my mother, Mrs Matebello Morojele who had faith in me that I will make it. I love you mama and thank you for your prayers and unmeasurable support.

Another person whose support cannot be ignored is my Pastor, Pastor Chukas Amadi, thank you so much for believing in me and always giving me courage to hold on and keep the faith. You have been counselling me when I was at my lowest and thought of giving up and most prominently you prayed for me more than I prayed for myself.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions from my Supervisor, the District Disaster Manager in Maseru District; Mrs ' Monoto who gave me thumbs up to endure with my studies while at the same time serving the nation at Disaster Management Authority.

Lastly, it also gives me huge pleasure to acknowledge the support I received from my dearest sister Boithatelo Morojele and my favourite beautiful children Tanki and Nthona, who experienced loneliness during the times I spent away from home to do this work. Thank you for your patience and understanding that all this was done for you.

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Acronyms

DMA	Disaster Management Authority
WFP	World Food Programme
LVAC	Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee
WB	World Bank
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation

SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
LNDC	Lesotho National Developemr Corporation
US	Unite States

ABSTRACT

Food Security has been a major concern globally mainly in the developing countries. One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to achieve zero hunger nations. Recently, most countries experience food insecurity due to global warming and not only that but also income sources for different households. Some livelihood income sources are casual/ informal and are mostly affected by crisis in many countries. When livelihood sources are affected, people become food insecure because they lose their purchasing power and cannot financially access food in the markets.

Food insecurity has been common in Lesotho for the past years and was intensively experienced by many households. One of the common income sources in Lesotho especially in the rural areas is remittances. When agricultural production declined in the country, household members migrated to the urban areas and to the neighbour country to seek employment and most of them remitted to their families. The remittances flows were affected in 2020 when COVID 19 evolved in the country. Lesotho has many migrant labours because of less job opportunities in the country and many people have indeed migrated. Those in the rural have migrated to the urban for domestic and textile factory jobs while some from both rural and urban have migrated outside the country.

However the pandemic came with lockdown restrictions that affected migrant labours. The borders were closed, factories were closed, most migrant labours returned home and movement was restricted. All these restrictions affected many sources of income including remittances. Many households lost their purchasing power and became vulnerable to food insecurity in Lesotho as a result of the pandemic and many humanitarian interventions were made to curb the extreme food insecurity emergency.

This study's main objective is to investigate the impact of COVID 19 on food Security for households that depend on remittances as livelihood sources. This paper has examined how

COVID 19 has affected remittances and investigated the livelihood coping strategies applied by households as they experienced food insecurity. The researcher used mixed methodology to test and build theories in this research. The study reveals that indeed COVID 19 affected the remittances flows and the remittance recipient's households experienced food shortages due to financial access. Prices were high while on the other hand people had no income to purchase food.

The study intends to make a contribution in guiding the policy makers in formulating development policies on food security in light of pandemics and to provide a background information on how pandemics can affect people's income sources and food security so that resilient programmes can be established to improve lives.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.0 Introduction

According Nyariki and Wiggins (1997), food insecurity has been the most famous interesting issue globally, especially in Africa during the last two decades. It is mostly caused by decline in agricultural production. The reports show that millions of people in the African countries are affected by diet related diseases than any other diseases as they fail to meet their food diversity scores. He indicates that Most developing countries are experiencing chronic and acute food insecurity because of lack of food in majority of households. More than half of the households faced with food insecurity resides in the rural areas and depend on agricultural production, (Nyariki & Wiggins, 1997).

The way food insecurity has been defined in the past is different from the current definitions of food insecurity. Food insecurity has always been linked with food production or agricultural production. Recently around 2002 and 2003 it is about food access and availability in the markets rather than own production. It is now about food supply and food demand depending on whether the households do have full access in terms of either financial or physical access, (Clay, 2003). Access may depend on whether households have enough income to purchase food from the markets and whether the markets are accessible to all the people.

Food Security is not only linked to access but also to food availability in preferred calories. Availability sometimes vary by season. For instance some food may be available in stocks from one's own subsistence production, while others may be available in the markets. Availability is a factor contributing to food security because once food is not available then households will not consume anything. Food security is defined by Hesselburg and Yaro (2006) as "secure access by households and individuals to nutritionally adequate food at all times"

1.1 Background to the study

COVID-19 as a rapidly growing pandemic in the world has posed a threat to the global food security due to the restrictions such as border closures, lockdowns and quarantines around the world. These restrictions have hindered movement of people especially the migrant labours. Import and export of food was also threatened thereby affecting food access and availability in many countries. It is due to the COVID-19 restrictions and protocols that other livelihood sources of income like remittances were affected leaving households that depend on remittances food insecure. Especially where mobile money was not available and also due to loss of jobs as economies slowed down

The number of households that were food insecure before the COVID-19 pandemic was roughly 11% in the United States but as the pandemic increased almost 18%-34% of the people were estimated to be food insecure because most people lost their livelihood income sources, (Reimold, et al., 2021). In some countries like India, food production was affected by restrictions on agricultural labour. Due to the fact that migrant labourers could not travel, all the farming and agricultural operations were jeopardised. Most household's breadwinners lost jobs and thus failed to provide for their families while other failed to send remittances to their families. At the same time production declined due to labour shortages and affected food availability thus resulting in more people becoming vulnerable and food insecure (Sing, et al., 2020).

The remittances are viewed as one of the components of financial development for both national and household, and in most cases they are affected by global crises like pandemics. The recent global crisis that have significantly affected remittances in Africa are the 2008 financial crisis and 2014 Ebola. The remittances have contributed 32% of economic development from developed countries with global migrants who remit the highest in

developing countries (Bisong, et al., 2020). The COVID-19 crisis has affected the remittances because the pandemic has hit the major global economies in European Countries where most remittances are sent from, (Bisong, et al., 2020).

Lesotho like all other countries has experienced food insecurity for more than three decades. It is a small, mountainous and landlocked country with a population of about two million. The country poverty rate in 2017 was 59.9 percent with the slowest progress of poverty alleviation in the country especially in the rural where resources are limited to the people (WorldBank, 2021) despite all the efforts to alleviate poverty. Majority of the population is found in the mountains, southern lowlands and northern lowlands and most depend on agricultural activities, beer brewing, casual labour, remittances and old pension as livelihood income sources. For the past five or six years since 2015 the country has been experiencing food insecurity due to climate change that caused severe droughts and resulted in low production in some places while in other places there was no production at all leaving most households vulnerable to hunger (WFP 2019-2020). However for the past two years 2021 and 2022, the country experienced heavy rains that affected production countrywide due to water logging in the fields. Both livestock production and agricultural production were affected together with agricultural casual labour, (LVAC, 2022).

The 2019 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) report shows that 30% of the population faced high levels of food insecurity and Maseru was one of the districts affected. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification results of 2021, stipulated that 12 percent of the population in the rural areas of the country is currently facing high levels of food insecurity caused by many factors with COVID 19 being one of the factors that contributed to the food insecurity in the country as it has impacted on the livelihood sources of income.

The COVID 19 pandemic evolved in Lesotho in June 2020 where it affected many livelihood sources of income. Most people lost their jobs thereby failing to provide for their families or sending remittances to their homes, schools were closed and other services were shut down because of the COVID 19 protocols resulting in people facing food insecurity as food access and availability became the major issue for many households. As the numbers of COVID 19 kept increasing, the situation became worse for many households in terms of food insecurity, (Paballo, September 2021).The 2021 Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Report, shows that COVID 19 has to a certain extent played a role in the food insecurity of many households in the country because their livelihood sources of income declined thus affecting their purchasing power.

Lilala Community Council is the 7th (AO7) of the twelve community councils in Maseru. It is in the Southern lowlands of the District. This council has been experiencing food insecurity for the past years due to drought as already access to water is the main problem in this community council hence they are always hit hard by drought. The majority of households depend on remittances, casual labour and old pension fund as livelihood sources of income because agricultural production has declined in this communit and only few households engage in agricultural production. Many other livelihoods were affected especially the remittances and most households members have migrated to other places for employment. Labour migration is common in this place and most of the nmigrant labour returned home during the pandemic.As the council is in Maseru, and the district has been the COVID 19 epicentre, it is obvious that the council has been affected negatively by the pandemic and its protocols.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The COVID 19 pandemic affected food production and supply in Lesotho due to restrictions implemented to curb the spread of the disease unaware that the very same restrictions may have a negative impact on food security. COVID 19 impacted a lot on livelihood income sources for many families in the country resulting in many households struggling to put food on the table during the pandemic. The majority of rural households in Lesotho survive on remittances send by bread winners either outside the country or Maseru, (LVAC, 2019). With the coming of COVID 19 which came with forced lockdowns, most economic activities came to a standstill throughout the world such that it was difficult if not impossible to send the remittances back home, especially for those doing unprofessional jobs or doing casual labour since they were forced to stay home with most of them experiencing a reduction in their wages. This implies that the recipients of remittances had to look for other means or substitutes to ensure their food security.

1.3 Statement of purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of COVID 19 on food Security for households that depend on remittances as livelihood sources of income in the Lilala community.

1.4 Objectives

Specific objectives for this study are as follows:

1. to examine how COVID 19 affected remittances as livelihood income sources of households in Lilala Community in Lesotho;
2. to investigate the livelihood coping strategies applied by remittance recipient households when facing food insecurity in the Lilala Community in Lesotho; and

3. to assess the impact of COVID 19 on Food Security indicators (access, availability, utilisation and stability) in relation to remittances in Lilala Community in Lesotho.

1.5. Research questions

Corresponding research questions were as follows:

1. How did COVID 19 affect remittances as the livelihood income source of households in Lilala Community in Lesotho?
2. Which livelihood coping strategies did remittance recipient households in Lilala Community use to survive the food gaps they experienced because of COVID 19?
3. Which Food Security indicators were most affected by decline in remittances as a result of COVID 19?

1.6. Statement of assumptions

The study assumes that COVID 19 has negatively affected the livelihood sources of income like remittances at all levels in Lilala Community leaving majority of people vulnerable to food insecurity.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study makes a great contribution in terms of guiding the policy makers in formulating and developing policies on food security in light of the COVID 19 pandemic. The study takes ideas from the affected communities to have an insider view point on lived experiences and how the problem can be mitigated. This would certainly guide policy makers on how to respond to the pandemics without pushing people into food insecurity.

This study will break fresh ground in terms of providing background information on how pandemics can affect the people's food security and how resilient programmes can be established so that whenever the pandemic hits the country, hunger will not be experienced to the core. It will also contribute in assisting the country on sustaining food security at all times and help the government to ensure that all food security indicators or dimensions are stable at all times even at times of pandemics as achieving the Zero hunger nation is their priority.

1.8 Ethical consideration

Certain ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality are considered in this study. The researcher was first introduced to the local councillor and the area chief to have access to the villages. The participants were fully informed about the objective of the study and their role. They were also made aware by the interviewer that their participation in the study is voluntary therefore they have a right to respond or not to respond to the questions. However there was Confidentiality in this research meaning that responses given by participants during interviews remained between the two as some information was very critical like financial status of respondents. The aim of applying confidentiality in this study was to protect and ensure privacy of research subjects.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

- Due to Covid 19 restrictions it was not easy to do bigger sample size which would have probably improve the results and the reliability of the research.
- Majority of respondents were not honest enough because of the food security topic as they may have thought being affected by COVID19 may gain them humanitarian assistance.

- Finding respondents was difficult because most household heads have migrated to the urban for survival and exploring other coping strategies.
- Time was also a limiting factor because the place where the research was conducted is a bit out of town and roads are inaccessible and this have delayed the study.
- Conducting interviews was challenging as most participants know me from the Disaster Management Authority office in Maseru and most of them thought I have come on behalf of the office not doing my research study. Probing answers had to be done intensively because participants were not honest thinking they will receive assistance from the Disaster Management Authority.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Food Security: Food security means ability to access food at all times either in the markets or through harvesting. FAO (2008), explains food security as “*when all people at all times have physical and financial access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy live.*” Food security entails two major elements; first being availability of food through production, storage and imports, second being food access to people through their purchasing power in the markets. World Bank (1991), defines food Security as “*access to food by all people at all times to adequate for an active live.*”

COVID 19: It is described as global health pandemic or crisis caused by a group of virus. It is said to be more dangerous than other infectious diseases as it has affected the social and economic sectors globally, (Udmale, et al., 2020). The pandemic has been evolving in many

rural and urban areas worldwide and it came about shutdown economy and disrupted the food access chains in many countries, (Sing, et al., 2020).

Remittances: they are defined as financial transfers from migrant or mobile workers to their households or families. They are somewhat an indirect flow of money which influence the balance of trade in many countries, (Cohen, 2011).

1.11 Study Organization

This research study comprises 6 chapters. Chapter 1 presents an Introduction to the study, the Background to the study, the Statement of the problem, statement of purpose, research objectives and questions, statement of assumptions, Significance of the study, ethical consideration, and limitation of study, definition of terms, Study organization and chapter summary.

Chapter 2 presents introduction, the conceptual and theoretical literature on remittances, food security and COVID 19 in both Africa and Lesotho, theoretical frame work and chapter summary.

Chapter 3 is the methodological approach used in undertaking this research.

Chapter 4 presents the collected data and its interpretation and discusses the findings in relation to the objectives of the study, the literature and theory and makes an analysis with regards to the aim of the study.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions drawn from the findings and makes some recommendations.

1.12 Summary

This chapter has covered the background on food security and COVID 19 and how the latter relate with the former. The statement of the problem is outlined in this chapter as to identify the problem the study aims to solve and how it will be solved looking at the objectives of the study. There is vital role this study will play hence its significant is outlined in this chapter to show how the study will help the authorities in their decision making about food security and pandemics. In fact, this chapter is an overview of the whole research and how it will be structured. Next chapter discusses related literature to contextualise the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Food insecurity has recently been an issue in many countries and with COVID 19 it became extremely worse for very poor and poor households that depend on informal employment as source of income. There are families who survive on remittances from family members who migrated to other countries for employment and send money back home for food and non-food purchase. However, the decline in remittances have weakened the cash flow for many households leading to failure to financially access food in the markets. It has also hindered the efforts to attain several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are households who only survive with remittances as their income source, but with the evolvement of COVID 19 many families lost their jobs. Some were retrenched, while others worked on shift that made them earn less than they earned before. As a result these families failed to survive because of decline in remittances, while other totally failed to send remittances back home, (Kalantaryan & McMahon, 2020). The purchasing power for remittance recipients became low leading to failure and lack of good access in the markets even though food was still available in the markets.

This chapter therefore, explores how food security of remittance recipients has been impacted by COVID 19. It also explores whether such households were able to attain food security or they became more vulnerable to food security. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section is the discussion of food security together with its dimensions, the second is the discussion on the impact of COVID 19 on remittances in Africa, third section is about remittances in Lesotho and how they are affected by COVID 19 and the their implication on

food security and then the last section will be theoretical framework, where theories will be discussed in relation to this study.

2.1 Food Security

Food security is a term created in the literature in the 1960s and 1970s and was used to explain and determine whether people have access to proper quality and quantity of food. There are many definitions of Food Security which were proposed by different authors and organisations and as it developed it was incorporated in all food related issues globally. The concept of Food Security was first discussed and recognised in the Declaration Right in 1948 as a right to food for every individual. However, there was huge global food crisis in 1972-1974 after the world's oil crisis and many definitions of Food Security were proposed on the table since the World Food Conference in 1974 after the crisis (Norhasmah, et al., 2010). One of the proposed definitions described Food Security as “availability of adequate supplies of basic food for consumption at all times and stability of food supplies.”

This term became a concern throughout the years and in the 1990s Food Security was defined as access to food by all people both physically, socially and economically. And that Food must be safe and nutritious at all times and meet dietary need and food preferences of all the people. This definition accommodated both food access and food availability at both macro and micro levels. The social aspect of food security that gives emphasis that food should both be accessed from the shops in an acceptable way, was incorporated in the definition of food Security by FAO in 2002. Hence the access to food involves both financial and physical access since some household are not engaged in food production.

Food security has four dimensions; food access, food availability, food utilization and food stability. Food access means being able to access nutritious food all times. All households must have access to food all year round, it could be financial access or physical access. Food availability means availability of food in the markets or in stores from the previous harvesting. Food should be available for household at all time and all types of food must indeed be available all year round. Food utilization refers to food safety, food storage, feeding practices, and water access and water preparation. Lastly food stability means access, availability and utilization must always be stable, (FAO, 2008).

Food availability simply means food must be available at all times for people to access either available from agricultural production that is food stocks or available in the markets. Food availability is one major aspect of Food Security because once the food is not available for consumption it is an indicator pointing to food insecurity as most household may experience hunger or refer to less preferred food because of unavailability of food. There is also food utilization as the third dimension of food security which can also affect poverty and hunger. Food utilization is very important to food security as it ensure that all households have access to nutritious food all year round, access to clean water and safe food, (FAO, 2008).

The last dimension of food security is food stability which entails all other three dimensions as it cuts across the other dimensions. Food stability has to be maintained at all times and it will only be maintained if people have physical and financial access to food at all times without destructions caused by weather conditions (FAO, 2008). There has to be stability in food availability. All food has to be available at all times either in the households or in the markets for all people to purchase. The moment food is unavailable to the community it means hunger will prevail leaving most people vulnerable. Moreover, food utilization also has to be stable at all times. People have to access clean water at all times, have food storages, have access to safe

food and, clean food preparations without hiccups due to weather conditions. Food stability has to be well maintained so that food security can be achieved for a country, (LVAC, 2019)

2.2 COVID 19

In December 2019, there was an outbreak of a severe acute respiratory syndrome called Coronavirus which was later abbreviated to COVID 19. This outbreak happened in China and then spread to other countries. The World Health Organisation declared COVID 19 as the global pandemic on the 30th January 2020 as it started spreading rapidly to other countries and causing more deaths and severe illness to a lot of people. The pandemic was a global health crisis that many nations were not prepared to manage the subsequent rapid spread and it was the decision of each individual government to manage the pandemic.

Since the discovery of COVID 19 in December 2019 in China, the virus continued to spread rapidly across regions and continents. Africa also experienced more cases and deaths caused by Covid 19 and thus has shaken the economic foundations in many countries because most governments globally had to implement restrictions on local and international movements either partially or complete lock down to avoid the spread of the virus. However it is a known fact that the implemented restrictions affected people differently and their income sources together with the food supply chains implicating food insecurity and hunger for many households, (Udmale, et al., 2020).

In 1918-1920 there was an influenza pandemic that evolved in Japan and it was the most devastating in the human history and cause 100 million death worldwide. Japan encountered two seasons of influenza between 1918 and 1920 and the pandemic spread in countries like North America, Europe and Asia. When this influenza pandemic evolved, Japan was beginning to experience economic force and integrating in industrial technology but the influenza

pandemic hindered all that and the country experienced economic crisis. However, there are consipiriencies that influenza pandemics evolve after every 100 years. There are similarities in the 1918 influenza and COVID 19, as both pandemics spread rapidly, both pandemics have caused many deaths, caused economic disruptions globally, no cure has been found for them. They both forced countries to lockdown and people to social distance while at the same time wear face musksat all times to avoid the infections, (Richard, et al., 2009).

2.3 Remittances.

Remittances are defined as economic transfers from a migrant worker to his or her household back in place of origin. They play an important role in providing households that lack local opportunities by helping them to secure food and meet other household necessities. Remittances contribute a lot on food security for many households and in most cases in rural areas household heads migrate to urban places for job opportunities so that they provide for their families back home. Remittances also contribute to economic growth in a country and are of fundamental importance to households that receive them as they help poor local communities, (Cohen, 2011).

2.4 Remittances and Food Security in Africa before and during COVID 19

As COVID 19 continues to threaten the economies and food security, governments responded by implementing restrictions that affected development in finance flows particularly remittances in African countries. Sectors such as tourism and hospitality, construction and manufacturing factories that employ migrants struggled to survive during the pandemic thus hindering the remittances send to their home countries and as a result their households

experienced food insecurity. The restrictions have impacted households that depend on remittances as livelihood source of income and such households struggle to meet their food needs that is they experience hunger. Many migrant labours have lost their jobs having consequences on income of individuals where remittances are highly important for daily survival. . Amere at al (2021) argues that COVID 19 affected many livelihood sources of income like remittances leaving many in food shortages.

According to World Bank (2020), remittances are expected to decline globally by 20% while in sub-Saharan African are expected to decline by 23.1%. This decline have affected Food security for the remittance recipients. It is also estimated that as Covid 19 continues to evolve, it may result in about 35% of migrants sending less than 5% of their previous remittances to their households and this implicates that such households may experience food insecurity. The decline in remittances have weaken the economic growth of many African countries and lower the welfare of many households pushing them back in to poverty and hunger. Many countries were desperate to curb the spread of the virus and by implementing the lockdown restrictions especially host countries or developed countries forced many migrants to lose their jobs and consequently reducing remittance flows in to developing countries and this affected food security of such migrant workers, (Emeka, et al., 2020).

According to World Bank 2019, in low and middle income countries like developing countries, remittances have played a role in foreign exchange and their importance is normally seen Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country. World Bank (2019) projected that the remittances in low and middle countries will reach at least \$551 billion and \$597 billion by 2019, 2020 and 2021 but this has not been the case because of COVID 19 (Emeka, et al., 2020). The projected figures by Word Bank were revised in 2020 as the pandemic continued to threaten the economies and people losing their jobs in foreign countries going back to their

home countries (low and middle countries). They were projected to fall from \$574 billion to \$445 billion, (Emeka, et al., 2020).

The COVID 19 has affected financial markets and global economy especially in African countries as they are now integrated in the global economy. Some governments have made some interventions to mitigate the severe impact of COVID 19 but not all the migrate workers and their households will benefit, (IMF 2020). The migrants in informal employment and in seasonal employment may not be able to benefit from the social benefits offered by governments. For some low income households that rely most on remittances are likely to be pushed in vulnerability to food insecurity given the predicted decline in remittances. UNECA (2020), argues that as COVID 19 is estimated to have negative impact on the economic sector in African Countries, it may push about 27 million people in to extreme poverty and hunger and for poorer households, remittances may be less than normal times or be unstable, (Habtewold, 2021).

The outbreak of COVID 19 affected the global financial flows through Global Financial Crisis. This was caused by shock in the labour sectors because of cuts in wages and limited working hours. The migrant labours in the GFS countries affected by COVID were unable to send remittances to households in remittance-dependent countries in Africa. The pandemic is said to have caused the worst economic disruption than those caused by GFS because COVID 19 came up with lockdowns measures introduces by different governments in different countries. These measures were meant to contain the spread of the disease but on the other hand it disturbed the supply and demand chain, (Emeka, et al., 2020)

When COVID 19 began to escalate, countries continue to extend their lockdown measure as a result migrants who remit faced more challenges and uncertainties as to whether they will still be able to remit to their families. Many migrants returned to their homes due to losing their

jobs while other did not actually lost their jobs but their salaries decreased leaving with less income to survive while at the same time fail to remit to their families. The remittance flows have shrunk during the pandemic and they are likely to continue to shrink even after the pandemic.

In Southern Africa, South Africa hosts a lot of migrant workers from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries like Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi and many others and such migrant workers remit to their home countries. During the COVID 19 lockdowns, these migrants working in the informal sectors lost their jobs and returned home and that affected the cash flow on remittances. During this pandemic, South African Rand has depreciated thereby by negatively affecting the volumes of remittances sent to the home countries. Therefore the lower levels of remittances from South Africa to SADC countries have affected the economic growth and development to South African dependent countries like Lesotho and Zimbabwe, (World Bank 2020).

Labour migration in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (BLS) countries contributed in living standards through remittances. According to Path (1987) in the late 1960s migrant remittances contributed approximately 40 per cent of rural household incomes and ten years later, migrant remittances were contributing about 65 per cent of rural household incomes. With this statement it is without doubt that household incomes in rural areas in BLS countries have always been dependent on remittances; hence living standards were able to increase during the 1970s as Path (1987) indicated.

2.5 Remittances and Food Security in Lesotho before and during COVID 19

Lesotho is one of the countries that depend of labour migration especially in South African. The migration remittances contribute so much or they are a major source of foreign exchange for the country and in 2006 they contributed 25% of the GDP (Mottele, 2011). Lesotho is one of the developing countries in the world as majority of people live below the poverty line, also agricultural production has also declined and there is highest domestic unemployment thus people migrate to other countries for domestic work and remit to their families. The remittances contribute to the financial development of Lesotho and they have brought about economic growth, (Sibindi, 2014). The majority of households in the rural depend of remittances as their livelihood sources and such remittances help them to financially access food in the markets. The remittances are mostly used for food purchasing and about 90 percent of the remittances in a household is used in food while the remaining used on other household necessities, (Crush, 2010).

It has been mentioned by LVAC report 2019 that majority of households in the rural areas depend of remittances as livelihood source of income, and they use such remittances to purchase food. However COVID 19 resulted in job losses while other people operated at reduced levels that resulted income decline. As a result the remittances rate declining, the households are left vulnerable to food security. The people who remit are the ones who have migrated to the urban places like Maseru to work in the textile factories and most of them are women. Due COVID 19 lockdowns and restrictions, the factory workers wages have been affected thus their purchasing power is negatively affected they cannot afford to purchase food in the markets that is financial access. Once access as a pillar of food security is a limiting factor, households begin to be more vulnerable to food security, (Kaleen, September 2021).

The COVID 19 restrictions implemented by WHO have hit hard the poor and very poor families who are already vulnerable to food security. They lost income opportunities and as a result their financial access to food was impacted. During the lockdown restrictions, the food chain distribution was also affected, thus there was inflation and prices of food were very high. The higher prices implies that the poor household cannot afford to purchase food and for those households that have lost remittances as sources of income, the situation became worse and their purchasing power was affected

Since March 2020 when COVID 19 lockdown restrictions began to be implemented, many migrant labours returned home and this impacted a lot on remittances in both the amount and the frequency. For some household, remittances declined and they could not afford to purchase food in the markets, some households lost remittances entirely because migrant labours lost their jobs. LVAC report (2021) indicates that 20% of rural households depend on remittances while only 7% of urban households depend on remittances. Most households receive remittances monthly, only few receive once in two months or once in six months. The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment report 2021 indicated that the female are the ones receiving remittances than the males as most people who migrate are men. According to the Lesotho IPC Acute Food Analysis July 2020- March 2021 380 000 people across the country are food insecure due to COVID 19 and other factors like drought but the pandemic resulted in reduced remittances and income sources for many people. Lilala community council being one of the affected as most household depends in remittances.

However loss of employment or decline in wages implies that such household is likely to experience hunger and poverty. This may either change their eating patterns or left them without food entirely. Some households experienced hunger during COVID 19 restrictions and had to resort to other livelihood coping strategies for them to eat and survive. In some countries like Malawi and Kenya the cash and food safety nets were used as coping mechanisms during

the pandemic, (Dasgupta & Robinson, 2021). Once there is no access to food, it implies that a household is food insecure. Access being physical access or financial access. The moment one pillar of food security becomes a limiting factor, then food insecurity is experienced. For households who depend entirely on remittances and do not have other sources of income, food insecurity became their worst nightmare. They failed to meet their dietary diversity scores and began to experience food gaps due to low purchasing power or financial access, (LVAC, 2021). When the country first implemented total lockdown in March 2020, food inflation rate was 5.2%. It increased to 8.7% in April 2020, and it remained above 12% from July 2020 through to March 2021 when it reached peak of 14.6%. This inflation affected financial access of many people and they could no longer afford to purchase food in the markets, (LVAC 2021).

Majority of textile factory workers have lost their jobs and these workers are from the rural areas and have migrated to the Capital city Maseru for employment opportunities so that they could remit to their families back home. The Nien Hsing international, which is the biggest textile factory in Lesotho had retrenched 2500 employees and has shut down, (Qhesi.T., 2021). According to Lesotho Times newspaper (August 2021), the Manager of this factory blamed the retrenched on the negative international market forces that resulted from COVID 19. The Lesotho National Development Corporation (LNDC) had reported that about 6000 workers have lost their jobs due to COVID 19. It is clear that once the factory workers lose their jobs, they cannot afford to remit rather they go back home to stay with their families and face food shortages.

The IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis report (2021), justified that the lockdown measures have caused a reduction in remittances thereby reducing the purchasing power remittances dependent households. The same report in its assumptions shows that the remittances are likely to remain reduced and affecting food security. The IPC Acute Food Insecurity Update Analysis

report (November 2021) confirms the assumptions of the previous report that the remittances have still reduced and affecting the food security of household in Maseru.

On the other hand, authors like Nechifer et al (2021) argue differently that although households' incomes were directly affected leading to lower household food consumption basket but the some governments like in Kenya intervened to assist the households that were affected by COVID 19 in terms of food security. The same goes with Lesotho, LVAC report (2021) shows that there were humanitarian assistance in some parts of the country to assist households that became vulnerable to food security during COVID 19 especially households which lost their livelihood sources of income

2.6 Empirical Evidence

This section is going to discuss the studies done by other scholars in the international community or other regions and how those studies are different or similar to the study at hand.

2.6.1 International Studies

The shock caused by COVID 19 on remittances flows was also discussed by Ambrosious et al (2021). The pandemic has caused loss on income for migrants in Mexico thus reduce their ability to send remittances to their families. The study reveals that Mexico as a destination country for remittances has been affected but the origin countries for remittances, there is no evidence that they were affected during the pandemic, (Ambrosious, et al., July 2021). This article has only assess the impacts of COVID 19 in Mexico not how those impacts have affected food security and the coping strategies applied when households became vulnerable to food insecurity.

Kassegn (2021) have only examined the possible impacts of COVID 19 on remittances and development in many African countries. The study reveals that World Bank has failed to project the decline in remittances in 2020 as a major income source of many households in Africa and how to response to the crisis (Kassegn, 2021). This article has not dicussed how food security will be affected once remittances have declined in African countries and if indeed the decline in remittances will affect food security of many households

2.6.2. Studies in Africa

Bison (2020) have assessed the remittance flows in Africa before and during COVID 19. According to him, COVID 19 posed a threat to the flow of remittance in Africa because of the lockdown measures implemented in some countries because many migrants workers lost their jobs. The drop in remittances flows has weakened the ability of developing countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as individuals, business sectors and governments depend so much on remittances. Bison (2020) have discussed importance of assisting the countries that have suffered the low remittance flows.

There are scholars like Akin et al (2021), who wrote about how COVID 19 impacted on remittances that lead to food insecurity. It is argued that COVID 19 outbreak has brought shock to economic sector in many countries. There has been a major disorder in the employment segment and it has caused job losses and debility in income sources especially the informal sector. They enlightened that Africa suffered most during this pandemic and the shock brought about a decrease of 2.1% in all economic activities in Africa (Akin, et al., 2021). They further argued that the majority of household (80%) of the population is not covered by any social protection and these household are likely to face serious destitutions to afford their basic needs and food baskets.

Akin et al (2021) have assessed the role of remittances during the adverse of COVID 19 in relation to Nigeria's food insecurity. In his paper he indicated that remittances were negatively affected but mostly the international remittances than the local remittances. According to the author, the remittances have lessened the negative impacts of COVID 19 on food security in the rural areas. Nigeria is one of the countries that suffered a huge shock of food insecurity as the country was going through the crisis even before the evolution of COVID 19. Akin et al (2021) debates that it was anticipated that the pandemic disruptions may cause negative pressure on the food systems and result in adding a huge number of poor people. The author has only assessed the role remittances played when COVID 19 affected food security in Nigeria but he has not talked about the impacts of COVID 19 on the remittances recipients in relation to food security. This study will discuss the impacts of COVID 19 on remittances and whether or not the recipients became food secure or food insecure during the pandemic.

Some authors argue the opposite, they maintain that remittances never decreased during the COVID 19 pandemic rather they increased after May 2020 in other countries. The main argument is during COVID 19 lockdowns and movement restrictions, most migrants provided financial support to their families in home countries to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on their families especially the formal migrants (Dinaert, et al., 2021). IMF (2021) elucidates that most remittances that we sent using informal channels but they shifted to the formal channels due to border closures and restrictions.

IMF (2021), used the case of Botswana that during the past shocks which attacked the country like drought, remittances were not affected rather more remittances were sent home. This has been the case during the pandemic, more remittances were sent because migrants saw an urgent need to support their families for sustainable food consumption and adverse health challenges they were likely to face during that time (Kpodar, et al., 2021). The remittance have helped many households as they have played a role of insurance, that is, they have helped families to

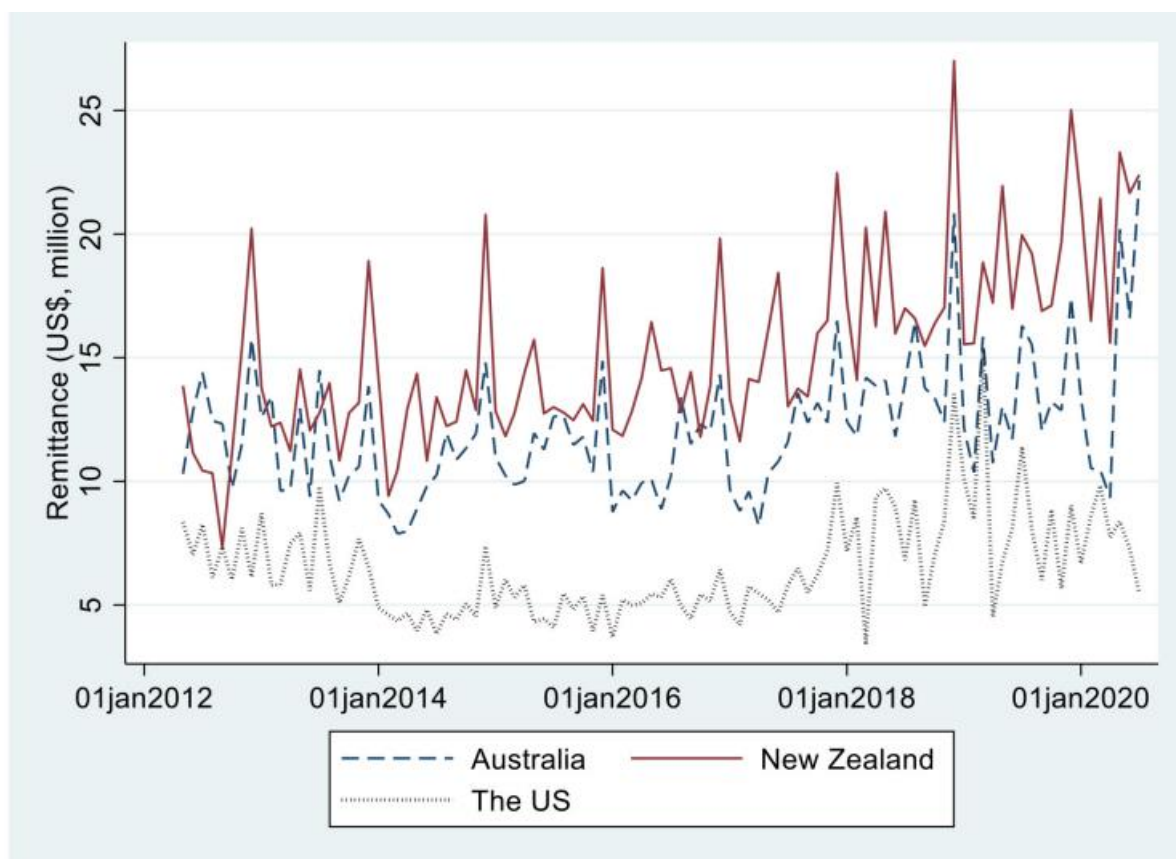
cope the impact of COVID 19 in many ways like health challenges, business challenges and food security challenges. The sending countries have recorded a large number of remittances through formal channels. Most migrant workers have some businesses at home and during COVID 19 they remitted more money to sustain their businesses and invested more in those business so that they could not be affected by the COVID 19 restrictions, (Dinaert, et al., 2021)'

On the other hand Authors like Chen et al (2020) dispute the fact that remittances increased during the pandemic, rather they argue that the pandemic has negatively affected employment prospects and the economic growth of many low income countries. World Bank (2020), gave the likelihoods that \$445 billion in remittances in low and middle countries are to be lost through migrant workers. Chen et al (2020) have used the case of Samoa indicating that 40% of households in Samoa depend on remittances and any shock or pandemic emerging in that country may affect the economy of households.

Chen et al (2020), have explored the remittances in Samoa and their inflows from the three countries namely, Australia, United stated and New Zealand. According to Chen et al (2020). The remittances were not completely affected in Samoa, the only remittances that declined due to the COVID 19 Pandemic were remittances from United States. Remittances from New Zealand and Australia were not affected because the two countries were not highly affected by COVID 19 like United States where the positive cases were high and death rate was very high. Evidence shows that remittances from the two countries have contributed a lot to remittance flows because migrant labours were less impacted by the pandemic unlike in the United States, (Chen, et al., 2020). The authors have only discussed the impacts of COVID 19 in remittances not how reduced remittances have affected food security and if households became food insecure household survived, while the study in hand will look in to how remittances affected food security before and during the pandemic and the coping strategies applied by the affected households.

Some scholars like Withers et al (2021) have assessed the disrupted flow of remittances and its implications in the economic sector in three countries namely Nepal, India and Sri Lanka. The remittances have affected the foreign exchange income for other countries and it has made matters worse for unemployed people threatening more people with low income. This pandemic has brought more challenges in the labour migration development in South Asia, (Withers, et al., 2021). The article has only assessed the economic impacts and how countries can respond to the low flow of remittances not how the disruption in remittances have affected the food security of households in these three countries.

Figure 1: Remittance Inflows to Samoa from major sources countries, March 2012 to July 2020.



2.7 Theoretical Framework

The relevant theory in this study is the Theory of Planned Behaviour which was developed by Ajezen and Fishbein in 1980 to investigate the factors that influences behavioural choices, (Khan Alam, 2020). This theory is based on the theory of planned reason and it is believed that people have a moral foundation for their action and to understand the consequences of their actions, (Raats, et al., 1995).

This Theory was first used in Netherlands to study the purchasing behaviour of people and supply food chains during the outbreaks. This theory shows the change in behaviour of people such as stockpiling, and improvising during the pandemics and crisis. This theory was used during the COVID 19 lockdown to explain the changes in buying patterns and the sustainability in purchasing food, (Alexa, et al., 2021)

Alexa et al, (2021) argues that COVID 19 has brought about major changes, uncertainty and disruptions in people's lives and many insecurities especially job insecurities and food insecurities. Therefore this theory is relevant to this study because it will help in analysing and understanding the behaviour of people during the pandemic in relevance to food security. During the COVID 19 Pandemic, there were many restrictions that change people's lives and their way of living. Some restrictions have influences the pattern of purchasing food and eating. For some households the food purchasing was done in stockpiling with the fear that good chain supply may be disrupted while other households could not afford to purchase food due to lose of income, (Alexa, et al., 2021).

During the pandemic, majority of people became vulnerable to food insecurity and feared the possible unavailability of food in the markets and food shortages together with higher prices of food. This fear came as a result of reduction of people's salaries and retrenchment from their jobs. During the pandemic food availability and access were mostly affected especially in

developing countries, as a result, the Theory of Planned Behaviour is used to understand the behaviour of people as they deal with the COVID 19 crisis. First of all the theory explores the food security status in the communities, then the behaviour of community towards food security and lastly their involvement in fighting the crisis so that after exploring their behaviour, a framework to strengthen resilience towards sustainable food security during the pandemic can be developed, (Sereenonchai & Arunrat, 2021).

The theory helps in understanding the behaviour of the vulnerable people who were mostly affected by the pandemic and have lost financial access to food. Most of them could not sustain their food consumption, and in relevant to households depending on remittances for purchasing food in the markets, their food consumption changed to the worst thus behavioural change. However the theory was used in Thailand to understand and analyse the community food security behaviours and three food security cases were explored, namely the food bank, the food exchange and food pantry, (Sereenonchai & Arunrat, 2021).

First of all people's values, norms, attitudes must be understood together with their capabilities, abilities and opportunities. This will help in understanding the behaviour towards change on food security status, (Sereenonchai & Arunrat, 2021). The intention is to determine whether the community can be resilient to food insecurity regardless the outbreaks of pandemics and if they have skills that can assist them in overcoming the challenges they encounter during the pandemic and this must be done together with the local people and central authorities .

This theory can be applied to this study to understand the behaviour of households that have lost remittances as their source of income. The theory can be applied to explore whether such households do have other coping strategies other than remittance or they are likely to experience food shortages. Some household may react or show in behaviour when facing the

challenges of food security and without this theory being applied to understand their behaviour toward the COVID 19 shock.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has shown that remittances play a huge role in both a country's economic growth and development, and the sustenance of household economic livelihoods. It has been established that remittances assist households in sustaining food security. In Lesotho, there are households that depend on remittances only as their livelihood source of income, and with the emergence of COVID 19 and its restrictions, the remittances began to decline posing a threat to food insecurity for some households. During COVID 19, majority of migrant labourers lost their jobs, while others had their salaries decreased and this made it impossible to send remittances back home. As a result their families encountered food shortages. The chapter also outlined the theory guiding this study: The Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) investigating the factors that influence behavioural choices. This theory is based on the theory of planned reason and it is believed that people have a moral foundation for their actions and to understand the consequences of their actions. Next chapter discusses the methodology used for generating data for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research paradigm, research methodology, research design, the sampling method, the data collection and data analysis methods used in this research. The ethical considerations and the limitations of the study are also outlined in this chapter.

3.1 Research Paradigm

Since the research have used the mixed methodology approach, the research paradigm used in this research is pragmatism and in this case positivism is used not counting on deductive reason to reach a conclusion. According to Wheeldon (2020), pragmatism includes observations and people's experiences while conducting data. As a result these observations can be tested and turn in to theories. Research Paradigm is all about observing the participants behaviour, beliefs and perceptions and draw a conclusion using a mixed methodology, (Wheeldon, 2010).

3.2 Research Methodology

The research used the mixed research methodology. This means this study have amalgamated different methods of collecting and analysing data from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In this research not only numerical data is collected for quantitative research but also narrative data is collected for qualitative research in order to answer the research questions and bring on a solution to the research problem (Williams, 2007). The two research methodologies complement each other by minimizing the weaknesses of each approach. The mixed research methodology helps the researcher to test and build theories in a research and aids in retaining logical and inductive analysis in one study (Williams, 2007). The mixed methodology have used the explanatory design. In this case qualitative data have been analysed

using quantitative approach to give meaningful findings. Qualitative data are more about themes and open-ended interviews, observations and videotapes.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is a structure of an enquiry that deals with logical matter and entails master plan concepts in which research is conducted such as collection measurement and analysis of data. Evidence obtained is easily presented through the design of a research to answer the initial questions explicitly. There are different methods of research design to be used but in this study explanatory research design are used. The latter aims at understanding the problem of the study and providing a final results to the study.

The researcher reviewed relevant documents for the research and conducted personal household interviews and telephonic interviews with the head of families that depend on remittances as livelihood source of income and have been affected. The interviews were aimed at examining how COVID 19 affected remittances as livelihood income sources of households in Lilala Community in Lesotho, to investigate the livelihood coping strategies applied by remittance recipient households when facing food insecurity and to assess the impact of COVID 19 on Food Security indicators (access, availability, utilisation and stability) in relation to remittances.

3.4 Population and sampling

The study population refers to the population the researcher wants to conduct the investigations from. The researcher must focus and maintain the objective of the study while dealing with the population, (Majid, 2018). The researcher cannot study the whole population rather a sample

is drawn with the targeted population and that sample will represent the population in the study. According to Majid (2018), sampling is another tool used in a research study population if interest may consist of too many individual with different age, different characteristics and different views. Sampling is a process of selecting individual representatives from the population of interest.

Population of interest is from Lilala Community Council from the three villages, namely; Tsoeneng, Masite and Rothe. When selecting the sampling, people who have lost their livelihood sources of income especially remittances during the Covid 19 restrictions were selected. Only 15 households from each of the three villages are in the sample size, which is the total of 45 households are participants in this study. The researcher used Non-probability sampling, a procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population will be included in the sample. Non-probability sampling is also known by different names such as deliberate sampling, purposive sampling and judgement sampling. Purposive sampling means that the researcher decides on whom she wants to participate in the study basing herself on what she wants to finds out. The participants are sampled according to who are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and experience. This kind of sampling is normally used in qualitative research to be able to identify the information-rich cases for the study. However this sampling comprises identification and selection of individual participants or groups that are well informed with that objective of the study, (Etikan, et al., 2016). For this reason, the purposive sampling was used to draw a sample from area chief, community councillor and humanitarian agencies that intervened in terms of food security during COVID 19 pandemic.

3.5 Research Instruments

The research used in-depth interviews for the purpose of this research, that is personal interviews and unstructured interviews were conducted so that the participant's emotions, feelings and opinions regarding COVID 19 and their food security status can be observed. The personal interviews involve personal and direct contact between the interviewers and the interviewee and this is an advantage to the research. The unstructured interviews give an opportunity for flexibility during interviews in terms of the flow of interview and that gives a room to draw conclusions deriving from the responses. Interviews maybe risky and deviate from the research objectives especially if the researcher cannot control the participants, (Gill & Johnson: 2002). To avoid this, the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide and questionnaire to guide the interviews towards the research objectives but however, there were additional questions that were asked during the interviews for clarity.

Secondary data portrays data which has been availed by the previous technical publications such as manuals, handbooks, data sheets, books, journals and official government documents. The researcher also reviewed some document analysis to collect secondary data so support the primary data and to relate with the research theme. These documents include reports from the vulnerability assessments and the reports from Shoprite checkers that shows the overflow of remittances during COVID 19.

3.6 Research Procedure

The study identified the background of the topic and the statement of the problem. The objective was outlined and research questions. The research followed the quantitative and qualitative approach for analysing data to have clear results from the data. The population

sampling was selected from the Lilala council as majority of households in that council depend of remittances as livelihood sources. Lilala is a big council with many villages but the sampling population is from only three villages because that is where most households of households reside. After data collection, that data will be organised in categories and then be analysed.

3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews was first coded and then sorted according to pre-determined themes derived from the study objectives. The sub-themes were further developed as guided by the research questions while the data from the documents was categorized according to the already derived themes and sub-themes in order for it to be comparable as this is the most recommended approach for data analysis.

There are different methods of data analysis and they include individual words, sentences, a paragraph or a whole text (Denscombe 2010). Types of data analysis approaches are content, grounded, discourse, conversation and narrative data analysis. Content analysis was also adopted in this study. The process of this type of analysis is explained by Moore and McCabe (2005) explain that in research, it is applied where data gathered is categorized in themes and sub-themes in order for it to be comparable. This approach is very much commended for data analysis because it reduces and simplifies the collected data while at the same time producing results that may be measured by using quantitative approach.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study was subjected to certain ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation and confidentiality were done during the research. The researcher first introduced herself to the local councillor and the area chief and briefly introduced the research topic them.

The participants were fully informed about the objective of the study and their role, that is, what is expected from them and how the research activity will be carried out.

The researcher created a conducive working environment to enable all participants to be at ease. Communication with the participants to solicit their acceptance to be interviewed was made in writing soliciting for their acceptance regarding their participation in the research through a signed consent and briefing letters. They were made aware by the interviewer that their participation in the study is voluntary therefore they had a right to respond or not to respond to the questions. However there is Confidentiality in this research meaning that responses given by participants during interviews are to remain between the two as some information may be very critical like financial status of respondents. The aim of applying confidentiality in this study was to protect and ensure privacy of research subjects.

3.9 Credibility and Trustworthiness of Data

The findings and credibility of data should reflect to what the research sets out to answer. Briefly, credibility can be defined as confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings. (Kyngas, et al., 2020). In order to promote credibility in a research, several sources of information have to be used and different procedures can be used repeatedly while collecting data. That is using more than method of collecting data and more than one method to analyse data to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, (Stahl & King, 2020). The sample size was enough to get the results that corresponds with the main objectives of the study and the empirical evidence is up to date. It has informed the study well enough about remittances and COVID 19 and how the two relate to food security as many several sources of information were used to collect data.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter the research methodology which is the core of this study is discussed. The study employed the mixed research methodology making use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The population of the study was from Lilala Community with a sample size of 45 households. Purposive sampling was used to sample the chief, councillor and other organisations. The research instrument utilised were interviews and secondary data. The chapter also outlines data analysis and presentation procedure for the study. The chapter ends by discussing ethical considerations and credibility and trustworthy issues of the study. Next chapter presents and discusses findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the findings of the study, discussed in relation to the aim and objectives of the research study as well as the reviewed literature. This discussion is divided into sections, based on the objectives of the study. The first section addresses the demographics of participants in the study. The second presents themes of the research based in the research questions that is ‘impacts of COVID 19 on remittances sent by different workers’. The third section talks of the coping strategies applied. The fourth section discusses the affected food security indicators. The last section is the summary.

4.1. Demographic Data

Households studied: Forty five households were studied across the Lilala community council in three villages. These households are found in the southern lowlands of Maseru.

Sex of Household Heads: Thirty six households were male headed households who had migrated to other places especially to South Africa for labour opportunities and they sent remittances to their wives back home. Five were female headed households and had also migrated. Two were child headed households with older children sending remittances home. Two households were elderly headed and they received remittances from their children.

Education Level of Household Head: The remittance senders were people without higher education. 51% of them had only attained high school level while 38% had attained Primary

level and were not working in professional employment with security. 11% had tertiary qualifications and had secure jobs as professional

Households with Orphans: Two households were headed by children and had orphans in those households.

Households with Disabled Members: only one household had a family member living with disability.

Table 1: The respondent’s household categories and ages

Age	Female Headed HHs	Male Headed HHS	Elderly Headed HHs	Child Headed HHs
18-26		1		2
26-35		5		
36-45	3	20		
46-55	2	8		
56-65		2		
66-75			1	
76-85				
86 +			1	

Source: Field survey at Lilala Community Council, April 2022.

Table 2: The Respondent’s household educational level, disability orphans

HHs Category	Primary Level	High Level	Tertiary Level	Disability in Household	Orphans in Household
Female Headed HHs		2	3		
Male Headed HHs	14	20	2		

Elderly HHs Headed	2			1	
Child HHs Headed	1	1			2
TOTALS	17	23	5	1	2

Source: Field survey at Lilala Community Council, April 2022.

The households' categories above had been receiving remittances as a livelihood source before COVID 19 and such remittances were sent by the Households heads who had migrated to Maseru as the city centre and others to South Africa. These remittances were meant to cover all household expenses including food expenses. The next section will discuss the themes of the research based on the research questions.

4.2 Impacts of COVID 19 on Remittances.

The impact of COVID 19 on remittances as a livelihood income source will be discussed in this section by comparing the rate at which remittances were received before COVID 19 and during the pandemic. The findings from data collected indicate that COVID 19 has impacted negatively on the flow of remittances to the recipients. One study participant affirmed: that her husband was in South Africa before COVID 19. He was working in the construction companies for more than 5 years and had been sending money back home monthly for all household expenses. The husband was sending remittances throughout the five years and those remittances were able to cover food expenses and non food expenses. The children were also paying school fees with the remittances. The wife was not working, their only source of income was remittances from the husband.

When COVID 19 evolved in 2020 in South Africa, there was a lock down that forced people to stay home.. Her husband had to come back to Lesotho during the lockdown as they were

released from the construction work without monthly salaries or wages. The husband who was sending remittances had to come home and stayed for four months without salary. The flow of remittances had to stop because of the husband's return and lack of salary as a result purchasing food was a problem in the family as there was no source of income. They had to use the savings they made for survival (Personal interview, Field Survey, March 2022).

Most participants revealed that the rate of remittances they received declined by almost 50%, that is half during COVID as some had their remittances reduced while others did not receive at all due to job loss. Data showed that some household did receive remittances but not with the same amount they received before COVID 19. Some indicated that they received half of what they used to receive before COVID 19. This was confirmed by one participant from Masite who indicated that:

“My husband has been working in South Africa before COVID 19 and he is still working. He has been sending money home for all household expenses. Then, the money was enough to cover all the food expenses, we did not face any food gaps. During COVID 19, when lockdown was implemented, my husband had to work in shifts at his work and the shifts affected his salary. He was no longer earning the same because the working hours were reduced as a results he could not sent enough money to us.

The money he sent during COVID 19 pandemic and restrictions was not enough to cover all food expenses because I was not working and the only livelihood source of income was those remittances sent by him. As a family we experienced food gaps for period of six months and had to resort to other coping strategies. The remittances he sent were half of what he used to send before COVID 19.”

COVID 19 has affected remittances differently depending on the type of employment the remittances senders were engaged in. Some were engaged in formal employment while others

were in informal employment and others were not employed, rather they were self-employed but sending money back home.

4.2.1 Formal employment/ Professional workers.

As shown in the literature discussed in chapter 2, professional workers remuneration arrangements were not affected by COVID 19. Most people in formal employment, in as much as they had to go home during the lockdowns but their salaries were not affected because they were receiving monthly salaries and their families could still afford to cover all food expenses. Data collected from field survey points out that professional workers who sent remittance to their families were not affected. The remittances did not decline and they were sent monthly by those professional workers who were away during lockdowns. This was confirmed by one participant whom their mother is the head of the family working outside the country as nurse:

“We have been receiving remittances from our mother who is the household head and she is working in South Africa as a nurse and she has been sending remittances to us on the monthly basis before COVID 19. When COVID 19 evolved in 2019 and came about lockdown restrictions, she was still working and her salary was not affected, she was still sending money to us as a family. We have been able to purchase food throughout the pandemic without experiencing the food gaps. The remittances were not affected and received monthly throughout the pandemic. Food security was stable in our household as the livelihood source of income was not affected. There is no other person working in the household except our mother.”

This is not the only household that was not affected. During data collection, there were households whom their household head were not affected at all. They were able to send money to their families for purchasing food. Another participant in Rothe mentioned that:

“My husband works in Maseru at the government ministries and he is permanent and pensionable in the civil service. The rest of the family we are in Rothe and he normally sends money to the family to purchase food or he would just purchase food in Maseru and bring them to Rothe as the head of the family. During COVID 19 lockdowns my husband had to come home as some ministries were not operational but that did not affect his salary, he was still getting his monthly salary and was able to purchase food at all times . COVID 19 did not affect my husband’s salary and our purchasing power. The remittances he sent have not been affected at all by COVID 19 and we did not became vulnerable to no food insecurity as a household.”

4.2.2 Casual labour / informal employment.

Data reveals that there are people who have migrated for informal labour and are sending remittances back home to their families. Majority of the households depend on informal labour remittances such as constructions jobs and housekeeping jobs and they were affected by COVID 19 as most have lost their jobs in the pandemic and the literature has emphasised that those in informal sectors were negatively affected and failed to send remittances to their homes. The data collected on casual labour is confirmed by literature casual labour was affected by the COVID 19 restrictions. More than 80% of the people have indeed lost their casual jobs during the pandemic. Many companies were closed during that time and migrant workers had to come home to their families. The migrant casual labours in Lilala community have returned home during the lockdowns and more that 50% of them were not able to sent remittances. One participant whose husband lost his job due to COVID 19 affirmed that:

“My husband was working in Maseru in the textile factories and has been sending money to the family to buy groceries and other household needs like school fees but in March 2020 when the government of Lesotho implemented the Lockdown restrictions, some factories closed due to border closures and lack of movement (imports and export of goods). My husband lost his job as he was working in one of the factories that closed as a result he had to come back home without any means of income for the family.

We experienced food insecurity as we were now not able to purchase food like before. Our children dropped out of school and we had to resort to other coping strategies for us to eat. Since then my husband has been at home without a job and we are still facing major food gaps so much that we receive food parcels from relatives and friends once in a while. The remittances are no longer received in the household and we do not have any other livelihood source of income which is stable except for the casual work I do once in a while like laundry for other families and beer brewing.”

The other participant was the elderly who was receiving remittances from the daughter working in South Africa as a domestic worker. She noted that:

The elder daughter was working as a domestic worker in South Africa and had been sending remittances monthly to the family back home. The remittances were not the only source of income as the grandfather is earning old age pension which is 750.00 maloti and the daughter was sending 1000.00 maloti monthly that is their total income was 1700.00 maloti monthly. During lockdown the daughter had to come back home and could no longer send money to the family. In as much as the family was still receiving pension but it was not enough to cover all food expenses as the pension was small and the household has increased with one member who has not been staying in the household. The household lost its purchasing power and could not afford to purchase enough food and experienced food gaps. The pension fund was too small

for covering all household expenses and they also had to apply other coping strategies. The daughter only got a job after six months and that was when things got back to normal as the remittances were received again.

However not all remittances were lost completely, other households were still receiving remittances during the pandemic but they received less than what they used to receive before COVID 19 evolved. Since the amount they received was less, they could not afford to purchase food like before and they too experienced some food gaps here and there. This was confirmed by one participant whose household head was a child above 20 but sending remittances to his siblings who were orphans and they were solely depending on those remittances.

“My brother was working in construction companies. He started working in January 2020 and has been sending remittances to us as his siblings but when lockdown restrictions were implemented in March 2020, his salary was reduced because of working shifts introduced at his work. He was receiving less salary than what he used to receive thus sending less amount of remittances to home. We could no longer afford to purchase all the food and sometimes we had to go to bed without food as the food we purchased could not last a month. Therefore we had to apply other coping strategies to survive hunger.”

4.2.3 Self-employed Migrants

There are people who are self-employed as cross border traders, they are the traders who do business in two countries. For instance, there are people who buy clothes from South Africa and sell them in Lesotho. After selling whatever they sell, they send money to their families in the villages. Other export local products to other countries and sell them there, then send money to their families as remittances. There are also people at the Lesotho border gates who help people cross in and out of the country using illegal gates or entries. They are paid and that is how they earn a living and sending money to their families.

There are self-employed people have been affected by COVID 19 and its restrictions as it has also been said in the literature. The restriction of cross border movements affected them and their livelihood source of income. During data collection, one participant who helps people cross borders illegally acknowledged that:

“I moved to Maseru to look for a job to provide for my siblings but when I got there I could not be employed anywhere because I has only attained primary level education. I therefore got engaged in assisting people to cross in and out of Lesotho using illegal gates or passes. They would pay me and then I would send money to my siblings to purchase household expenses. During Lockdown measures, restrictions of movements and border closures, there were no people going in and out of the country and I could not help people as usual. I lost my livelihood source of income resulting in me not affording to send remittances to my siblings. As a result my siblings lost their purchasing power and could no longer afford to purchase food hence experiencing severe food gaps throughout the lockdown restrictions.”

COVID 19 has affected the remittances hence affecting food security of many households. According to literature and data collected, remittances were affected and this impacted so much on the purchasing of many household. Shoprite and U Save Lesotho are the popular remittance route used by most migrant labourers to send money to their families as they are regarded as cheap ways to send money from one country to another. The table below show flow of remittances in Lesotho through two international supermarkets.

Table 3: cross border remittances through Shoprite & U Save

SHOPRITE & USAVE CROSSBORDER REMITTANCES	
MONTH	TOTAL CROSSBORDER RECEIPTS
JUNE 2020	M80.2 Million
JULY 2020	M89 Million
AUG 2020	M97.9 Million
SEP 2020	M88.2 Million
OCT 2020	M91.8 Million
NOV 2020	M87.7 Million
DEC 2020	M93.1 Million
JAN 2021	M67.5 Million
FEB 2021	M82.4 Million

Source; Shoprite Maseru

When looking at the evidence, the flow of remittance during lockdown shows that there was an increase between June 2020 and December 2020. While data shows that the remittances were affected and most households were not receiving remittances. While gathering this evidence, the manager responsible for cross border remittances pointed out that, the increase in remittances does not imply that many households were receiving remittances but households that received remittances then, received larger amounts than usual?

The number of households that received remittances declined but the amount increased. Those who sent remittances increased the amount with the aim of avoiding financial burden to their families so that they could afford to purchase food as there was fear that lockdown might lead shops being closed. This was done by migrant labour that did not come back home during

lockdown and the purchase food was improved as most purchased food in bulk. The remittances also declined in January 2021 because most migrant labourers were home and in February 2021, there was another lockdown restriction implemented thus the increase in remittances flow and also almost 30% of the people got their jobs back. While on the other hand there are some who are still at home not working since the lockdowns. Since the remittances were affected and purchasing power was also affected resulting in many households experiencing food gaps, some households had to apply coping strategies to survive like selling of animals and assets.

4.3 Coping Strategies applied to fight food insecurity.

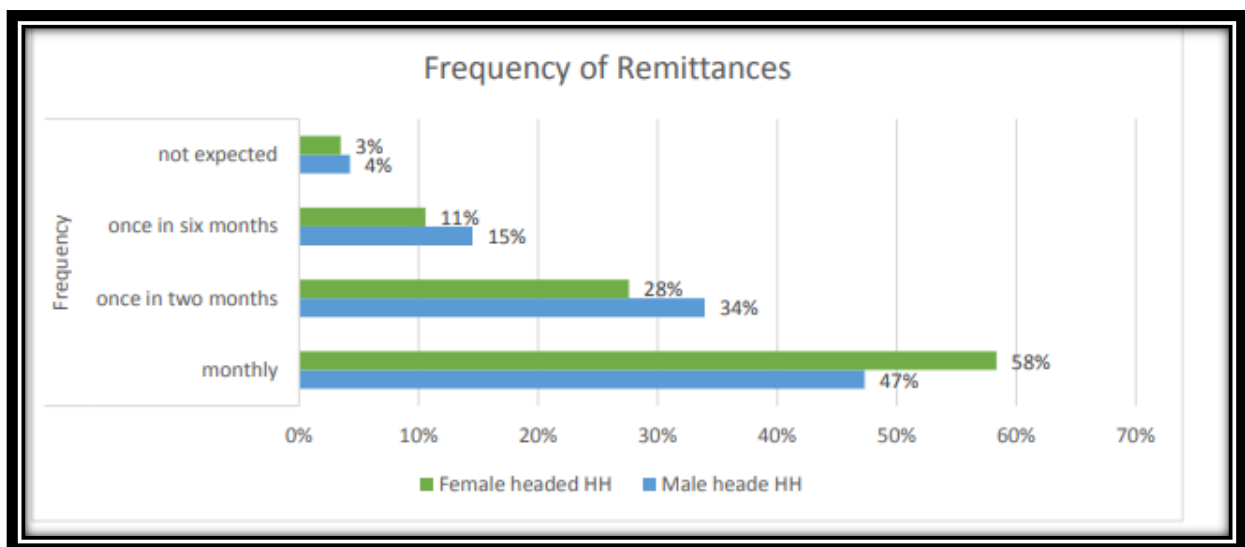
Coping strategies are means of survival. When people face food gaps and become food insecure they resort to other ways or means to bring food on the table and to survive, these are called coping strategies. Other people may sell their last female animals, others sell assets while others withdraw children from school to survive food insecurity. In other places, people migrate or use prostitution as coping strategy. During the field survey, some participants confirmed that they have applied coping strategies as they face food gaps due to lack of remittances as livelihood source of income. The most common strategies applied were beer brewing, crop sales, petty business, casual labour, livestock sale and reduction of meals in a household. These strategies were applied by different remittance recipients groups.

4.3.1 Female recipients.

When looking at the demographics, the female recipients are more than all other groups of recipients. They are the ones who stay at home and receive remittances to take care of all household expenses, purchase food and prepare such food. Almost 70% of participants in data collection were females and mentioned that they applied coping strategies when COVID 19

affected remittances as their livelihood source of income. LVAC report 2021 indicated that female receive more remittances than males. These females were not working at all and they only depend on remittances and during that time they had to resort to other means of survival. The graph below shows that female receive more remittances than men and they receive them frequently.

Figure 2: frequency of remittances received by household heads



Source: LVAC report 2021.

During data collection female participants indicated that they resorted to beer brewing and petty business to survive and to able to purchase food. One specified that:

“When my husband who has been sending remittances lost his job and had to come home, he did not have any income and purchasing food was a problem for us as family therefore I had to apply some coping strategies and I resorted to beer brewing. The beer sale was doing well because during that time all liquor stores were closed due to lockdown restrictions and many people resorted to home-made beer. I used the sales to purchase food for the family though it was not enough because it did not cover all food expenses but at least the most needed like maize meal were covered.

“The other coping strategy I applied for us to survive, was purchasing less preferred food not the one I usually purchase. I used to purchase 25kg maize meal for the family when I was still receiving remittances from my husband but because I could no longer afford it, I then purchased 12.5kg maize meal with cheaper brand. Beer brewing helped the family to cope during that time when my husband was not working. Home-made beer was in demand so much that people were travelling from other places to purchase beer in our villages because of the closed liquor stores. As a family we have never received any humanitarian assistance before or during the pandemic because the community regarded my family not vulnerable. They allegedly claim that my husband is working and they excluded our household during humanitarian targeting lists”.

There are other coping strategies that were applied by the female heads to survive the food shortages they experienced during the pandemic. Other household engaged in petty business like selling of snacks, sweets and cigarettes. Another participant admitted that she resorted to petty trade as coping strategies when she could no longer receive remittances.

“I started selling sweets, snacks and cigarettes in my village when I experienced food shortages with my household. It was still challenging as the business was not doing well because people did have money to buy snacks. The priority then was purchasing food not snacks for most people. The only thing that was at least bought were cigarettes because they were scarce in the country because of border closures. After selling, I used the money I to purchase food for my family. I used petty trade as a coping strategy at first but with time I seriously got engaged in it as I am still doing it. I traded in my village and other villages. I would wake up in the morning and go house to house selling then in the afternoon after the sales I would go to the shops and purchase food. I was no longer purchasing food on the monthly basis as I could not afford to. We also relied on less preferred food as a family. My household did not receive any food Aid

from humanitarian assistance with the allegation from the community that that husband is working yet he lost his job during COVID 19 pandemic”.

4.3.2 Male Recipients.

The male recipients are less than the female recipients. The field survey shows that males that receive remittances are less than the females. In this study, the males are the ones migrating sending remittances to their wives. It is not always the case that men stay at home and females migrate for employment opportunities. Data confirmed that males who have been receiving remittances were also affected, that is their spouses could no longer send remittances back home as a result they too applied some coping strategies.

One male participant who has been receiving remittance from the wife who migrated for labour accepted that;

“I have been receiving monthly remittances from my wife while I was home taking care of the family and all household necessities. During COVID 19 lockdown, my wife came back and could no longer send remittances me, as the household I had to make sure the family remains food secure and that is when I had to apply some coping strategies for my family to survive. I sold my animals to generate income for the family and we managed to purchase food and other expenses. We household were able to purchase food but not all the food needed as we could not diversify in our meals. I sold the animals at a lesser price than the normal price. Under normal circumstances the price of an average cow ranges between 8,000 and 10,000 Maloti but during COVID 19 since people could not buy I had to sell my cow 5,000 Maloti. The buyers were buying with the price they wanted not the price the seller has put. If these animals were sold at a normal price, I am confident that we would have been to afford all food expenses and

other expenses. But since we received less from the livestock sales we could not meet all the expenses as some money had to pay schools fees and medical bills.”

The sale of livestock was applied by most of the male recipients' household, they did not apply many coping strategies. The other strategy applied was selling of food stocks in the household from the harvesting. Another male participant declared that;

“I am engaged in agricultural production though I don't do it annually. I have a piece of land where I produce only for my family and I normally produce maize. My wife has migrated for employment and she has been sending remittances home for other food purchase. I have been using money she sent to purchase other food like vegetables. During lock down when my wife lost her job, she could no longer sent remittances. We had maize in the house from harvesting, but because we needed money to purchase other food other than maize, we sold other bags of maize to get cash. We sold 3 bags (50kg) of maize to get cash. In that way we were able to purchase food. My household also received humanitarian assistance in a form of cash (M614, 00) for three months from World Food Programme in 2021 as a result we did not experienced much of food gaps. My wife went back to work in June 2021 and is now sending remittances again.”

Conversely, data collected reveals that the male recipients unlike female recipients are engaged in agricultural production and livestock production thus they are not migrating for employment. They let their wives migrate and remain at home to take care of livestock and agriculture for the family.

4.3.3 Elderly Recipients.

There are elders who receive remittances as livelihood source of income from their children while other receive remittances and also earn old age pension. Data reveals that those who earn

pension did not intensify the coping strategies like those were not earning it. One elderly who was receiving remittances from her daughter and also earning pension stated that:

When I stopped receiving remittances from my child, I did not apply much of coping strategies, all we did as a family was to reduce the size of meals and number of meals as a household. We were depending on my olds pension which was then 750.00 Maloti, we purchased less preferred food with lesser quantities. Other than that, we had to reduce the size of meal on the plates, and number of meals. We only ate two meals in a day unlike before COVID when we ate three meals. We also received humanitarian assistance for three months from World Food Programme because of my disabled who lives with me in the house and that assistance was also of great help because it covered food expenses.”

There is another elderly who was only receiving remittances as income and had no other income other than remittances. She also revealed the coping strategies she engaged while facing the food gaps,

When her children could no longer send her remittances she engaged in crop sale. She produced vegetables from her garden and sold them to other households. With the money she got from sales she would purchase food that she did not have in her garden. Since then, she has been engaging in crop sale as a source of income. This coping strategy did not cover all food expenses because the business was not doing well. Sometimes she would sell a lot and at times people would not buy her vegetables. On days when she could not sell, she relied on relatives and neighbours for food.

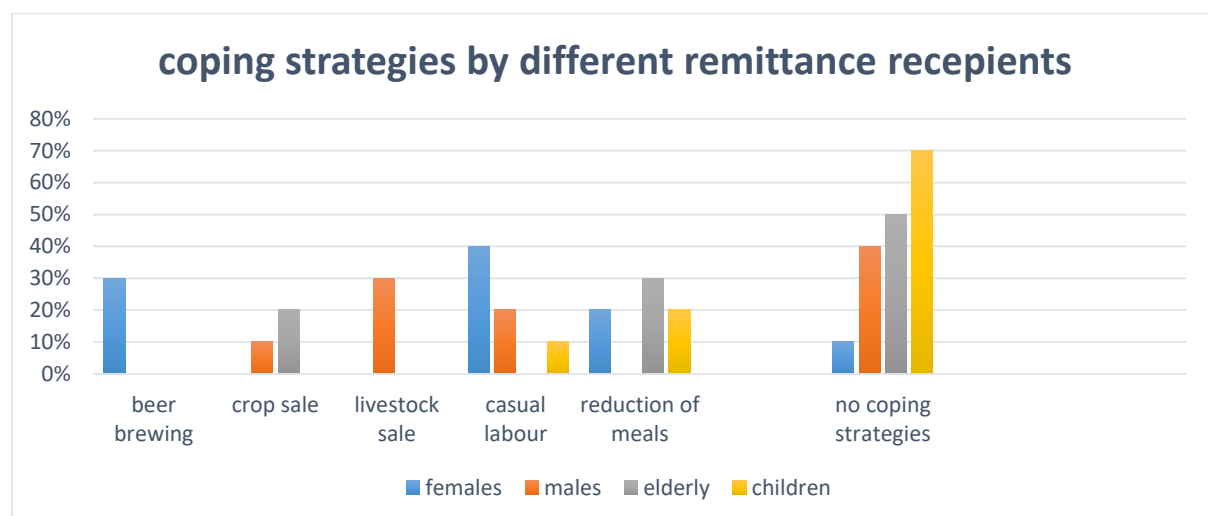
4.3.4 Children Recipients.

There are also children who have been receiving remittances from the older one in the family who is also regarded as the head of that family. The siblings are the ones receiving the

remittances and purchase food. The field survey displays that these children also engage some coping strategies to survive hunger that they were undergoing during COVID 19 because their providers lost their jobs and could no longer send remittances. One child participant affirmed that: When the older brother who was taking care of them lost his job and came back home, they could no longer meet the expense of food, they had to look for other means to put food on the table. The other sibling had to engage in casual labour , he went to work as a herd boy in the other family so that with the money he get, they could purchase food. They were able to eat on the daily basis though they had to skip other meals to save for the next day. What he was earning was less than what the elder brother used to remit.

On the other hand not all household engaged in coping strategies. Others were getting help from the community councillor, while other were receiving humanitarian assistance and others had other source of income besides remittances. There is one case where the remittance sender lost her job in South Africa and had come back home, but shortly when she got home she found another job before the household could experience food gaps and the family survived. The figure below shows the coping strategies applied by different recipients as they were facing food gap.

Figure 3: coping strategies applied



Source: field survey at Lilala Community Council, April 2022

As remittances were affected and coping strategies were applied, there are food security indicators that were also affected negatively. The graph shows that most child headed households did not apply coping strategies, they only did casual labour and reduced meals. Female headed households applied almost all the coping strategies than normal times. The next session will discuss these indicators according to data gathered from field survey.

4.4 Affected Food Security Indicators.

There are four food insecurity indicators as stated in the literature. There is food access (financial and physical access), food availability, food utilization and food stability which cuts across the three indicators. All the three indicators must be stable for one to be food secure. During field survey, it was discovered that some indicators were affected by COVID 19 and its restrictions.

4.4.1 Food Access.

The aim of the study was to find out if food access was affected in the Community of Lilala. Literature has already pointed out that COVID 19 restrictions have affected food access in many places especially financial access. Most people lost their sources of income and lost their purchasing power. Physical access was not a limiting factor. Many households were still able access the markets locally and in other places. They mentioned that the shops were opening later than normal times and closed earlier than normal but this did not stop them accessing the shops when needs be. One household member stated that:

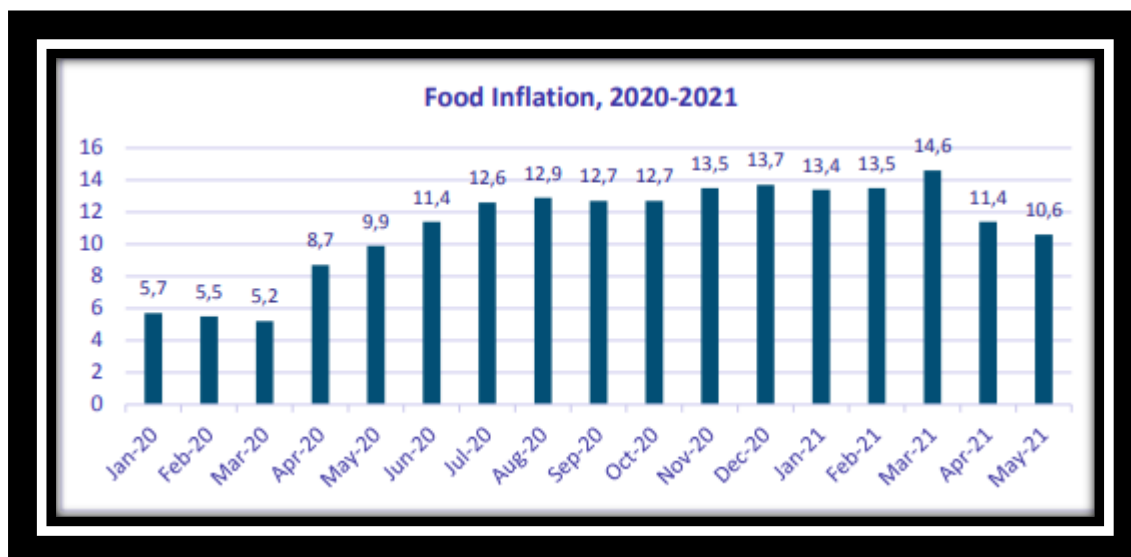
“The shops were opening at 10.00AM and closing at 14.00 HRS in the afternoon. Many people in this village had physical access to the shops because they were local and it was only a matter of walking to the shops during the opening hours.”

Financial access means not being able to purchase food because of lack of money or high prices which restricts people from purchasing. This indicator has been affected as many households confirmed that they could no longer afford to purchase food. One participant affirmed that:

“I lost my income source and I lost financial access. Purchasing food in the markets was a problem to me and my family. The prices of maize were very high at that time and I could not afford to purchase food rather I could only afford less preferred food. Because I was no longer receiving remittances, the money I had could not purchase all the food needed. I lost her purchasing power thus purchasing food in small quantities and preferred cheap brands.”

Financial access also relate with inflation rates. As literature stated, there was high inflation rate on food during COVID 19. The prices of food became very high so much that many people could not afford to purchase food and other items. One participant also confirmed that: During COVID 19 prices became very high in the local shops especially process of maize meal. They could not afford to purchase the same quantity of maize meal. Her for instance used to purchase 50 kg of maize meal for the family but because of high prices she was now purchasing 25kg and it could not even last them a month. The prices became very high and her financial access was affected.

Figure 4: Food Inflation during COVID 19



Source: LVAC Report 2021

Evidence from last reports do confirm that there was inflation in the country between April 2020 and March 2021 and around that time there was a lockdown in the country and in South Africa. People lost their jobs and there was not movement. Loss of income made it hard for people to afford purchasing of food due to inflation rate. Food access became a limiting factor due to high prices and loss of livelihood sources of income for many household. With this evidence it is clear that COVID 19 negatively affected food Access for many households. Access as an indicator to food security was not stable, it was affected and many vulnerable households became more vulnerable to food security. Only less than 40%households could afford to purchase food in the markets.

4.4.2 Food Availability.

Food availability is defined by food available in the markets at all times and food stocks available in a household. The question maybe whether there was food in the local markets at all times or in the households from the harvesting for people to eat during COVID 19 restrictions. Literature has already stated that there was no food in the markets at all times because of the movement restrictions and the fact the borders were closed. Some goods that were imported in the country were very scarce because* of the logistics and movement restrictions across the borders. Some goods would take days out of stock. The market chain or route affected the availability of food in the markets. Beside availability in the markets, many households did not have food stock in the house because there was no harvesting due to the 2019/20 drought in the country and in 2020/21 there were also heavy rains that affected the country and most farmers had low production. There still few farmers who managed to harvest though not in large amounts like normal years.

One household confirmed that they did not have food stocks in the household, they were depending more food in the markets:

“My household is engaged in agricultural activities in normal seasons and we produce maize and beans. We failed to harvest after drought of 2019/2020, and in 2020/2021 there were heavy rains that affected the whole country and we failed to harvest too. During the time of pandemic, we did not have any food stocks in the household from harvesting. We had to depend on purchased food which were expensive.”

Besides the availability of food stocks in the household, there is also an issue of availability in the markets. Most participants confirmed the literature that food was not always available in the markets. The available was not stable as at times they could not find certain food in the markets. The unavailability was caused by affected market routes by COVID 19 restrictions. Some food were imported, while others that were produced locally, production was affected

by lockdown. One household affirmed that: When COVID 19 lockdown restrictions were first implemented some people purchased food in bulk with the fear that there might be a total shutdown and shops might be closed. People who could not afford to purchase in bulk struggled to purchase food as there were no food in the markets. During the time of complete lockdown, the local markets did not have all food at all times. Household necessities were not available.

Food availability cannot said to be a major limiting facto to food security rather a minor limiting factor. The fact of the matter is; food was still available in the markets, and it only took less than a week for unavailability. In most cases households did find food in the markets even if they were not available in food stocks. When considering the evidence from data gathered, we cannot say food was totally unavailable therefore people were not food insure because of availability but other indicators.

4.4.3 Food Utilization.

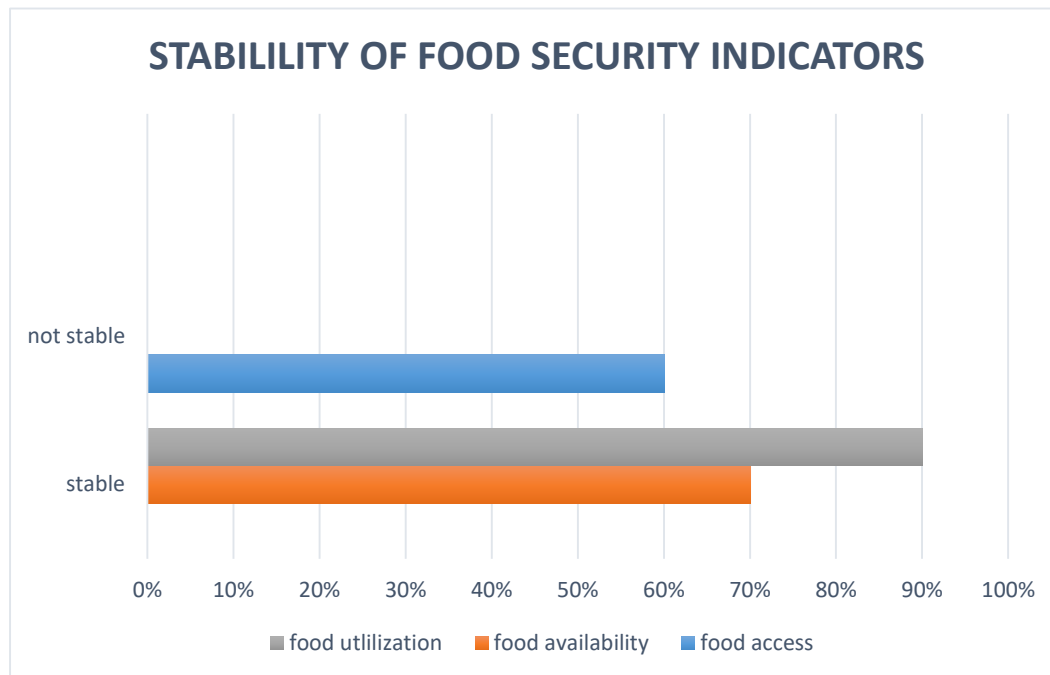
Food utilization means the way food is prepared, whether they are using clean water and preparing food according to the nutrition rules. The question is whether households do diversify in their meals. Food utilization in the survey area has been stable according to data collected. The water sources were not affected by the pandemic. Food preparation was not affected at all. Nutrition has been stable and all these were confirmed by the participants at 100%. They collect water from protected boreholes and public taps.

4.4.4 Food Stability.

This indicator cuts across all the above indicators. It checks whether food access, food availability and food utilization are stable at all times. Once one indicator is not stable, then the household is likely to face food insecurity. In this survey shows that food access has not been stable throughout the pandemic. Food availability has not been stable because there were times

when there was no food in the markets and in food stocks in households. The figure below gives a clear picture of state of stability of the food security indicators

Figure 5: Food stability of all indicators



Source: Field Survey at Lilala Community, April 2022

The above table shows that food utilization has been stable at almost 90% , food availability has been stable at 70% because there were times that food was not available in the markets but not all food and not at all time. Only food access was not stable at 60% because of low purchasing power for many households.

4.5. Summary.

This chapter have discussed the findings from field survey and some of the discussions have confirmed the literature while some findings say the opposite of what the literature is saying. It has been discovered in this chapter that remittances have been negatively affected by COVID

19 so much that most households about 60% lost their sources of income thus losing their purchasing power. The loss of remittances affected food access especially financial access for many households. Remittance recipients have confirmed that they were no longer receiving remittances during COVID 19 while others received less than they received before the pandemic and this led to them being vulnerable to food insecurity because they had to financial access to purchase food in the markets.

Food access has been a major limiting factor and posed a threat of food insecurity to many families. There is also food availability which has been a minor limiting factor because it was not posing a threat to food security as availability was not a problem at all times. It just that the preferred food was not available in the markets not that completely they were not available, therefore this indicator could not pose a threat to food security hence a minor limiting factor. There is also food utilisation which has been stable and it is not a limiting at all, is has not threaten food security in many households.. There humanitarian assistance did not cover all the households and could not close the food gaps most households were experiencing in lilala council. Therefore the remittances recipients' household experience food insecurity during COVID 19 pandemic. Next chapter presents summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of COVID 19 on food Security for households that depend on remittances as livelihood sources of income in the Lilala community. The study identified how remittances were affected by COVID 19 further established how the affected remittances impacted on household food security of remittances recipients. The studies also identified the coping strategies applied by households as experience food gaps due to affected remittances. This chapter presents summary, conclusions on the findings and recommendations regarding the findings. It comprises four sections. The first is the introduction; the second is the summary; the second is the conclusions; the third is the recommendations; and the last section presents the areas for further research identified during the research.

5.1 Summary

This study sought to investigate the impact of COVID 19 on household food security for remittance recipients as livelihood source of income in Lesotho with special focus on Lilala community. Its ojectives were to investigate the impact on food security dimentions, to assess the coping strategies applied during the pandemic as households experience food insecurity and to examine the inpact COVID 19 has on remittances. However tha study reveals

that indeed COVID 19 had negatively impacted on the remittances received by households and that has resulted in more than 50% in the community council due to the decline on flow of remittances. The humanitarian assists were made by UN agencies , the interventions were made but they did not meet the food gaps experienced by households. Almost 80% of households applied coping strategies to survive the food gaps and also purchase non-food items but those strategies did not meet their needs. Some migrant labours did return to their jobs while others are still at home. The remittances are still recovering and there are still households experiencing food insecurity even at present due to decline in remittances and this is according to LVAC report 2022. The data collected have confirmed the literature that indeed decline in remittance flow has affected food security for many households.

5.2 Conclusions.

Remittances have always been played a vital role in many households food security. The migrant labours have always sent remittances back for to their families for survival. The remittances contribute so much to food security in many households. Most households depend only on remittances as livelihood source of income and they use those remittances to purchase food and other household expenses. As it has been mentioned in the literature that remittances contribute to the economy of the country, it has been the case in Lesotho where most household heads have been migrating and sending remittances to their families.

Literature has pointed out that COVID 19 has affected the remittance flow and indeed the remittances were affected because most migrant workers lost their job while others had their income reduces as a result they failed to send remittances to their families. The reduced remittance flow resulted in many households becoming more vulnerable to food security. The said community council have many migrant labour who send remittances back home and for food purchase but since COVID 19 evolved in 2020, many of them have failed to send

remittances to their families thus experiencing food gaps. Most of these households depend only on remittances as livelihood source of income.

The remittance have negatively affected by COVID 19. As the pandemic came up with many restrictions. The lockdown that caused borders to close resulted in many migrant labour returning home without monthly salaries thus not being able to send remittances. As evidence indicated, most migrant workers returned from their work places and stayed home, and their families suffered so much that they could not afford to purchase food in the markets. The remittances recipients experienced food gaps and became more vulnerable to food security as they lost their purchasing power.

One of the restrictions of COVID 19 was social distancing which caused many workers their jobs. Evidence shows that most factory workers in Lesotho lost their jobs as many of them were retrenched due to social distancing. Many of them were sending remittances back home but they lost their source of income, their families became food insecure. Some factory workers did not lost their jobs but their working hours were reduced as working shifts were introduced and that affected their wages or salaries; they became less than normal times. As they were earning less, they could not afford to remit to their families. Most remittance recipients have experience food gaps and became food insecure because of the pandemic especially in the beginning.

Many households depend only on remittances especially the female recipients. As the remittance flow was affected, purchasing power was also affected. They could not afford to purchase food and other household expenses. Financial access was negatively affected for those households. Food insecurity became the second emergency other than the Pandemic so much that humanitarian organisations, UN agencies and the government had to respond to the problem of food insecurity experienced by the nation.

At that time when households became vulnerable to food insecurity, the government together with developing partners responded to the crisis. There were many interventions made country wide but they did not reach all the households as evidence shows that majority of households did not receive assistance in the research area. For instance, the World Food Programme intervened with cash assistance to meet households affected by COVID 19 half way in purchasing food but since this was done through self-targeting, the community only considered two wealth groups; the very poor and the poor only and the vulnerable households affected by the pandemic did not benefit.

The threat of food insecurity was still not addressed even after the intervention efforts. Food insecurity remained an issue during the pandemic especially during the lockdown restrictions. Most of the households depending on remittances did not receive any assistance with the claim from the community that their household heads were working and they are not poor yet it was a known fact that they have lost their livelihood source of income due to COVID 19. Therefore it is a fact that the pandemic had a negative impact on food security in Lesotho.

However there are households that applied some coping strategies to survive the food gaps they were experiencing as they lost their purchasing power. These coping strategies did not help the households to survive. They remained food insecure as they could still not afford to purchase food at all times. The applied strategies could only help to a certain extent like purchase of less preferred food or purchasing only the basic food like maize meal. Based on the evidence, the coping strategies applied were not so beneficial to the households because they remained food insecure. On the other hand, they could have been more vulnerable had it not been for the strategies applied in other households because they could still afford to put on the table. There were no cases of extreme hunger and poverty.

It has been mentioned in literature that there are four food security indicators and that once these indicators are not stable then people are not food secure. A research has been done on whether they are affected or not and the findings were discussed in chapter four as a result a conclusion is drawn in this chapter on these indicators;

Food Access; COVID 19 has not only affected remittances but it has also affected some of the food security indicators resulting in to households experiencing food insecurity. Financial access was affected by the pandemic as many people lost their purchasing power when remittances declined. When most families lost their financial capacity, they could not afford to purchase food. It is clear from the evidence that physical access was not at all affected because people could still go to the shops and purchase food even though the opening hours were restricted by the COVID restrictions. The local markets were opened on a daily basis from 10 O'clock in the morning to 3O'clock in the afternoon and people could still purchase food in the local markets not in other places outside their villages because of movement restriction.

Many households could not afford to purchase all the food they normally consume because they had no income source. They had to depend on less preferred food; that is buying cheaper food brands than they normally purchase. Secondly, the food prices were high in the country as a results the already affected households could not afford to purchase. They had already lost their income and to afford food in the markets was difficult. There were indeed households that applied some coping strategies so that they could still access food in the markets but due to inflation, it was no so easy to fully have purchasing power. Therefore financial access was a major limiting factor for most households to be food secure while physical access was a minor limiting factor that is, it was not posing any threat of food insecurity to many households like financial access.

Food Availability: this indicator focuses more on whether food is available at all times in the markets and in food stocks especially from harvesting. The questions in hand was whether food has been available during the pandemic for people to access and to consume and answers to this question were also discussed in chapter 4 therefore while looking at the finding it is concluded that availability was somehow affected by COVID 19 restrictions. When the restrictions were implemented, the borders were closed and import and export of food was hindered by this restrictions. Lesotho is one country that depends mostly on food imports than local produce. Most food commodities were not available in the markets in the beginning and people could not purchase thus availability was affected. It was only when the restrictions were partly uplifted that food were available in the markets.

Availability did not only depend on imported food but also on local production. Most factories that were producing food were closed while other had their staff reduced and production became very slow thus unavailable food in the markets. The market route was affected due to travelling restrictions and transporting food to the outskirts places like Lilala Community took a bit longer and resulted food not available in the local shops outside the city centre.

It is not only about availability in the markets but also availability of food stocks in the households. Agricultural production is common in Lesotho and it was practised mostly in the rural areas on the country. Most households depended on production but because of climate change which affected agricultural sector, some households stopped practising it and began to migrate for employment opportunities and send remittances back home. Other households are engaged in both agriculture and migration labour. Research indicated that most households had no production/ harvesting in 2020 when COVID 19 evolved because the previous consumption year 2019/20 was affected by drought and people could to produce. There was no harvesting in the that year meaning households had no food stock, only a few had harvested but their harvesting could not last them for more than three months. Those that had some food from

harvesting had to sell them as coping strategy to have cash to purchase food. However availability in the markets was affected by the pandemic but availability in the households was not affected by the pandemic. Therefore food availability was a minor limiting factor because although food was not available in the households but it was somewhat available in the markets for people to purchase.

Food Utilization; this is the third food security indicator and it focuses more on food preparation, nutrition and access to clean water. The research done has indicated that this indicator was not affected by the pandemic. The community had access to clean water to prepare food. This indicator is not a limiting factor at all and it had not pose any threat to food insecurity. The available food in the households were prepared accordingly.

Food Stability; this indicator cut across the three other indicators. That is whether food access has been stable, availability of food has been stable and food utilization has been stable. In this study, food access has not been stable due to many households losing their purchasing power and could not afford to purchase food. Physical access was also not available because of movement restrictions. Secondly food availability has not been stable because markets routes were disrupted by lockdown restrictions. Some of the food items were very scarce. Other than, food utilization has been stable during the pandemic. For a fact that there was not stability in the two food security indicators means that most households became food insecure as remittances flow declined.

COVID 19 has affected food security of many households that depend solely on remittances as their livelihood source of income. Households members who were sending remittances lost their jobs during the lockdown restrictions, while other have their salaries or wages decreased to half of what they earned before and this indicates that majority lost their purchasing power and could not afford to purchase food in the markets. However there are coping strategies that

were applied as emergency to be have financial access in the markets but when looking at the evidence and data collected, those coping strategies did not help household to survive because they mentioned that regardless the strategies they were still experiencing food gaps. Therefore it can be concluded that the coping strategies did not help much.

Interventions were made during the pandemic to assist the affected households so that they could meet their food consumptions and these interventions were made by both the government and the developing partners like World Food Programme (WFP). The government gave out food parcels to the most affected and WFP assisted affected households with M615.00 per month for three months. Most remittance recipients indicated that even though they were affected by the pandemic, they were not the beneficiaries of these interventions because the community claimed that they were working and receiving remittances yet on actual fact those remittances were affected by the pandemic. Almost all the remittance recipients did not benefit from the interventions hence they remained food insecure.

The households that depended on remittances have been food insecure due to the pandemic because their remittances flow declined and as they declined they lost their purchasing power because of high price they could not afford to buy some food items. Not all the recipients became food insecure because other were still getting fully paid by their employers; those working in the formal jobs but those who were working informal jobs like in the contactors did became food insecure. The humanitarian interventions and the coping strategies did not response the emergency of food insecurity the households were facing rather benefited other households which were not remittances recipients. Food insecurity remained an issue for a longer period until some people went back to their old jobs and other got new jobs and were able to send remittances again to their families. During the study, many things were observed that can be recommended so that next time there is a pandemic or a similar incident people would not became food insecure.

5.3 Recommendations.

For the country to ameliorate social and economic issues brought by food insecurity of households, communities and nation during the pandemics and other hazards the recommendations are as follows:

- The government should built resilience programmes in the communities so that whenever a hazard hits, the community would not suffer more. For instance, if projects like poultry projects were implemented in Lilala Community Council then food security would still have been maintained in the council as households would still other sources of income from the project.
- There should be clear and outlined mitigation and preventions measures to avoid responding when there is an emergency. These measures will help in avoiding the consequences brought by a hazards. In this case a hazard was COVID 19 which affected livelihood income sources and resulted in food insecurity.
- When responding to and emergency especially food insecurity, the government should aim for targeted group, the one that is affected not respond to certain wealth group like the very poor and poor groups because their poverty is chronic and intervention will only help for that short period. While for the affected group response will assist to get back on their feet again. Chronic poverty requires a long term intervention.
- Early warning campaigns must be made to prepare the communities on mitigating the impacts of the hazard. When COVID 19 evolve in South Africa, it was so definite that it will also hit Lesotho and the government should have made campaigns on how to avoid the spread on the virus and how communities should behave during the pandemic.

- The government must set aside a special funding for the response to food insecurity emergencies brought by pandemics to so that they could be directed to the affected population.

5.4 Areas for further Research

This study assessed the impact of COVID 19 on food security for the remittance recipient's households that is if COVID 19 affected the remittances flow was affected by the pandemic and if the impacts led to food insecurity. The Other areas which were related to the issue of food insecurity in Lesotho were identified during the field survey were identified and are worth investigating in future. They include:

- The impact interventions by both government and UN agencies have on household food security.
- The appropriate coping strategies to be applied that curb the intensification of food insecurity in the households.
- The resilience strategies that can be implemented to assist households to avoid gaps and having livelihood protection deficits and survival deficits once they are hit by a shock.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Researcher:

Institution:

Occupation of interviewee:

1. How COVID19 affected remittances as livelihood income source of household in

Lilala Community in Lesotho.

- Did you receive remittances before the coming of COVID19
- If yes, please explain
- Did COVID 19 affect the household remittances?

- If so, how were they affected?
- Are there any other sources of income in your household?
- If yes, please explain the sources

2. Coping strategies applied by remittances recipient's households when facing food insecurity in Lilala Community.

- Are there any humanitarian or social assistance given to the household that were affected by COVID 19?
- If no, stated why?
- If yes, did that assistance help to recover from food insecurity?
- Were there any other coping strategies for affected households to resort to when remittances were affected?
- If no, state the reasons?
- If yes, what were those coping strategies
- Were these coping strategies able to cover all the household food expenses?
- Which livelihoods strategies do people depend on in this community?
- Has COVID 19 affected other livelihoods as a community? If yes, how?
- If no, Why

3. The impact of COVID 19 on food security indicators (access, availability, utilization and stability) in relation to remittances

- Was physical food access affected by COVID 19? If yes, how?
- Was financial food access affected by COVID 19? If yes, how
- Was food available in the markets during COVID 19
- If no, why

- Was food available in household stocks
- If no, why?
- Was food properly prepared in terms of proper nutrition and clean water? If no, state how? Has COVID 19 affected food stability in the community? If yes, please explain how?